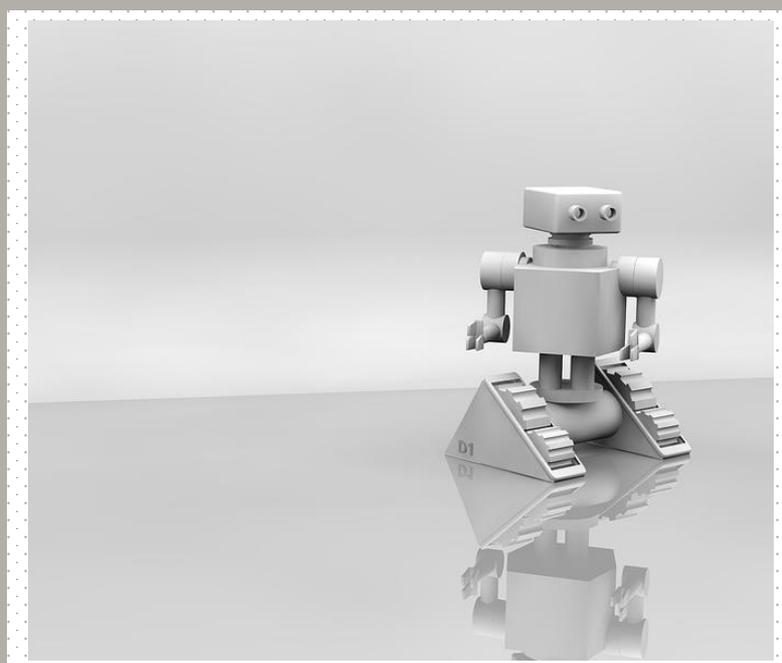


## ACCELERATING SHARED SERVICES THROUGH RPA

ROBOTICS PROCESS AUTOMATION (RPA) AS AN INTEGRATED PART OF FINANCE  
TRANSFORMATION ACCELERATES BENEFIT REALIZATION AND COST SAVINGS.



**Robotics Process Automation (RPA) is the cornerstone of digital transformation, providing benefits through cost savings, process efficiency, as well as improved accuracy and quality in day to day finance activities. Many Finance organizations perceive RPA as a brand new shining toy... A quick win opportunity to automate transactional, manual and repetitive processes, independent of strategic and transformational initiatives; caution should be exercised when approaching anything hyped. In the following piece, Sia Partners provides a viewpoint on how RPA could be used in tandem with a well-established approach in the Transformation toolkit; Shared Services & Centralization. If companies integrate RPA within their Finance Transformation and Shared Services initiatives, a greater magnitude of benefits can be achieved by leveraging common activities and outcomes. The following article will illustrate how organizations can achieve accelerated benefits when the two are adopted in conjunction.**

## Integrating RPA with Shared Services

Finance functions vary in terms of maturity in centralizing Finance functions through Shared Services, often impacted by factors such as industry trends, strategic outlook and economic factors. Many global organizations have an established Shared Services to centralize and optimize Finance processes, whereas other organizations have maintained individual Finance teams within each business unit and local office. Regardless of an organization’s Finance operating structure, a common theme is the impending digitization and

