Statements by Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi
Director of Cloud Policy
Internet Association

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Thank you to the team behind this report. I was glad to be able to contribute to even a small part, as it is such useful information and delivered in a very attractive and informative way.

My name is Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi and I am the Director of Cloud Policy for Internet Association. IA represents over 40 of the world's leading internet companies and supports policies that promote and enable a digital workforce. Our companies are also global leaders in the drive to develop lower cost, secure, and scalable cloud-based solutions for users and customers in the private and public sectors.

When I spoke with Pierre-Eduoard last year, I was the Director of Acquisitions at the IT Modernization Centers of Excellence, which is part of the US General Services Administration's Technology Transformation Services, or TTS. TTS has within it a number of groups focused on various paths towards implementing emerging technology in the government, including 18F, login.gov, cloud.gov, and a team with a number of different shared services called Solutions. More importantly for our conversation today, TTS is also the home of the Robotic Process Automation Community of Practice.

The RPA CoP is designed for government employees and serves as an information sharing community, focused on spreading not only awareness of the technology, its various uses, and its application to different types of workstreams - procurement included - but also to share lessons learned and best practices. As part of that effort, I know that the source code for at least two RPA bots are available for download through a GitHub repository, one for automatically sending accounts payable notices and the other for automatically generating micro-purchase transaction logs from a standardized spreadsheet.

At GSA, the agency adopted RPA to improve a number of different aspects of their work, but applications related to tasks performed for and by the Finance teams and the Procurement teams were two of main drivers to widespread adoption. In fact, the Chief Financial Officer of GSA is (or at least was if the transition didn't change that role) a co-leader of the RPA CoP along with the head of TTS. Finance and Procurement were probably the best candidates to unveil an RPA strategy for three main reasons:

- First, just about every team within GSA will interact with the Finance or Procurement teams at some point during the year. As a result, there are widely applicable and objective metrics that could demonstrate measurably improved customer experience directly attributable to the bots.
- Second, there is no room for error in Finance or Procurement, much like with RPA, so a governance model that not only measures the viability of a bot's performance, but also outlines

how they can be turned on or off, when and where their activity is logged, and other compliance-related information is a defacto prerequisite - not just a best practice - for success.
- Third, the data and information that is collected through the use of the bots, as well as the additional time and insight the Finance and Procurement teams obtained, brought better data-driven results to the team, who also benefited from improved morale.

The Responsibility Determination Bot, which is what TRUMAN was called before it was branded for wider use, is a great example of a bot that achieves all of these outcomes. Designed to check certain metrics on a potential contractor's viability and compliance before a contract can be awarded, it is a great example of an RPA bot. Seeing as we're here at a live panel, I thought I'd give you an exclusive use case for being here today, showing the replicability and transferability of what we learned to novel use cases.

One of my favorite RPA bots at GSA was a contract modification bot that has been reused a number of times now. Originally designed to automate a unilateral contract modification that was required as a result of new regulations involving thousands of construction contracts, it helped take a process that took hours and was able to get it done in just minutes. I bet it could have been done in seconds, but understandably, there was a certain degree of human supervision built in to verify the output, as it was one of the first bots ever deployed at GSA. A recent version of this bot was applied to a specific bilateral contract modification required as a result of new regulations involving information technology contracts, with performance measurements I've read indicating a one hour process now takes six minutes max.

The reason why I like this bot so much is that it helps show the promise of RPA in the procurement space in a number of different ways.

In terms of customer experience, both the industry partners and the contract administrator on the government side were happier with the process. It reduced a large degree of their low-value, rote work, while also minimized - if not eliminated - typical transcription errors that come from a manual process.

In terms of governance, a number of components ended up being standardized. The rules that have to be followed to utilize the bot, what the user privileges of that bot will be, and how information associated with the bot will be stored, it all necessitated a great deal of cooperation and collaboration between the Procurement teams as well as the Chief Data Officer and the Chief Information Officer. Both of them ended up being essential partners in the cross-functional team that ultimately led to the successful implementation of this technology across the entire enterprise. Internally, the Chief Procurement Officer worked with their staff to standardize the format of the procurement packages themselves as well, making future automation and analysis possible, as the content was starting to be viewed as data.

In terms of improving decision making, this contract modification bot primarily helped by providing staff with additional time to perform a number of other functions, whether personal or professional. Furthermore, as the bot itself evolved along with the IT infrastructure being used to support its operations, it found its way into improving data analysis and other data-driven decision making processes by being a part of a larger, overarching modernization strategy. As many say, RPA is a gateway to AI, and so much of that, I think at least, is because of the de facto data-focused culture RPA bots help create within a team, especially as they evolve and are applied to different functions.

On the point of teams, staff using RPA bots get to truly understand the benefits of cloud-native applications. Taking advantage of the scalability of the cloud-based infrastructure the bots were built on, the automation and orchestration that they perform, and the ability to record all of the actions it undertakes allowed us to take what was a bot for a project, scale it across the agency, and then turn it into a shared service that other government agencies could utilize.

In my world, which was involved with modernizing legacy IT, this was incredibly important, as we were able to actually use and benefit from the same technology we were tasked with procuring. After all, nothing is better for developing and running an evaluation than actually being familiar with what is being ultimately decided upon, so many other aspects of our work were able to improve along the way. Even more to the point, our colleagues over at the Department of Labor used our knowledge and experiences to begin their own RPA bot farm, as we call them, giving their staff access to these new skills and tools.

So to try to sum up, implementing an RPA bot to automate contract modifications helped:

- Reduce an hours-long manual process to a minutes-long automated process;
- Created collaborations among a number of teams within the agency to create a more cohesive enterprise-wide strategy;
- Gave staff a new set of tools and skills to improve their work in all areas, not just those impacted by the bot itself; and,
- Building on the foundation of the cloud, provided the impetus for a degree of data set development and utilization that set the foundation for the use of other, more advanced disruptive technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence.

For anyone out there interested in adopting disruptive technologies within your own organization and feel like you are hitting roadblocks, I would like to suggest that a cloud-based RPA bot will be one of the most impactful ways to objectively show the promise and progress of a modernization plan, especially as it will force you to create and manage data, slowly sanitizing and standardizing it along the way.

Before wrapping up, I would like to add one final note. One of the most exciting things that I saw during my time at GSA was how eager industry partners who specialize in this type of technology were to work with us on developing solutions. From the smallest startup to the largest multinational corporation, we were almost always able to find technologists eager to solve problems in this space, not just salespeople eager to sign contracts. I mention this because I want to encourage everyone to be proactive in your outreach to industry to see what is possible and don't hesitate to ask for someone who is technical.

There were so many times where my colleagues on the acquisition workforce would see RPA bots and other things we were doing to automate procurement, and they would express shock at what we were doing, as they never thought something like that could be developed. Similarly, there were so many times when I spoke with members of industry that had no experience with the internal processes of government, being completely unaware of the actual pain points in the work we perform. The more opportunities you seek to create an interactive feedback loop, the more advances will be made in our space.

With that, thank you again for everyone's work in putting together this report, and I will always be more than happy to answer any questions anyone may have, whether today or after the event.