

RESOLVE 

Building an Automation Strategy: A Guide for Financial Services Organizations

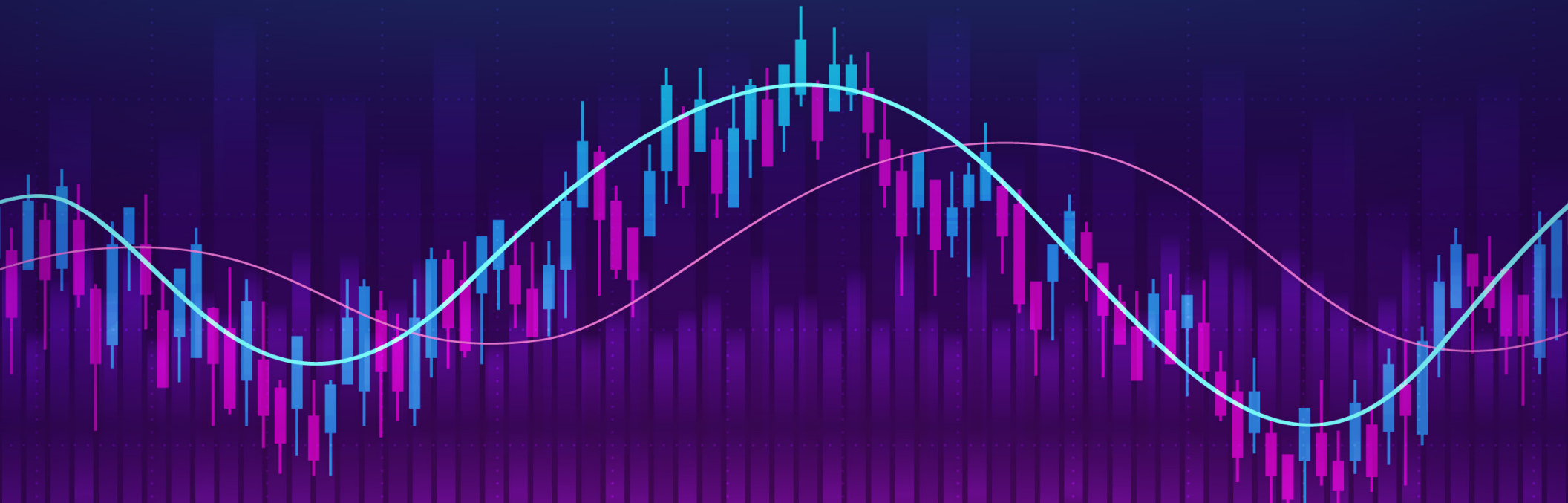


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Executive Summary

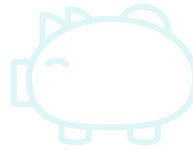
Top financial services organizations are proactively looking at automation and taking a more holistic, process-driven approach to achieve operational excellence in today's trailblazing, highly competitive landscape.

The shift stems from the modernization of the financial services marketplace and an increasingly difficult-to-meet collection of customer needs. Financial services organizations are applying automation more strategically to meet such demands and embrace the digital transformation era.

Digital transformation, despite the buzzword it's become, is more attainable with the right automation. As such, organizations are adopting self-healing automation, the powerful partnership of robotic process automation (RPA) and (ITPA), orchestration of automated processes, and more to achieve long-term business results.

While financial services IT teams have been using scripts and simple automations to improve efficiency for quite some time now, the landscape has expanded to focus on innovative, strategic automation for picture-perfect customer experiences, operational efficacy and resiliency, and robust risk management.

Meanwhile, the true technology-driven winners – of today and tomorrow – are doing even more: elevating automation by mapping it out according to their business strategies and paving the way to digital transformation within the entire financial services organization.



Top 5 Financial Services Trends IT Leaders Are Embracing

Financial services, along with just about every other industry, is focused on digital transformation. As advancements in AI and modern, more nimble technologies become mainstream, the possibilities for innovation prove to be endless.

Movements like these highlight the importance of modernization and emphasize the importance of change. IT teams today must design agile systems, workloads, and processes as the business prioritizes faster, more efficient services for customers.

In the context of digital transformation, there are five prevalent trends that are paving the way for the future of financial services organizations, and IT leaders must stay vigilant.





