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ZF FRIEDRICHSHAFEN ESTABLISHES A GLOBAL RPA SERVICE IN ONE YEAR

Together with Capgemini Invent, ZF Friedrichshafen conducted a full-scale automation journey within one year to rapidly develop mature process digitization capabilities

In recent years, low code automation and robotic process automation (RPA) have achieved tremendous success and become a commodity across industries and functions. Low code automation is widely praised for its short implementation time, its close integration with business functions and its rapid benefit at a low investment cost. However, it is often overlooked that RPA is more than just the installation of a new tool – it requires a solid automation and digitization change journey.

Having identified the potential of low code automation, ZF Friedrichshafen, a leading global automotive supplier, launched its own automation journey in 2018. The goal was to increase employees' value add, while maintaining its existing workforce capacity. Based on a longstanding successful working relationship, ZF Friedrichshafen collaborated with Capgemini Invent to establish a global automation service and a nearshore RPA Center of Excellence. By combining process expertise and scalable digital technologies, ZF Friedrichshafen aimed to automate repetitive and manual tasks, improve process outcomes, and increase employee satisfaction.

Overview

Client: ZF Friedrichshafen

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: Germany

Client Challenge:

As part of a global IT realignment strategy, ZF Friedrichshafen wanted to embark on a transformation journey to establish a global automation service

Solution:

Together with Capgemini Invent, the organization selected initial use cases and rolled out a scalable platform based on an agile operating model. A comprehensive communication strategy ensured employee support for the launch of the RPA platform.

Results:

• Fast integration of business and IT functions into the new platform
• Agile way of working enables swift implementation of automation use cases
• Repetitive tasks can be automated, increasing employee satisfaction

The preparation phase sets the right guidelines for the overall project

The partners began with a preparation phase to define general guidelines that would help successfully establish the new technology and RPA service function within the company. ZF conducted a full-scale vendor selection process and identified the first use cases to create a demand pipeline. A success factor at this stage was the early integration of Business and IT functions with external RPA experts. A collaborative workshop subsequently brought together the key project participants and formed a competent team that managed to create full buy-in from all stakeholders across different IT disciplines, business functions, regions, and hierarchies.

Create a common goal by drafting a vision

In the beginning, the project strategy and vision for the RPA initiative were formed to create a common goal to which everyone could commit. Though this project, ZF Friedrichshafen aimed to keep pace with market innovation by setting company-wide standards and building a platform to enable future developments and extensions. Further priorities were additional, constant value creation and hands on implementation along with the development of a comprehensive operating model.

Choose a tool with the suitable strategic focus

A thorough vendor selection process, including analysis of automation tool landscapes, was performed to select a vendor that matched ZF Friedrichshafen criteria and IT specifics. A combined team of business and IT professionals evaluated the different setups and jointly decided on a best fit RPA IT strategy. Together with Capgemini, ZF chose decision criteria and identified a weighted shortlist of vendors. The top scorers were invited to present their approaches during a tool selection workshop.

Select straightforward cases for fast benefits

The third major component of the preparation phase concerned the initial creation of an automation demand pipeline. Here, ZF Friedrichshafen and Capgemini Invent carefully drafted a selection process with pragmatic selection criteria using the proven Capgemini ESOAR™ process optimization method to ensure that the pipeline was filled on best-fit use cases. Initially ZF Friedrichshafen evaluated nine use cases from the HR, Finance, Sales, and Shared Services divisions. The pipeline was constantly maintained and was filled with over 70 use cases, many of them with an ROI of less than one month. These were quickly advanced to an MVP stage that made it possible to rapidly gain experience and generated traction within the different target divisions of ZF Friedrichshafen. This established the buy-in and continuous support of ZF Friedrichshafen business functions and enabled the organization to consistently and rapidly benefit from RPA while easily implementing use cases.

