



Robotic process automation

A path to the cognitive enterprise

By David Schatsky, Craig Muraskin, and Kaushik Iyengar

COMPANIES are increasingly using software robots to perform routine business processes by mimicking the ways in which people interact with software applications. And the rapidly growing market for robot process automation (RPA) is already showing signs of an important emerging trend: Enterprises are beginning to employ RPA together with cognitive technologies such as speech recognition, natural language processing, and machine learning to automate perceptual and judgment-based tasks once reserved for humans. The integration of cognitive technologies and RPA is extending automation to new areas and can help companies become more efficient and agile as they move down the path of becoming fully digital businesses.

Signals

- Leading RPA vendors are incorporating cognitive technologies such as natural language processing and machine learning into their offerings¹

- Large RPA providers are partnering with vendors of cognitive technologies; for example, Blue Prism and IBM Watson have partnered to bring cognitive capabilities to clients²
- Enterprises across industries such as banking, insurance, and transportation have deployed RPA with cognitive technologies to automate routine business processes such as fulfilling purchase orders and new hire onboarding³
- Analyst firm Forrester suggests that a best practice for installing RPA is to “design the system to potentially link with cognitive platforms”⁴

A quest for cost savings, scale, and speed

RPA software automates repetitive, rules-based processes usually performed by people sitting in front of computers. By interacting with applications just as a human would, software robots can open email attachments, complete e-forms, record and re-key data, and perform other tasks that