Digitization and Financial Technology

Organizations in the financial services industry need to transform into technology-driven companies, which means going digital to the core.

Fintech fuses two of the largest – and richest – sectors of the economy: finance and tech.

It refers to an emerging class of financial services companies that is using technology to meet new standards and improve financial services for businesses and customers. Services they offer cover a wide range of financial needs, including online payments, peer-to-peer lending, digital wallets, crowdfunding, blockchain, mobile banking, and more.

Getting innovative via technology is everything for succeeding in today's highly competitive market and rapidly evolving landscape. While implementing new technologies can be risky, IT leaders in the financial services space must focus on five priorities to get it right:



Speed to Market

Build practices, processes, and systems that drive speed.



Reskilling and Upskilling

Ensure your teams are equipped with the knowledge to support new and innovative charters.



Interoperability

Fully understand how new applications will talk with each other, and with legacy applications as well.



Security

Ensure robust and reliable infrastructure that keeps data secure.



Compliance

Continuously meet standards with ever-changing and inconsistent regulations.



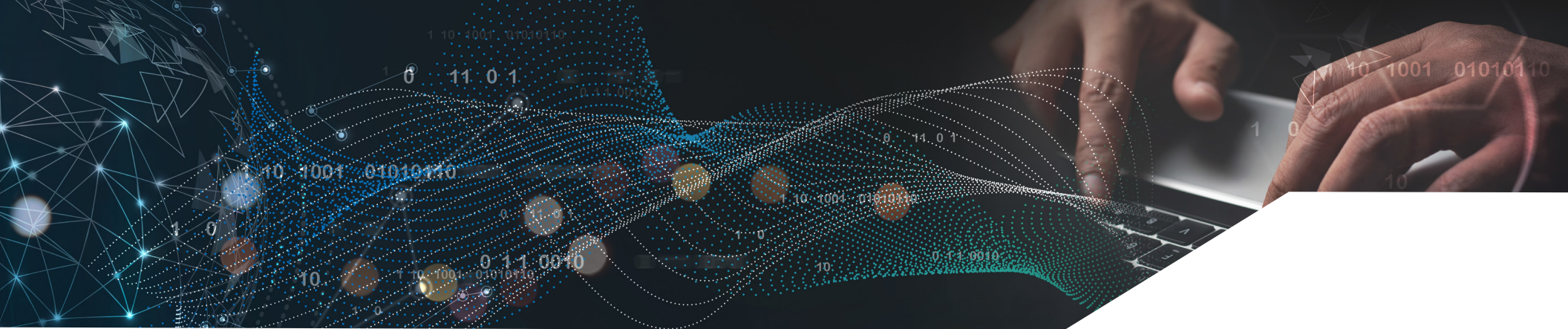
Automation and Orchestration

Many financial services companies still use legacy systems and decades-old technology. For instance, more than 800 billion lines of a programming language developed in 1959, COBOL code, still run on mainframe systems.¹

Supporting digitization of core banking applications requires marrying the old and the new, with an urgency for adopting automation in this new age. IT leaders who are successfully upholding business priorities are hungry for orchestration of automated processes, which is a more coordinated way of stitching together siloed and disjointed workflows.

For financial services companies, orchestration improves processes associated with data analysis, fraud detection, risk assessment, and more. And for customers, it produces better investment decisions, enhanced customer experiences, and advanced operational efficiency.





