human forward.

randstad

rpa
assessment

finance team
vat number checking

assessment

This assessment is based on an actual issue that existed in Randstad before it was resolved with RPA. For the purposes of the assessment, certain elements are fictional in order to provide a richer basis for the assessment and as a result, do not represent the internal workings of Randstad UK payroll.

The deliverables for this assessment are:

1. A fully functional UiPath automation delivered via XAML + any additional files necessary to run the automation
2. A document explaining:
    a. the approach
    b. any assumptions made as a result of lack of information in the assessment document or lack of clarity around certain parts of the process or Randstad internal systems and structure
    c. where you could take the automation next (in theory)
3. If you use any web-based technologies to deliver the solution, make sure that they are accessible publicly or the appropriate authentication is provided.

background

Randstad payrolls a large number of contractors each week (LTD Company workers) and as part of the initial validation process for a new contractor, if they supply a VAT number because they want to be paid VAT, Randstad checks this VAT number with the VIES website (https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/) to make sure that:

1. The VAT number is valid according to VIES
2. The Company name that is linked to the VAT number matches the company name provided

If both these values are correct then Randstad will include VAT in their payment to the contractor. Randstad payroll its workers on a weekly basis, and during subsequent weeks it is possible that a contractor has had their VAT status removed, or they have elected to withdraw based on their turnover. The contractor is meant to inform Randstad so that we stop paying them VAT. There is no mechanism that currently exists from the Government to provide companies running payrolls with this information on an automated basis like it does with Tax Codes.

As a result, each week the payroll teams extract a file from the payroll system with all 8000+ VAT numbers on them and the company names associated with the VAT number and perform a random sample check of 500 VAT numbers. This can take a team of 2 up to 3 hours to complete, depending on if the VIES website is not throttling them.

Randstad is then in a position of holding the VAT liability for 7500+ contractors in the event we pay them VAT and we shouldn't.

process summary

Randstad runs it payroll on a Monday afternoon and the payroll teams spend the morning getting the payroll ready to send. In a single payroll there can be PAYE workers, Contractors and workers paid via other 3rd party payroll providers.

Around 3 hours prior to the payroll deadline, a manager runs a report out of the payroll system that gives them all the VAT numbers and the Company names associated with those VAT numbers, who are on the payroll that week. The data is in an Excel spreadsheet.

Example Data file for the purposes of the assessment:

VAT Number	Company Name
492 4357 26	Randstad UK
154186115	Randstad Public Services
535-5640-42	Randstad Select

The payroll team then open up the VIES website and enters the VAT numbers and checks if they are valid and if the names match.

If they are invalid then they receive the following error:

Quite often the name Company name doesn't match exactly but it matches enough to know that the company is the same.

If they find a VAT number that is invalid or where the name is so different that it cannot be the same company, then the team highlights the row in Red.

Once they are finished, they then go into the payroll system and remove all the VAT numbers from the lines that are read to prevent VAT payments to them and raise a separate query directly with the contractor. Resolution of not paying when we should is handled outside of this process.

other considerations

The following are some considerations that may influence your approach to automation, based on technological factors or other strategies across the organisation:

- Randstad is wanting to move as much as possible into GSuite which means that Excel will not exist within the finance teams in around 1 years time.
- VIES offers a SOAP API endpoint
- When the UK leaves the EU, VIES may not be the solution that we have to validate UK VAT numbers against
- Often projects in Randstad are rapidly accelerated or delayed depending on the priority and changing landscape of the business