

Case Study: Manufacturing

IPA Improves CX and Efficiency for Agricultural Giant

Automation delivers improved customer service and greater business flexibility while saving time and reducing costs. The key to success is approaching automation as a companywide effort, with clear business objectives and strong governance.

The Challenge

A leading international agricultural and food company wanted to streamline its largely manual and fragmented order fulfillment, financial reporting and customer care processes. The client required an end-to-end intelligent process automation (IPA) solution that would improve how it served customers and reduce unit cost and cycle time from procurement to final delivery. The solution had to scale globally and leverage existing resources whenever possible.

At a glance

An international agricultural firm wanted to accelerate order fulfillment, reduce costs and improve processes across its international regions. Cognizant implemented an automation center of excellence (CoE) and a bot development program for business users to rapidly automate key processes from end to end. Benefits gained include:

- 126+ automated processes delivered and counting
- \$20 million savings
- 90%+ process improvement
- Improved customer experience (CX)
- 4X return on investment

The company was new to automation and selected Cognizant as its partner for several reasons. First was our expertise in implementing intelligent process automation technologies, including Optical Character Recognition (OCR), robotic process automation (RPA) and machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) tools. The client also trusted our deep expertise in manufacturing process automation. Finally, a critical point for the client was our extensive experience in integrating automation with SAP and JD Edwards, because both are used in the client's enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

The Approach

To ensure employee adoption of IPA across the globe, we recommended that the client adopt a Center of Excellence (CoE) approach to achieving its automation goals. Establishing a CoE would help drive optimal returns on automation investments throughout global business units, serving as a centralized governance model for automation.

A CoE enables an organization to evaluate, then prioritize, automation use cases based on feasibility and predicted ROI. Use cases that meet the client's CoE criteria are then implemented via a federated delivery model. The CoE ensures the company pursues only strong automation cases with acceptable ROI. It also facilitates centralized governance over automation efforts to ensure they are aligned with company business objectives.

The client's federated automation delivery centers are in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific. The automated processes include order management, supply chain, sales, finance, human resources and compliance processes.

Bots developed in the CoE have automated the client's sales order process from end to end. Whether our client's customers place an order via telephone or digitally, the system automatically generates the order, along with inventory and financial documents required to fill and bill the

order. Automating the order entry and fulfillment processes has brought about:

- A 75% improvement in handling time
- A change in focus for 50% of FTEs onto more skillful work
- 28,000 hours of FTE annual savings
- The ability to monitor process-related key performance indicators (KPIs) through our business intelligence dashboard

Additional automation bots streamline processes in customer care, contract management, pricelist creation, payment terms updates, order processing and many more. In addition, 120+ IT use cases have been automated using the Cognizant Automation Center in the areas of trading, operations and supply chain, human resources and corporate finance.

Equipping citizen developers

Because business users often are in the best position to understand process issues that create pain points in their day to day tasks or work, our client wanted to capture this expertise. To accomplish this, we created a framework to empower non-IT users (aka citizen developers) to recommend and design bots to streamline processes. We trained 90+ citizen developers in the client's Asia and Latin America operations. With continued support from Cognizant automation teams, the client's citizen developers manage 80% of the automation development process, and from a strong pipeline of processes to automate they have created a variety of bots to date.

Business Outcomes

The client's automation initiatives have brought a time savings of 52,000 hours per month, which allows associates to take on higher value projects. The CoE automation projects also enable our client to achieve high scores across delivery benchmarks in its industry, which is a selling point to its customers.

Growing automation sophistication

As the IPA initiative continues to mature, there is a growing emphasis on reusable assets. The CoE helps identify bots created for one process that can be deployed for other similar processes, driving more return on the initial bot development investment. Reusable assets also speed the automation of additional processes, to enable wider, faster adoption of automation throughout the client's organization.

Bots also enable our client to maintain efficiency while avoiding ERP system upgrade expenses during the global COVID-19 pandemic. We are helping the client to identify and deploy automation solutions to streamline related processes. We also have begun planning for how bots may

complement the capabilities of the ERP systems when they are deployed. For example, the current purchase order creation process done via ERP systems has repetitive steps that can be automated through APIs.

Additional processes suitable for AI and ML are also being identified. We have created a cognitive reference architecture to provide a foundation for this next generation of cognitive bots. The standard extensible ML models required for the base routine work have been defined and can be reused wherever necessary. In two business lines, the client is using AI and ML to extract data from semi-structured text data in PDFs, to create sales orders in SAP, and this process is easily extensible to other business groups.

About Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSI) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 194 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at www.cognizant.com or follow us [@Cognizant](https://twitter.com/Cognizant).



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