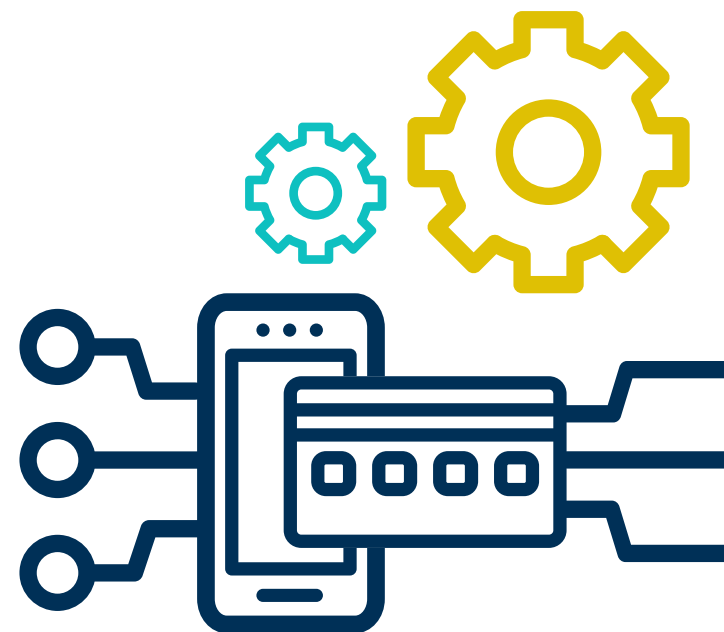
Digital Currencies

Digital currencies like central bank digital currency (CBDC) and cryptocurrencies are on the rise and have the potential to completely revolutionize how we think about money. After all, digital currencies are easy to use and promise programmability, enriched data, lower costs, and faster payments, and they're increasingly being used by banks, governments, and fintechs for various payment situations.

Plus, customers have high visibility into payment processing and any technology disruptions will directly hit a company's top line.

As forward-looking financial services companies examine and start to support transactions in modern digital currencies, IT leaders will need to step up to support this new form of payment with modern applications built using next-generation technology by standing up reliable and secure infrastructure not only to quickly build these applications but also to ensure business continuity.

However, for the foreseeable future, these teams will need to support existing forms of payments, meaning digital and traditional currencies will co-exist for now. It will require IT leaders to perform a fine balancing act of ensuring progress without disrupting IT operations that support existing payment processing.





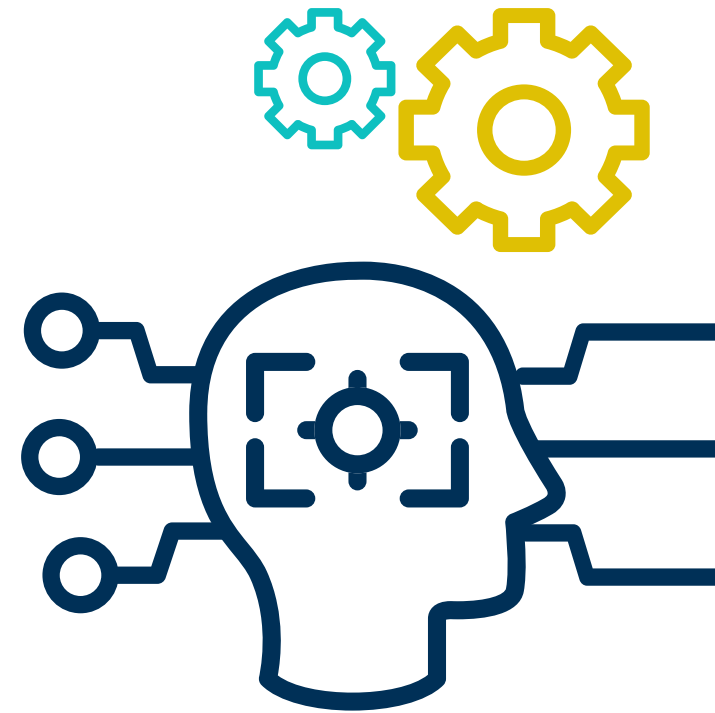
Customer Centricity

A rough 67 percent of banking businesses have endured at least one underperforming transformation in the last five years, mostly caused by a lack of commitment to customer centricity. They think their transformation initiatives are customer-centric, but they're unfortunately business-centric, instead.

Customers today have different expectations from customers of the past. Successful interactions are those that are woven together from a series of digital and/or human interactions. While it's easy to get short-sighted regarding the internal priorities, IT leaders have the opportunity to step up and drive discussions on how technology and business goals come together.

IT is the foundational core that can remove — if not prevent — any friction from the customer experience. Three ways IT leaders can force customer-centric transformations include:

1. Understand customer needs, behaviors, and values before digitization projects begin, so as to streamline the way customers connect with digital products.
2. Review transformations against customer centric KPIs. Combine the net promoter score (NPS) with other metrics, like a customer's interaction with a digital product.
3. Create a culture of customer centricity wherein every IT employee embraces its importance and aims to improve it.





Security

Security continues to be an area of focus for financial services firms. Given the sensitivity of the information exchanged, financial services organizations are a target for cyber-criminals. With more and more transactions taking place online, especially in developing countries, the industry today is all the more vulnerable.