> *Robotic Process Automation is available at ZF Friedrichshafen and we have created the structures to get the most out of it. More than 70 use case ideas are already in the pipeline, which is directed by our RPA center together with various business partners in coprorate functions, divisions, and regions. As all use cases are registered in one pipeline tool and as all live bots run on one platform, we provided a framework to learn from each other by re-using existing case ideas or technical building blocks.*
> *The foundation for the success was generated based on the implementation project. With the great support of Capgemini Invent, we installed the platform, gained the know-how, and developed the target operating model, which was continuously improved and strengthened based on 15 live cases."*

Rainer Scheuring, Vice President Corporate Finance,

IT, M&A AC Market and Materials Management, ZF Friedrichshafen

> *This very successful initiative has proven that technology is nothing without smart application. Based on a highly collaborative approach and strong senior stakeholder buy-in, ZF Friedrichshafen has ramped-up a service unit that will support scaling low-code automation on a global level. Together, we build the basis for sustainable success: an ambitious team of experts that will support the business in driving automation to the next level."*

Robert Frank, Senior Manager

AI & Automation Strategy at Capgemini Invent

Scaling the RPA Initiative

During the scaling phase, it was important to receive strong sponsorship and commitment from ZF Friedrichshafen to drive a global RPA strategy. With an initial IT setup ready, the first implementation phase could be run in pilot. This allowed the partners to design a full-scale operating model that managed the RPA lifecycle on an operative basis. In contrast to a classical approach, which would require the complete design of the technology infrastructure, challenges were tackled as they occurred with a new tool that was better integrated into the business.

One operating model to rule it all

A collaborative approach across IT integration, business, and external support resulted in a full-scale operating model focusing on the five dimensions of processes, technology, people culture & change, roles & responsibilities, and governance to be created within only 3 months. The Operating Model was designed in specialized teams that tailored the solution according to the overall agreed upon mission and vision. A close integration into the operative execution of automation cases was crucial to establish a lean support function throughout the entire RPA lifecycle— from process analysis to the development and management of automation artefacts. The designed solution was adjusted to offer a satellite approach to cover all specific needs and meet the expectations of all business units. Following this concept, some parts of the RPA lifecycle became decentralized, offering higher flexibility to functions and business units. Outputs were managed from a central location, which enabled quality checks and process monitoring to support proper functionality on the RPA infrastructure.

Sponsorship, communication and change

Good communication and change management approaches were major elements for keeping all stakeholders informed during the project. At ZF Friedrichshafen, the IT market and materials management function took the lead in hosting the RPA environment. This decision was based on the organization's strategic positioning, potential for automation cases, integration within the company and their personnel's ability to train themselves in core RPA skills. Additionally, an early integration of the worker's council and active communication with participants in the RPA project secured the ongoing support of external parties within the company. This also included an intensive knowledge sharing and employee training program. Employees were made part of the journey by organizing campaigns and events as well as broadcasts for over 1,000 participants. Moreover, targeted awareness sessions and an RPA explanatory video helped to get major target areas quickly up to speed in terms of process discovery and RPA implementation support.

Digitized processes on a global scale

A strong, dedicated team from business and IT functions, an open communication policy, the willingness to test ideas, and a supportive sponsorship, made it possible to create a Center of Excellence with a scalable support function that added immediate value. ZF Friedrichshafen has positioned itself to tackle shared services and process digitization on a global scale and taken an important step towards a more digitized process landscape.

The Collaborative Approach

Capgemini Invent has a proven track record with RPA and Intelligent Automation projects. The tandem approach of joint teams with client members and consultants ensured high acceptance, engagement, fast progress and an effective coordination between central and local teams. Equipped with local and functional knowledge as well as transformation experience, the Capgemini Invent team effectively helped the client to introduce the RPA technology and to design a scalable Center of Excellence.

About Capgemini Invent

As the digital innovation, consulting and transformation brand of the Capgemini Group, Capgemini Invent helps CxOs envision and build what's next for their organizations. Located in more than 30 offices and 25 creative studios around the world, its 7,000+ strong team combines strategy, technology, data science and creative design with deep industry expertise and insights, to develop new digital solutions and business models of the future.

Capgemini Invent is an integral part of Capgemini, a global leader in partnering with companies to transform and manage their business by harnessing the power of technology. The Group is guided everyday by its purpose of unleashing human energy through technology for an inclusive and sustainable future. It is a responsible and diverse organization of 270,000 team members in nearly 50 countries. With its strong 50 year heritage and deep industry expertise, Capgemini is trusted by its clients to address the entire breadth of their business needs, from strategy and design to operations, fueled by the fast evolving and innovative world of cloud, data, AI, connectivity, software, digital engineering and platforms. The Group reported in 2020 global revenues of €16 billion.

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