enterprises can leverage cognitive technologies without IT infrastructure investments or large-scale process re-engineering. Therefore, businesses that have deployed RPA may be more likely to find valuable applications for cognitive technologies than those that have not.

Implications

The potential benefits of deploying cognitive technologies through RPA frameworks include faster implementation with less effort and more rapid ROI than either in-house development or platform investments could deliver. Many considerations emerge:

Look beyond basic bots. When implementing RPA, consider potential for cognitive enhancements. Cognitive RPA can not only enhance back-office automation but extend the scope of automation possibilities.

Review talent models. Enterprises that deploy RPA tend to focus on opportunities to eliminate jobs. But they may also gain the capacity to scale their operations and more fluidly handle demand spikes. The use of cognitive RPA may present opportunities to redesign jobs and reassign people to higher-value roles, including customer-facing and problem-solving functions.

Business process outsourcing providers face an opportunity and a threat. The stakes are high for BPO players. Given that a software robot can cost as little as one-third the price of an offshore FTE, RPA offers an alternative to some BPO relationships. Potentially, bots can automate as much as 40 percent of BPO human labor, with cognitive technologies taking that figure even higher. Companies that offer BPO services are responding to the threat of automation by building out cognitive RPA capabilities themselves or partnering with vendors.

RPA on the path to the cognitive enterprise

Many organizations are just beginning to explore the use of robotic process automation. As they do so, they would benefit from taking a strategic perspective. Bots can do much more than automate routine process steps. RPA can be a pillar of efforts to digitize businesses and to tap into the power of cognitive technologies.