Specific, dedicated teams are responsible for securing key banking systems, but IT leaders have an inherent duty to guard their systems from any malicious activity. This means establishing best practices and enforcing compliance of these across the organization. It also requires full visibility into existing infrastructure and the ability to run proactive checks to ensure IT systems stay compliant over time.



Leveling Up Your IT Teams

A key group of customers have spoken. An IBM survey reported 73 percent of millennials would be more excited about financial services offerings from tech giants like Google or Apple, as compared to those from long-established institutions.

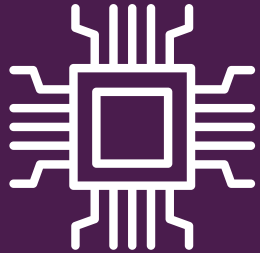
While most organizations have begun on their digital journeys, the survey indicates that IT has a fresh opportunity to design IT systems and applications for maximum efficiency, ensuring that their technology integrates with each other and creates a cohesive ecosystem.

For many IT teams, automation is gaining ground as the silver bullet for moving faster, becoming more agile, and delivering stellar customer experiences.

But to further elevate their competitive advantage, IT teams are orchestrating automated processes. Integrating new automations with their old, existing technology fuels modernization of the institution as a whole and accelerates digital transformation simultaneously.



Modernize Your Financial Services Organization with Automation



Core Digitization

Core digitization is only possible when financial services providers think technology-first. Training people, designing nimble processes, and having technology that can scale without needing huge investments in resources is key to begin this transformation.

Quickly ramping up digitization to support the purchase process along the customer journey, as well as rethinking systems that back core business functions are highly important. Examples include your customer relationship management (CRM) system, Voice of the Customer (VoC) tools, and infrastructure that runs back-office applications.

Automation will deliver quick wins for IT teams stitching together workflows with legacy and modern applications that are otherwise siloed, while also driving significant efficiencies and freeing your IT team up for more high-value tasks.



Self Healing

Financial services organizations, over the years, have without a doubt accumulated a lot of technical debt. It's common for IT teams to support hundreds of applications and databases with highly specific infrastructure needs.

Automation will help reduce the level of manual oversight needed to keep systems running. Simple, yet crucial processes such as patching updates, which often bog down IT can be completely automated.

IT teams have the opportunity to build automations for self-healing, taking efficiency even further. In the financial services industry, self-healing automation can run end-to-end, eliminating false positives that cause burnout.



Artificial Intelligence

The financial services industry has made some remarkable strides in operationalizing AI - on the business side for fraud detection and on the back-office side for support and intelligence to improve overall productivity.

This progress shows that AI and automation, together, unlock much needed capacity for IT teams. In financial services specifically, automation enables IT teams to act on the intelligence in a risk-free way.

IT Support

Most financial services organizations use chatbots to improve customer service, and today, it's also common to do so internally to empower employees. For example, IT teams use chatbots to make service requests to support employees' IT-related needs, like account unlocks and password resets.

Automation can complement AI here by fulfilling requests, speeding up mean time to resolution (MTTR), and setting up automations to execute common service requests. These are just a few ways AI and automation drive self-service to improve employee productivity.

IT Operations

AI is known to significantly reduce the number of alerts that IT monitors, from the tens of thousands to just a few thousands, illustrating another ideal partnership between AI and automation.

Automation, when integrated with AIOps, acts on critical information to pinpoint root causes and take the right actions to resolve alerts. While AIOps can correlate alert information and distill it down to only the most important details, automation can remediate issues and update IT tickets accordingly as part of a self-healing workflow.

Building Automation Pipeline

When treated as a strategic IT-wide initiative, the value derived from automation can be exponentially increased. With so much data already at hand in the form of IT tickets, it is the best place to start looking for insights that can maximize automation ROI.

AI/ML can analyze service desk ticket data, understand high-volume and high-impact tickets and help point IT in the right direction as they begin or scale automation initiatives.



Proactive Threat Assessment

As threats continue to evolve and laws such as Service Organization Control Type 2 (SOC2) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) continue to place pressure on financial services institutions to build and enforce cyber-security policies, there are best practices regarding technology infrastructure that support core banking applications and are designed to deal with extremely sensitive personal and financial information.

