

Human Resources Automation For The Artificial Intelligence Economy



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Every top-level executive will tell you people are their organization's greatest asset. The human resources profession was created to find, engage and retain that #1 asset. HR is supposed to advocate for people. Yet somehow it has managed to get so buried in paperwork that it only emerges into company-wide consciousness during that most dreaded time of the year: Open Enrollment. It seems counterintuitive, but computers can make your workplace more human, and it starts with automating certain HR processes.

A [2019 UK report](#) found the HR industry stands to gain the most from automating administrative tasks. Robotic process automation (RPA) market leader UiPath says [HR professionals can reclaim up to 40% of their time](#). What they choose to do with that time will revolutionize their field and your workforce.

HR for the AI Economy

The biggest benefit of automating repetitive HR grunt work is time, time to prepare your employees and your entire operation for the AI economy. Global consultancy KPMG broke HR's workload down into 21 functions and found 5 areas least likely to be automated. No surprise, they are the most complex and most value-added tasks. These are the ones you really want your HR experts focusing on: employee relations, change management, organizational effectiveness, HR & business strategy, and "people performance whole system architecture."

Just 5 functions, but they sure are the big, intimidating ones. Here are my 3 automation-enabled tips for achieving HR's most critical outcomes:

1. Build Relationships

Believe it or not, talent sourcing, acquisition and onboarding are some of the most popular HR tasks to automate. UiPath demos how a [digital assistant screens resumes](#) within existing applications. But I hear your protests, "What? Bringing new people on is one of the MOST interpersonally intensive parts of my job!" Well, that's exactly why you need to automate the less human parts. If your robot is home screening resumes, you can be out and about, putting in facetime at talent scouting events and meeting one-on-one with qualified candidates. When you bring on the new employee, your digital assistant fills out the paperwork, freeing you up to make connections. Orient the newbie to company culture and core workplace values. Introduce her to go-to team members and potential mentors. Build the human-centric bridges that make people feel supported and comfortable coming to you whenever necessary throughout their tenure.

2. Be Proactive

So much of HR's time-consuming paperwork is responding to emergent situations. Whether it's incident reports, benefit enrollment or payroll updates, you spend so much time reacting that you can never seem to get ahead of the curve. Let automation tools feed the machine, so you can take time to dream up new, better ways. The digital assistant fills out the accident report while you figure out how to

prevent it from ever happening again. RPA keeps the existing benefit system running while you create a new wellness initiative that actually engages employees. And Gallup quantifies how [engaged employees make a big difference for productivity and profitability](#).

3. Get Strategic

[I talk a lot](#) about how to upskill workers for the Age of the Augmented Human. It's a pet issue of mine, and I believe automation-enhanced HR pros can be our most valuable resource on this front. I would love to see all our Chief People Officers become Chief Learning Officers. With automation to do the data entry, requests and approvals, HR can move from maintaining to developing employees. From cost center to workforce value generator. That kind of strategic transformation garners attention and ranks a seat in the boardroom, which is a place HR leaders have been historically underrepresented, according to [USC's Center for Effective Organizations](#).

Where Do I Start?

Whenever you embark on an automation project, you should prioritize quick wins that save time and money. It's the best way to grow buy-in and ensure an appetite for future initiatives. Human resources staff can assemble a list of repeatable, high-volume processes that are based on structured data. Some likely automation starting points are payroll updates, PTO requests, and expense/reimbursement processes.

Bring us your list of repetitive, time-consuming HR processes, and we'll determine which are most suitable for automation. We can estimate what percentage of each task is automatable. From there, we lay out an automation road map detailing which processes to bring online in what order. Then, we will work together to pick them off one at a time, [documenting the 'As Is' and 'To Be' processes](#) and implementing accordingly.

Automation is a journey to free people, not replace them. As the AI economy continues to fundamentally change our workplaces, companies need HR units to anchor and facilitate their value center: human creativity and collaboration. The less time you spend working like a robot, the more time you have to put the 'human' into human resources.