



Intelligent Automation for Long-term Success

Understanding the concept of Intelligent Automation

Intelligent Automation (IA) represents the overall range of technologies that enable the automation and transformation of business processes, from rudimentary process automation such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to Cognitive automation.

RPA is software robots that fulfil repetitive tasks. In other words, RPA is the automation of rule-based processes replicating the steps a human would take to execute the processes such as transaction processing and financial reconciliation.

Cognitive Automation combines machine learning and workflow automation to mimic human activities such as reading documents e.g. invoices and updating the company's accounting system. Additionally, support with reasoning and deriving insights from big data (structured and unstructured data).

Value drivers and adoption of Intelligent Automation

As IA delivers enhanced efficiency, flexibility and scalability, reduction of operational risks, and improved customer journeys, it is a critical component in today's business strategy.

The pace of adapting Intelligent Automation has been rapid as organizations of all sizes leverage automation to drive value. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the world of business right in front of our eyes, with the massive impact of the pandemic catapulting intelligent automation to the fore.

The disruption caused by Covid-19 has forced business leaders to ramp up investment in innovation, with KPMG research showing that IA, cognitive computing, and robotics are among the top technologies leading in business transformation.

East African business leaders are no exception. The 2021 KPMG East Africa CEO Outlook Survey revealed that over 50% of East Africa CEOs would increase investment in:

1. Disruption detection and innovation processes
2. Joining industry consortia focused in development of innovative technology
3. Assessing their company's culture and values to align with disruptive technology
4. Partnering with third-party cloud technology providers to ramp up digital transformation

Are you ready to leverage Intelligent Automation?

In the transformation journey, business leaders need to advance digitization and connectivity in functional areas and especially back-office processes including human resource, financial operations, and supply chain. In this ever-present age of agility, these processes should be fully automated with seamless self-service delivery models to ultimate users and customers without needing to reinvent the readily available standard operating procedures.

To drive successful IA deployment and realize the intended benefits, it is important for business leaders and senior management to ask and answer the following questions:

1

What is the IA strategy for our business?

2

What tool(s) are fit-for-purpose to accommodate and support the strategy?

3

What processes need to be automated and which of these process automations are important to the organization?

4

What existing or new governance structure can be leveraged to control IA (during and post-implementation)?

5

What are our customers and suppliers' views on IA from their user experience? What aspects of this experience can be improved?

6

Do we need to retrain people impacted by this transformation?

7

What resources and systems are affected by automation and what are the plans for the next stages?

Once these questions have been answered, the following considerations will help the organization drive, scale, and realize the benefit from the IA investments:

1

IA is enabled by technology and benefits the business. It is about reinventing the business, not pursuing a series of technology investment projects.

2

Spearhead IA initiatives via a top-level champion. The leader needs to understand its value, direct it enthusiastically, get management and employees buy-in to rally the staff around.

3

Coordinate collaboration between business units, executive management and IT. IA is a business enabler powered by IT.

4

Combine IA technologies to work together and reinvent processes or functions, rather than going for piecemeal tactics to solve individual problems.

5

Scale up IA within the business by broadening its scope to be focused on end-to-end processes, mitigating a siloed approach with the risk of redundant efforts, diluted ROIs and benefits.

6

Ensure adequate resources are upskilled and allocated to help your staff evolve (a challenging multi-year effort). Be realistic about just how many of your experts can be qualified.

7

Address IA skills shortages to fill in the talent gap while your IA agenda matures and advances. Make use of experienced external service providers including contingent labour.

8

Manage the transition towards a collaboration of human and digital labour. Change management, guidance and empathic leadership are key here!

9

Talk to market leaders in your industry. Learn from their IA success stories and failures.

10

Implement a mindset of "start small, think big and scale fast".

Contact us

At KPMG, we leverage the latest technologies and capabilities alongside our deep-rooted domain expertise to accelerate innovation and drive speed and relevance to our client's businesses. Please do not hesitate to contact us – our team is ready to support you with advice and assistance.

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