One of these best practices is to define and ensure compliance. For support teams, this habit translates into confidently knowing that all the latest and greatest patches have been applied, and they have 100 percent visibility into their IT infrastructure.

The sheer number of versions of applications, databases, operating systems, and servers supported can make threat management complicated. Automations in these cases would be scheduled ahead of time to patch these mission-critical systems safely and consistently to ensure compliance. IT teams can also run these automations to either verify or audit IT systems on a regular basis.

What Is in Your Automation Toolkit?

The automation toolkit in the financial services industry has evolved to encompass a broad spectrum of technologies such as RPA, AI/ML, workflow automation and other tools designed to drive innovation, efficiency, and a competitive advantage.

When looking at your automation toolkit, we encourage you to look at it holistically. Each automation technology provides an edge around a set of boxed constraints but as a whole, are the technologies disruptive enough to truly be transformative?

To take step back, let's review a few automation initiatives being prioritized today:



Scripting

Scripts play a prevalent and crucial role in IT for financial services, facilitating various tasks, from automating routine processes to enabling complex data analysis. Usually, this form of automation is very tactical and specific to the task at hand, making it hard to keep up with demand.

That's why as IT organizations scale and their tasks grow in complexity, scripts can become hard to maintain. As scripts evolve, they become difficult to understand, especially if multiple team members work on them. This complexity can lead to errors and make debugging and troubleshooting more challenging. To make matters worse, there's usually a lack of proper oversight or documentation, which leads to insufficient control and visibility over automation efforts.

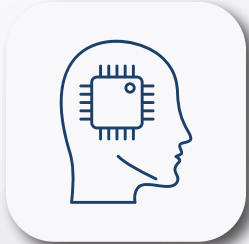


AIOps

AIOps is another form of widely adopted automation. It leverages artificial intelligence and machine learning to optimize monitoring.

In the highly competitive and regulated environment of financial services, AIOps automation can provide a significant edge by enabling real-time decision-making by correlating alerts and reducing the number of alarms IT needs to focus on. It allows IT teams to stay agile, compliant, and responsive.

AIOps has the potential to change how incidents are detected, yet resolution for many financial services organizations remains manual.



RPA

RPA is nothing new to the financial services industry. In fact, many organizations are already making advances by automating a great deal of back-end processes. RPA can augment human actions by interacting with digital systems. Common tasks that RPA bots automate include:

- Extracting data from, and processing, customer documents, and then verifying this data.
- Filling forms with relevant data from another data source like Excel sheets
- Reconciliating data to verify every entry against the bank data and other records

RPA bots today are completing stable and repetitive tasks. However, RPA bots can fail when tasks are unpredictable. As with most technologies, it is crucial to understand how RPA can thrive and deliver the best results, accelerate throughput, and identify where any weaknesses are.

When IT complexity comes in the form of intricate decision logic, distributed IT systems, and the need to connect to hundreds of systems, RPA might not be the best technology for the job.



A Holistic View

Each of these automation technologies provides innovation within its boundaries; however, to digitally transform key processes from end-to-end, you need to not only automate, but also orchestrate some or all of these different automations.

End-to-end process automation in financial services offers a range of advantages that contribute to increased efficiency, reduced operational costs, improved customer experiences, and enhanced compliance. It is the catalyst to digital transformation.

Doubling Down on IT Process Automation

IT process automation has the potential to streamline processes within financial services organizations. From self-healing to automated request fulfillment, these tools enable end-to-end automation and orchestration of complex processes, reducing operational overhead and errors.

IT process automation differs from the other automation technologies in a toolkit, as it is built to manage complexity across distributed systems and long-running processes with multiple decision points.

When designing and timing workflows and sequences of tasks, in 24/7 banking, for example, ITPA allows for the execution of IT processes using triggers, events, alerts, and incidents. It's an all-dynamic way to design complex workflows that can better respond to various situations, such as errors, system changes, or results.

With ITPA, IT teams can leverage the web services, application programming interfaces (APIs), and command line interfaces (CLIs) for processes like GUI screen scraping, mouse and keyboard movements, and so forth. This capability is much more robust compared to what you can leverage with RPA.

