



Leveraging intelligent automation during COVID-19

Introduction

COVID-19 has, in its relatively short tenure, already introduced unprecedented change (and business pressure) on organisations, and is expected to continue doing so for at least the next few months. A few topical challenge areas currently being faced (uniquely or more predominantly) within COVID-19 times, include for example:

Employee related matters



Increased **workload with limited options to increase capacity** (for example due to hiring freezes instituted) and the **need to virtualise activities** traditionally done in person. Employee morale and motivation also becomes a bigger challenge (given limited in-person contact and the consideration of “bigger concerns”). Further, **productivity** may be adversely affected (as a result of the morale impact, or more tangible elements such as IT and connectivity issues).

Business focus shift



As clients’ focus shift to personal well-being and primary needs, the ask for more luxury-nature goods and services is severely impacted. This means that business are increasingly pressurised to **diversify their offerings**, especially in scenarios where restrictions and caps are placed from a regulatory perspective. This also further impacts projects which usually would have been prioritised – such as large-scale business revitalisation / ERP implementations – which are put on hold in the interest of cost saving (or even survival).

Operational matters



Given the above (and a multitude of further) challenges, organisations will increasingly place **focus on cashflow measures** (e.g. deferred payment, adjusted forecasting to account for seasonality introduced by COVID-19 measures) and on the **reduction of costs** (such as cost cutting, refinancing or restructuring debt, electing to use relief measures such as payment holidays and tax relief measures).

Risk & fraud



With new ways of working (largely being remote), additional opportunities are created for **abuse of reduced physical oversight, redirected focus or previously effective (traditional) controls/measures** – such as phishing (using COVID-19 “hooks”/ fears), increased cyber attacks, physical or virtual theft, accessing data or systems not required for execution of duties and the falsification of approval.

Regulatory pressures



Most countries have introduced COVID-related measures – including phasing in or out of lock-down (across allowances to operate, products and services restrictions, travel measures, etc). **Uncertainty is introduced into businesses** given the unpredictability of timeframes, as well as the possibility of compounding challenges (e.g. return of load-shedding in South Africa as economic activity increases).

Introducing the concept of intelligent automation

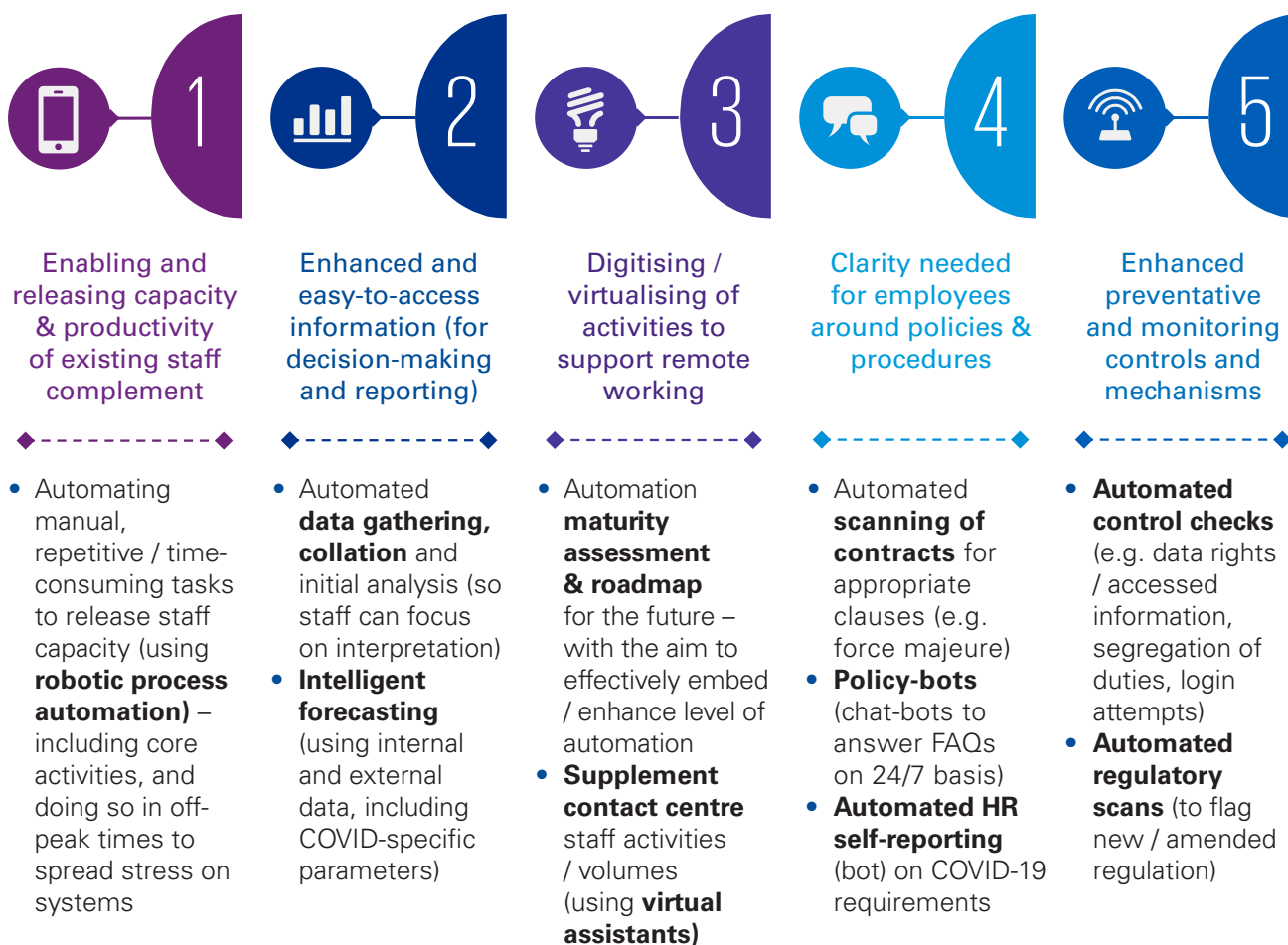
Intelligent automation spans across basic process automation, enhanced automation (e.g. machine learning, natural language processing) and cognitive automation (e.g. artificial intelligence).

Resilience, recovery and a new reality

Focused on intelligent automation

Translating themes identified into illustrative, practical intelligent automation solutions:

The challenges noted on the previous page can be bucketed into a number of themes which create the opportunity to use intelligent automation (to alleviate / reduce the impact of such challenges). Illustrative examples of these are highlighted below:



Contact us for more information and support:



Shamit Govind
 Director: Emerging Technology
 T: +27 (0)82 719 1389
 E: shamit.govind@kpmg.co.za



Liesl Slabbert
 Associate Director: Emerging Technology
 T: +27 (0)82 718 2872
 E: liesl.slabbert@kpmg.co.za

kpmg.com/socialmedia



kpmg.com/app



© 2020 KPMG Services Proprietary Limited, a South African company and a member firm of the KPMG network of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International"), a Swiss entity. All rights reserved. Printed in South Africa. The KPMG name, logo and "cutting through complexity" are registered trademarks or trademarks of KPMG International. 17850MC

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. Although we endeavour to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.