

TJ: Hi, I am TJ and I hope all our listeners are safe and healthy. In this episode we are going to talk about Robotic Process Automation or RPA and how it can make a big difference for users and organizations plagued by repetitive mundane processes by bringing in highly customizable and effective automation at almost every touchpoint.

To help us understand and decipher the world of possibilities around enterprise Robotic Process Automation, our Anuj Gupta is Anuj Gupta, the Deputy General Manager at Digital Workplace Services at HCL Technologies.

With more than 15 years of experience in the IT services industry and numerous commendable achievements, Anuj, in his current role, helps some of the top BFSI organizations in the world modernize and transform their digital workplace in the process of revamping their systems and introducing cutting edge digital solutions to deliver the next level of experience, enabling and equipping employees to proactively engage, understand and deliver on customer needs.

Welcome, Anuj.

Anuj Gupta: Hi, TJ.

TJ: Thank you, for joining us today. We really appreciate you taking out time to talk to us.

Anuj Gupta: Thank you very much for having me here. I have a feeling this is going to be an interesting discussion.

TJ: Absolutely. So, Anuj, for the un-initiated, what is Robotic Process Automation and which job functions, or job profiles stand to be benefitted the most from this technology?

Anuj Gupta: Very simply put, RPA is a tool that mimics human actions. So for example, if you have to repeatedly copy a set of data from excel A to excel B, instead of some human doing Ctrl+C, Ctrl+V every time, you can program a piece of code to do this every time it detects some data in excel A. This piece of code is nothing but RPA. To put it technically, It is the process of automating business processes by configuring 'virtual robots' to capture inputs in order to process transactions, data manipulation, triggering responses and sharing information with other digital solutions.

Standardized processes with easily identifiable inputs and outputs and which are repeatable in nature are best tackled through this solution. Hence any user or user profile who is engaged in the task of doing repeatable work are the best candidates for whom this tool can be provisioned like a Service Desk or a Call Center Engineer who spends a substantial part of his day talking to customers and do some standard work like raising a ticket, etc. So, while the interaction is done by the engineer giving it much more humane element, the back-end work of actually filling up a standard form or raising a ticket can be done by RPA.

TJ: Understood. So, like you mentioned, if implemented properly, it can be very beneficial. Could you shed some light on some of the possible benefits?

Anuj Gupta: So, let's take this service desk engineer example. When an RPA tool compliments a Call Center or a Service Desk engineer, what does an organization get?

One, they get a more productive engineer who instead of 10 calls can pick up 20 calls in a day because a big chunk of his clerical work has been handled by RPA, which is quicker, efficient and makes close to zero mistakes. Improved productivity has a direct connection to increased bottom line for companies.

Second, it leaves the engineer to focus more on his core skill, which is talking to a customer and helping him or her out. This increases customer experience. So, the organization can effectively cater to seemingly contradictory requirement of increasing customer experience while reducing cost at the same time.

Now also think of the benefit for the engineer. This technology has the ability to take out the robot out of an engineer as it takes away the burden of mundane clerical job leaving him to do what humans do the best – show empathy to customers. Isn't it wonderful?

TJ: So, it's well understood that the origins of the technology had its root in improving productivity and reducing costs due to automation of mundane, repetitive tasks. But now, is it going beyond the usual and most organizations are leveraging it heavily to provide improved user experience? How does RPA bridge the gap between what users desire and what the applications deliver to increase experience?

Anuj Gupta: Following the path of the consumer applications, business applications are now designed in a manner that interfacing with them is a delight. The User Interface is designed ground-up with the end-user experience as a key priority. But as the experience of interfacing with these applications improved, the workflows got more and more complex as they tried to accommodate new requirements and the underlying processes every day. Organizations have business processes and workflows that use multiple systems which are not properly connected but sharing data between these entities is essential, as essential as anything.

This is owed to a mix of newer applications coming in every transformation cycle and legacy applications that have major dependencies. To cater to the complex workflows, a user generally ends up switching between these applications multiple times. This means switching between local, web and virtual applications. Add mobile-only applications to the mix and you have perfect recipe for productivity taking a hit.

TJ: So, if I understood that correctly, is RPA potentially the invisible ink linking all the applications, irrespective of where they are hosted, required by the user to complete tasks based on workflows?

Anuj Gupta: RPA can be thought of as the unifying trunk connecting all applications. This unification would have been much easier in the past as compared to now due to the ever-growing number and types of applications in the environment. Furthermore, solutions like VDIs make it even harder to scrape data present on the screen as all the information is presented as images. But the technology is catching up. Advanced computer vision now enables RPA on remote desktops as well.

TJ: Ok. So, the benefits look too good to be true. What is the catch? Is it complicated to control or is it hard to implement? What are the major hurdles?

Anuj Gupta: In terms of introducing RPA into workflows, one major challenge is the design process. Identifying and planning for the inputs and the expected outputs is the most critical aspect, after considering all the risks and possibilities. The best advice for this phase is to always look at the bigger picture.

The larger RPA architecture, that is expected to deliver the desired value-adds, would consist of numerous small automated processes or robots. Sometimes the only link between these robots is the user himself.

So, things tend to get complicated fast. Thus, the design process requires a huge investment in terms of time and clarity. This is a perfect example of how technology can be only as effective as you want it to be.

TJ: Thank you very much, Anuj, for sharing your views and enlightening our listeners. And when we come back after a short break, we will ask Anuj for his takes on some exciting consumer tech. Stay tuned.

TJ: Welcome back. In this segment, we ask our guests to summarize their opinion about some exciting consumer tech. Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality?

Anuj Gupta: So, you haven't given the option of MR, which is Mixed Reality. When you combine Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, then the actual fun begins. So for me, it's Mixed Reality.

TJ: Folding Displays on Mobile Phones

Anuj Gupta: Yeah, I wish I had the money to go for that. If I had, I would have definitely gone for it.

TJ: We know you are a regular long-distance runner and take part in many marathons. Which earphones do you prefer?

Anuj Gupta: So, while both android and apple have wonderful products, I still love Bose.

TJ: Window or Mac?

Anuj Gupta: Never used a mac. So, I am not sure. Given an option, I might go for Windows only.

TJ: It was an absolute pleasure having you on this episode. There was so much that we did not know about Robotic Process Automation and the possibilities it will open up in the workplace.

Thank you again for your time and we hope for an opportunity to host you again. I thank our listeners for joining in. We want to hear from you. We need your feedback and suggestions for future topics. The contact information is available in the description. Comment, share, recommend, subscribe and stay safe. See you all in the next one.