At its core, ITPA brings the following benefits to all IT teams in the financial services sector:

- ✓ A robust, unified orchestration that creates a centralized automation hub.
- ✓ A user-friendly, low-code experience that simplifies and accelerates delivery of new automations.
- ✓ Thousands of prebuilt action tasks, process templates, and runbooks.
- ✓ Seamless, bi-directional integration with almost any IT tool, completely vendor agnostic.
- ✓ An extensive library of prebuilt automation templates to jumpstart an end-to-end workflow.
- ✓ Scalability via hundreds of millions of executions per day, and tens of millions of devices.



The Power of Orchestration

In the dynamic and highly regulated environment of financial services, orchestration provides the agility, efficiency, and reliability required to stay competitive and compliant. Financial services institutions often have a multitude of legacy systems and applications. Orchestration can bridge the gap between these systems, facilitating data exchange and communication among various siloed platforms, enabling real-time data sharing and reporting.

Orchestration ties multiple tasks and point automations together to build a process workflow. Organizations can bring scripts into automation as part of firing up process efficiency, as well as achieving next-level standardization. From here, organizations are well-positioned to make five key moves, including:

- ✓ Reusing scripts for multiple automations by converting them into a library.
- ✓ Maintaining an audit log that documents when an automation was run and the output it produced.
- ✓ Sequencing tasks into a workflow and making decisions based on the output to take the next action.
- ✓ Standardizing platform and use source control to track changes.
- ✓ Making information available to IT teams for various uses.



RESOLVE
ACTIONS



Unified orchestration & automation platform

Provides robust unified orchestration layer that creates a centralized automation hub.



No code, low-code, bring your own code

Offers drag-and-drop Automation Designer that simplifies and accelerates delivery of new automations.



Extensive depth & breadth of 'actions'

Comes with thousands of prebuilt action tasks, process templates, and runbooks.



Out-of-the-box integrations and connectors with Automation Exchange

Extensive library to jumpstart an end-to-end automation workflow.



Scalability

Execute hundreds of millions of automations per day on tens of millions of devices.

An Automation-first Mindset for Long-term Success

Strategic, end-to-end automation seals the deal when driving long-term results. But getting there needs to be planned and executed thoughtfully.

Neglecting to treat IT process automation as an end-to-end transformation can lead to several missed opportunities for financial services. Without strategic automation, organizations tend to focus on short-term operational needs rather than long-term business goals.

The Resolve Automation Capabilities Framework has helped our financial services customers determine which automations to prioritize based on their desired business outcomes. The framework provided a place to start and then led them to build their automation pipeline as they continued their journey.

We developed the Resolve Automation Capabilities Framework by accumulating wisdom gained from our customers' experiences and our own decade-long journey in delivering IT automation. Using these learnings, we've developed an approach that enables financial services institutions to transition from a reactive to a proactive approach as they seek to embrace and integrate automation throughout their operations. Read more about the Resolve Automation Capabilities Framework and its power to create and produce new, complex, and intelligent automations, enabling more efficiencies to be achieved with end-to-end automation.



Full Orchestration

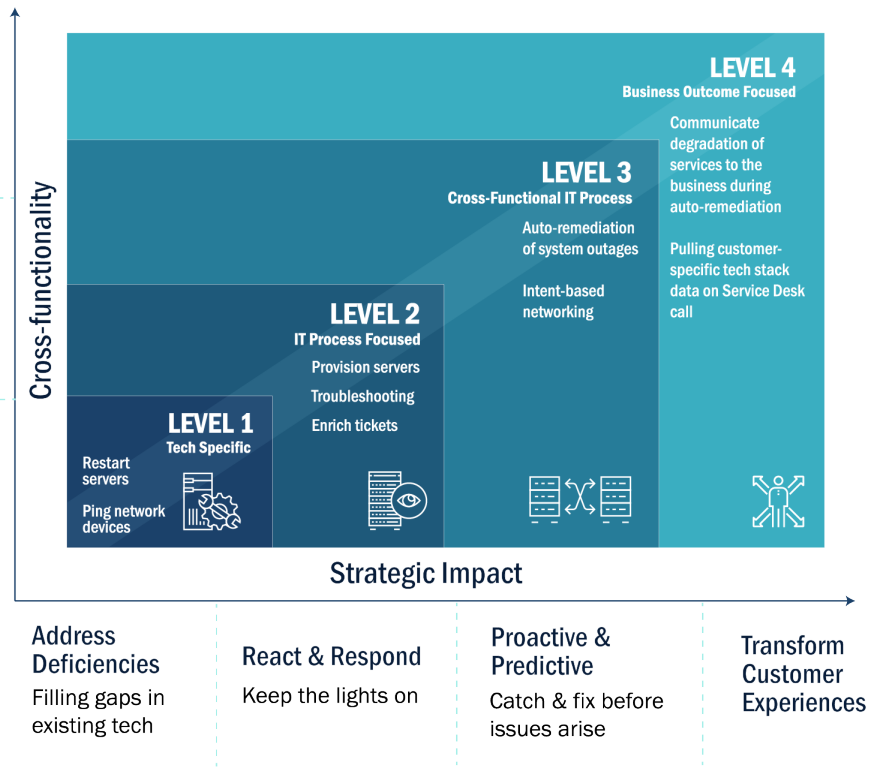
High solution orchestration across department