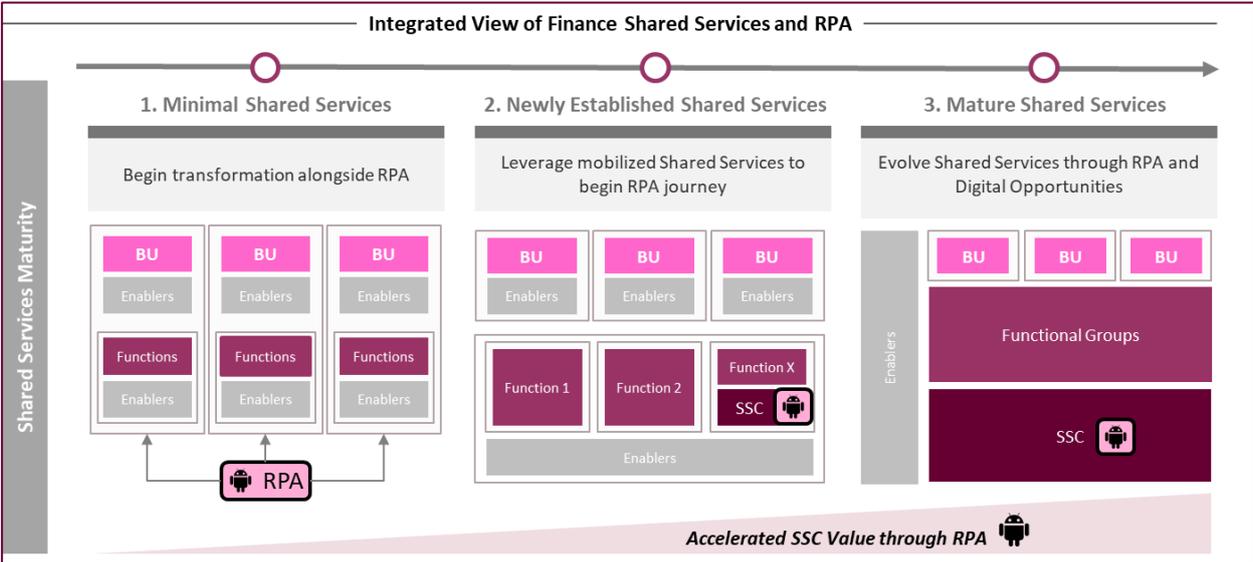
the necessity for organizations to adopt digital solutions. As such, organizations looking to optimize processes and resources should adopt RPA as part of their Finance Transformation roadmap, which can also be a stepping stone into digitization.

The following section will explore the benefits of RPA when implemented for a Finance function across multiple stages of Shared Services (as illustrated in Image A). Specifically, activities and outcomes that are shared across RPA and Shared Services will demonstrate the advantages of integration.

### 1. Organization without Shared Services

An organization at the early stages of Finance Transformation operate in a federated and siloed model, where finance, business units and support functions conduct similar accounting activities independently. Organizations at this stage do not have established Shared Services and process automation infrastructure. For organizations that are beginning the journey of process optimization, RPA should be considered as part of the initial approach and planning. At the early stages of Finance Transformation, process and activity assessment, process qualification and operating model design are highly similar and can be leveraged across Shared Services and RPA.

From a digitization perspective, early stages of Finance Transformation should incorporate digitization at the forefront of visioning and design. This enables digitization to not only be an afterthought or initiative that is considered later in the journey but is incorporated in the roadmap, establishing a solid and prominent digital foundation for a Finance function.



The following activities and outcomes are typically done to prepare for Shared Services, as well as RPA implementation. Significant amount of resources and time can be saved when the activities are shared:

- Vision and Strategy
- Leadership Alignment & Awareness
- Finance Operating Model & Governance
- Delivery Methodology (incl. testing & risk assessment)
- Business Case (accelerated ROI through automation)
- Process Assessment and Selection

## 2. Organization with Newly Established Shared Services

Organizations that have started their transformation journey provide operational support to business units and functions through Shared Services. The prework to stand up Shared Services requires extensive work effort to assess, design and implement the operating model. Many of these upfront tasks during the Shared Services design phase are highly similar to RPA process qualification activities. Leveraging the knowledge and outputs from Shared Services stand up, the time required for to qualify RPA opportunities is reduced, leading to a potential savings of 2-6 weeks of work effort to achieve the initial proof of concept.

During Shared Services assessment, processes and resource activity is analysed in detail. The same process and activity breakdown can be taken through an RPA qualification assessment to identify automation opportunities, which can reduce the upfront cost to establish a business case and proof of concept. This lowers the barriers to automate and enter into a digital environment.

The following are examples of outcomes that could be leveraged from the Shared Services Centre set-up:

- Process Intake Criteria and Process
- Refined Program Governance, Organization Structure, Delivery Methodology, and Investment Case
- Mobilization of Developers and IT Team (including Infrastructure, environment, Access Set-Up)
- Process Configuration
- Consolidate and Leverage Lessons Learned
- Performance Management, Change Strategy & Communication Plan

## 3. Organization with Mature Shared Services

Organizations in mature stages of transformation will have an established Shared Services with defined processes and SLAs in operation. Many of the processes tend to be operated by FTEs, whether onshore, offshore or outsourced. At this stage, organizations commonly discover that the benefit realization decreases over the years, as additional cost savings are minimized and may even be eroded by increased operational cost of shared service centres.

