The Department for Education uses robotics to enhance responsiveness to customer emails

In collaboration with Capgemini, the Department for Education designs and implements an RPA solution to more effectively identify and respond to incoming queries

Enhancing query responsiveness with automation

Few ministerial departments have quite as much of an impact on the people of England as the Department for Education (DfE), which is responsible for children's services and education from early years through higher education and apprenticeships. The DfE supports the general schooling of children, teens, and young adults in its constant pursuit of a vision to provide world-class education, training, and care for anyone regardless of background. In addition, the department handles children at risk or extremism messages, meaning that

"This project has been exciting for DfE. The delivery team at Capgemini has provided invaluable guidance and expertise in helping our automation launch successfully. We have seen really strong results which have improved the performance of our teams and improved our overall process. We have seen real benefits through automation and we're already planning the next phase of RPA work."

Ian Wiles
Strategic Improvement Team Leader at DfE

Overview

- **Client:** Department for Education
- **Region:** UK
- **Sector:** Public Sector
- **Client Challenge:** The Ministerial and Public Communications Division (MPCD) at the Department for Education wanted to improve its ability to respond to email enquiries more rapidly and accurately through the implementation of automated processes
- **Solution:** By partnering with Capgemini, the Department for Education developed and implemented a best-in-class RPA solution that processes incoming emails for more rapid follow up

Benefits:

- Reduced waiting time for customers
- More resources dedicated to front line support
- Greater email processing accuracy
- Increased productivity and faster completion of the allocation process
- Faster allocation of Freedom Of Information requests and child at risk emails
- Reduction of operation costs

every correspondence potentially has serious consequences. Considering the scope of its work and the size of its ambition, the DfE must handle logistic challenges on a daily basis and requires the best available talent and technology to succeed.

Part of this involves the 60,000 emails, letters, and online enquiries that the Ministerial and Public Communications Division (MPCD) at the DfE receives on an annual basis from a variety of sources such as parents, Parliament, and the general public. The management of these communications was a repetitive and time-consuming process that did not operate as quickly as the DfE wanted and prevented employees from working on more rewarding and value added tasks. In an effort to enhance its ability to support and engage with its customers, the department examined its existing processes and technologies to determine its opportunities for lowering the turnaround time and improving the accuracy of its email responses.

Partnership supports RPA innovation

As part of this introspective journey, the DfE decided to partner with Capgemini via the Cabinet Office Centre of Excellence for the RPA framework. Capgemini's proven history of innovation within the public sector and within the field of automation promised to add substantial expertise to the project. Together, the organisations explored a number of potential opportunities before settling on Robotic Process Automation (RPA) as both the solution for the DfE and a proof of concept for other government departments and agencies. By selecting RPA as the core of the solution, the DfE and Capgemini planned to reduce the need for manual processing of all forms of digital correspondence while simultaneously increasing the speed and accuracy of its replies.

Though RPA is a proven and reliable approach to automated solutions, the DfE and Capgemini decided to push the boundaries of the technology in order to achieve a new level of success and innovation. To do so, the partners needed to confront and overcome a series of challenges. The first was the decision to implement an unattended robot, which would function without human oversight. While this would maximize the reduction of manual labor involved in the correspondence process, it would require a finely tuned and extremely effective robot to guarantee accuracy. In addition, although most RPA solutions are intended to operate within a structured data environment, the DfE robot would need to process unstructured data. Finally, this would be one of the first RPA solutions applied to a public facing, high profile department operating within the public sector and the team would need to demonstrate that such a solution could work and excel within this environment.

While these challenges offered significant obstacles, the DfE and Capgemini felt confident that through their combined expertise and future vision, they would be able to deliver a truly notable success.

Achieving greater accuracy and speed with RPA

In response to the stated objectives, the partners developed and implemented an unattended robot that was subsequently named A.R.N.O.L.D (Automated Robot Negating the Onerous Logging of Data). This solution operates on a set of established business rules to make decisions when processing incoming emails and distributing them to the correct parties for response. These rules help the robot classify each email through hundreds of variables that enable it to follow the same data entry process as a human with a higher level of accuracy.

When it receives an incoming email, A.R.N.O.L.D. first classifies the message and identifies essential information, which it then inputs into the DfE's customer relationship management (CRM) platform. Once this is complete, the robot then shifts the email into the "Processed" folder while completing the entry into the CRM platform and attaching the original email. A.R.N.O.L.D. can also identify duplicate contact cards and alert the relevant team. One of the most important functions offered by this new robot is the ability to scan and review an email in order to identify child at risk or extremism messages. These emails are then flagged, thereby expediting the response times and enhancing the department's ability to provide critical support. Finally, once the emails are fully processed, A.R.N.O.L.D. leaves notes for reply drafters and assigns the created cases to workflow queues.

A.R.N.O.L.D. delivers substantial benefits

ARNOLD offers a marked improvement to the DfE's email processing, despite the inevitable restrictions of working with unstructured data. Not only has the solution increased accuracy and decreased response times, the robot also provides ample opportunity for continuous enhancement through the refinement of business rules. Since its launch on September 24, 2018, A.R.N.O.L.D. has processed over

10,000 emails, 77% of which were logged the first time without any human involvement and 1.9% of which produced a system exception. However, 35% of these exceptions occurred within the first two weeks following the go-live, meaning that by adjusting to those unique cases, the DfE and Capgemini have already enhanced processes and delivered a more effective approach to customer engagement.

Since implementation, A.R.N.O.L.D. has required an average of just over four minutes to process emails and the DfE has experienced a wide variety of benefits, such as:

- Reduced waiting time for customers
- More resources dedicated to front line support
- Greater email processing accuracy
- Increased productivity and faster completion of the allocation process
- Faster allocation of Freedom Of Information requests and child at risk emails
- Reduction of operation costs.

The future of a collaborative RPA solution

Following the successful implementation of A.R.N.O.L.D., the DfE has become more responsive and offers better services to its customers. However, the department is not content to rest on these achievements and instead will continue to engage with Capgemini, through the CoE framework, to drive further improvements to the robot and to its overall approach to customer engagement. This will involve another data review in 2019, the adaptation of A.R.N.O.L.D. to a new CRM platform, and the implementation of user feedback to support improvements to the solution early in 2019. The robot's success has even led to the examination of other opportunities for applying RPA in a variety of public sector departments and agencies.

Together, the DfE and Capgemini have demonstrated a commitment to innovation and customer service. The DfE is now more capable of supporting its large audience with faster and more accurate responses in addition to a greater ability to identify high priority messages. Capgemini has added another success to its substantial history of innovative RPA solutions and looks forward to pushing the boundaries with an increasing variety of departments in the future.

About Capgemini

A global leader in consulting, technology services and digital transformation, Capgemini is at the forefront of innovation to address the entire breadth of clients' opportunities in the evolving world of cloud, digital and platforms. Building on its strong 50-year heritage and deep industry-specific expertise, Capgemini enables organizations to realize their business ambitions through an array of services from strategy to operations. Capgemini is driven by the conviction that the business value of technology comes from and through people. It is a multicultural company of over 200,000 team members in more than 40 countries. The Group reported 2018 global revenues of EUR 13.2 billion.

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About The Department of Education

The Department for Education is a ministerial department that is supported by 19 agencies, public bodies, and non-ministerial departments. It is responsible for for the teaching and learning of young people from primary school to higher education. The Department for Education strives to provide world-class education, training, and care for everyone, regardless of their background.

People matter, results count.

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