Cross-cutting

Cross-department or cross-solution

Siloed

Single-department or single-solution



The framework was developed to construct an industry-specific route toward digital transformation. The intention of this framework has four main levers:

- 1** Categorizing financial services-specific IT automation use cases to uncover opportunities
- 2** Providing a structure that IT teams can use to analyze and consider automation initiatives across all stakeholder touchpoints.
- 3** Delivering insights into the context and challenges that each level of automation faces.
- 4** Establishing a meaningful way to continuously evaluate automation ROI in the context of the business.

Establishing Automation Focus Areas

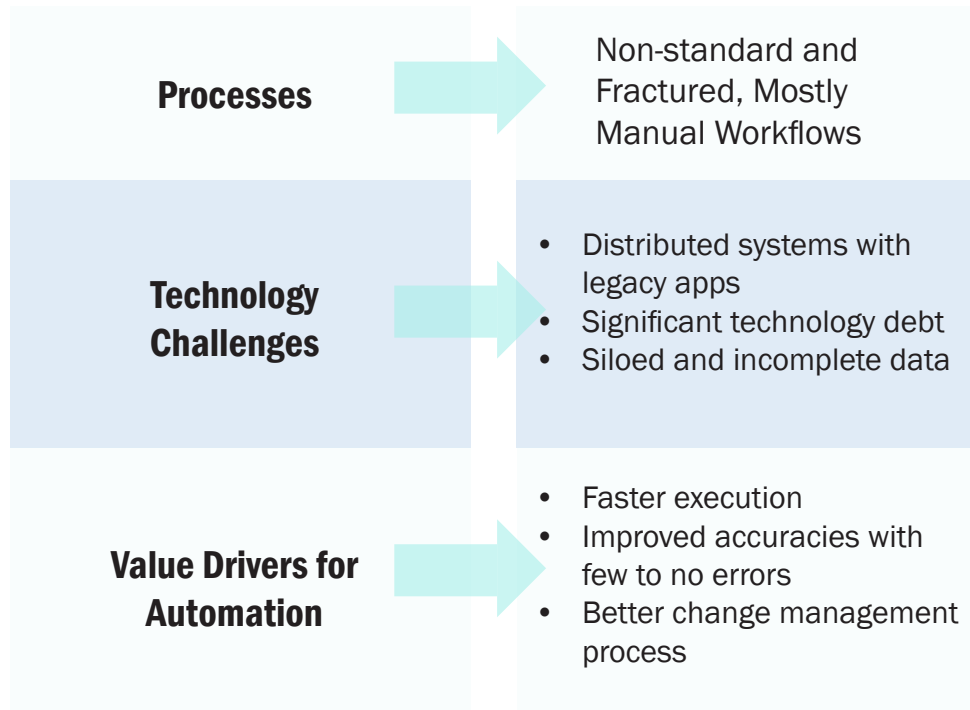
The framework divides automation use cases into four distinct focus areas, which look at each use case through the lens of increased efficiency, efficacy, and agility based on key business outcomes such as the contribution an IT automation initiative can have on revenue growth, service assurance and service delivery, or risk management.

By using the framework to analyze your operations at a granular level, organizations can more effectively identify those processes most likely to benefit from automation. In the following pages, we'll cover each automation focus area and how they allow IT in financial services firms to achieve specific business goals.