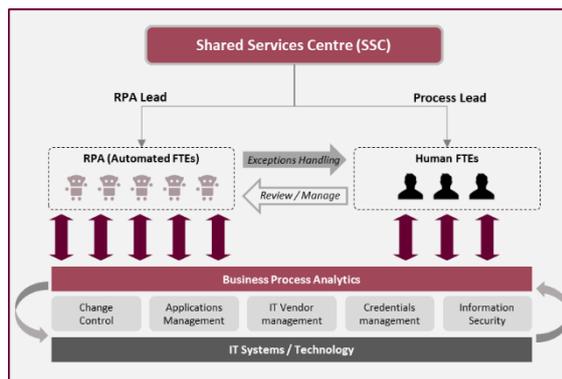
To evolve Shared Services and reap additional cost savings, organizations should consider automating the processes that are transactional and rules-based in nature. In addition to cost and efficiency benefits, there is higher accuracy and confidence that SLAs are met. This is particularly important for Shared Services that service multiple global units. Again, the upfront activities to qualify RPA processes and design a new operating model are reduced by leveraging the work done to stand up Shared Services. RPA also provides an excellent opportunity to allow the Shared Services operators to free up time from clerical, repetitive tasks and focus more on high value business partnering ; there are very real employee experience benefits to be realised by the enterprises who get their RPA implementations right...

Finance functions are moving beyond the traditional role as bookkeepers and controllers, into roles with a need to add incremental value to the organization. CFOs and their respective Finance teams are exploring ways to integrate digital finance into traditional tasks, but there are barriers that prevent Finance from moving beyond traditional manual processes into digitized solutions. Shared Services can act as the foundation to transition into digital finance, with RPA as a solution that can be implemented quickly with visible results. Once RPA has been implemented, additional digital solutions can be explored and scaled throughout the organization. In many cases, organizations will set up a Digital office, using RPA as a pilot and further expanding into other digital technology. The shared services team could also benefit by establishing capabilities as a RPA centre of excellence within the enterprise and be leveraged to deliver wider operational value enterprise wide

## RPA and Shared Services Operating Model

An RPA Shared Services Centre can be effectively mobilized with a structured and defined operating model. Since the RPA operating model adopts a similar structure to a Shared Services operating model, it provides Shared Services organizations an ease of adoption to RPA.

### RPA Operating Model within a SSC



Within an RPA operating model, there should be clear delineation between the RPA Lead and the Process Lead. The RPA Lead will be responsible for managing operational and quality assurance tasks. The Process Lead will be responsible for ensuring business process requirements are met and SLAs are followed. Although RPA will necessitate the need for an RPA Lead to manage the automation component, other supporting functions and roles, such as IT and Security, remain similar between the two operating models with opportunities to share resources.

## Conclusion

Adopting RPA as part of a Shared Services enabled Finance Transformation journey provides organizations with an ease of entry into digitization, as well as accelerated realization of results. As organizations challenge their existing transformation roadmap with digital solutions, the following factors should be considered:

- **Start Small and Scale** – Implement an initial automation pilot through a proof of concept, while leveraging processes assessment and design work completed

through Shared Services to shorten the timeframe and resources

- **Share Resources** – Minimize the reinvention of work by taking the time to identify similar activities and outcomes that can be leveraged from Finance Transformation projects and initiatives
- **Enable a Strategic Mindset** – Ensure digitization and automation are embedded into the long-term strategy and vision, and not as a one-time activity; Deploy governance and change management tactics to support overall change
- **Get the foundation right** – High performing RPA robots are less prone to error and contribute less to the dreaded 'technical debt' that most large enterprises have to contend with. The right blend of in-house and external expertise is required together with IT buy-in to ensure outcomes are achieved. Take an architecture based Transformational approach across the function(s) rather than treating this as an experiment. As a starting point to encourage the Finance personnel to embrace this new exciting "Digital" world, embedding new ways of working and encouraging the team to operate in an Agile delivery model will also be important to quickly realise benefits while continuously improving outputs

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