Level 1: Technology-specific Automations

In the first category, in the bottom left of the framework, the approach to automation targets routine, repetitive, and low-risk tasks. Exploiting domain-specific automation capabilities such as scripting or vendor-specific automations, in addition to leveraging the inherent workflow capabilities of automation platforms, allows IT to achieve swift task automation within the corresponding domains. These narrowly focused IT automations yield the greatest benefits when they substitute a task that an IT or a network administrator is required to perform frequently. By automating these fundamental tasks, you can realize substantial cost savings, enhance accuracy and speed of IT delivery, boost employee productivity, and improve the overall customer experience.

Starting at this level in the framework shouldn't be confused with a low level of automation maturity. Automating routine, repetitive tasks often provides the fastest ROI while acting as building blocks for more complicated workflows. If organizations already have existing homegrown scripts and automations built using open-source configuration management tools, this approach is often the most effective way to start using and maximizing an automation platform.



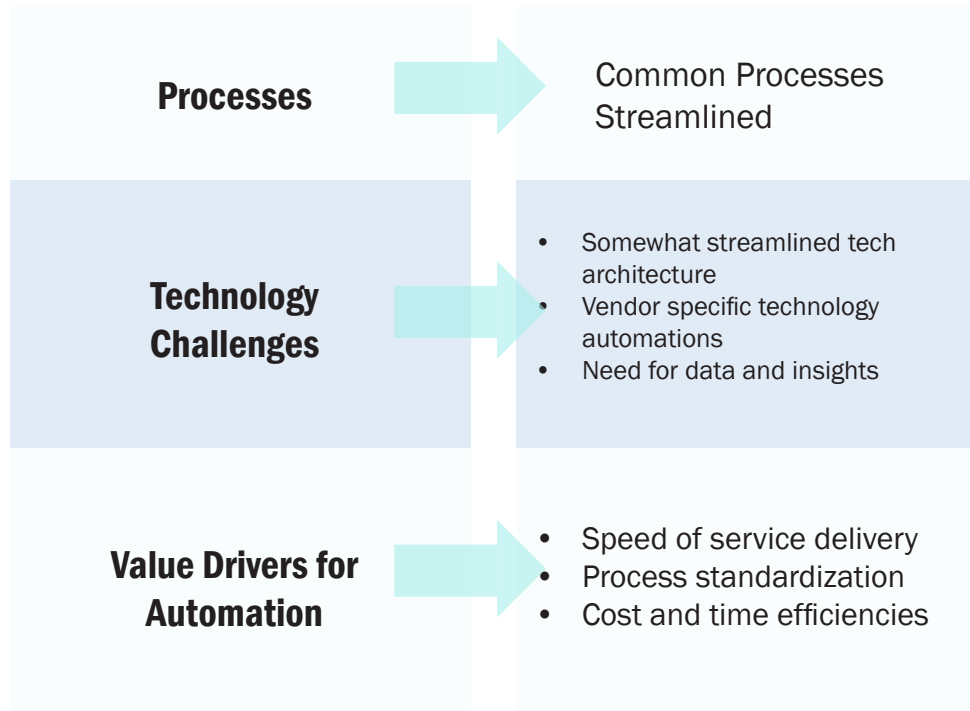
At this stage in the framework, individual segments of an IT process are typically automated to accomplish a highly specific tactical task. For example, Microsoft Windows PowerShell can assemble cmdlets, variables, and other components into a script, which mirrors the sequence of commands and steps an administrator would issue one-by-one via the command-line interface (CLI) to provision a virtual machine (VM) or establish a backup process.

Level 2: IT Process Specific

The second category in the framework focuses on automating IT processes, wherein the approach to automation builds on tactical automations or scripts that already exist to create a cohesive workflow. Exploiting capabilities such as event-driven automation can bring significant efficiencies into processes, as the automation will kick off as soon as the event occurs; rather than waiting for a human to address the problem. Process automation adds consistency and standardization to processes that touch multiple systems while working significantly faster than humans can.

Single IT process automation covers numerous technologies but remains confined to a specific IT function. Automation for processes that are recognized for keeping the lights on adds a layer of strategic impact versus that of single tasks.

Automation for single IT Processes include server provisioning, troubleshooting, and ticket enrichment.



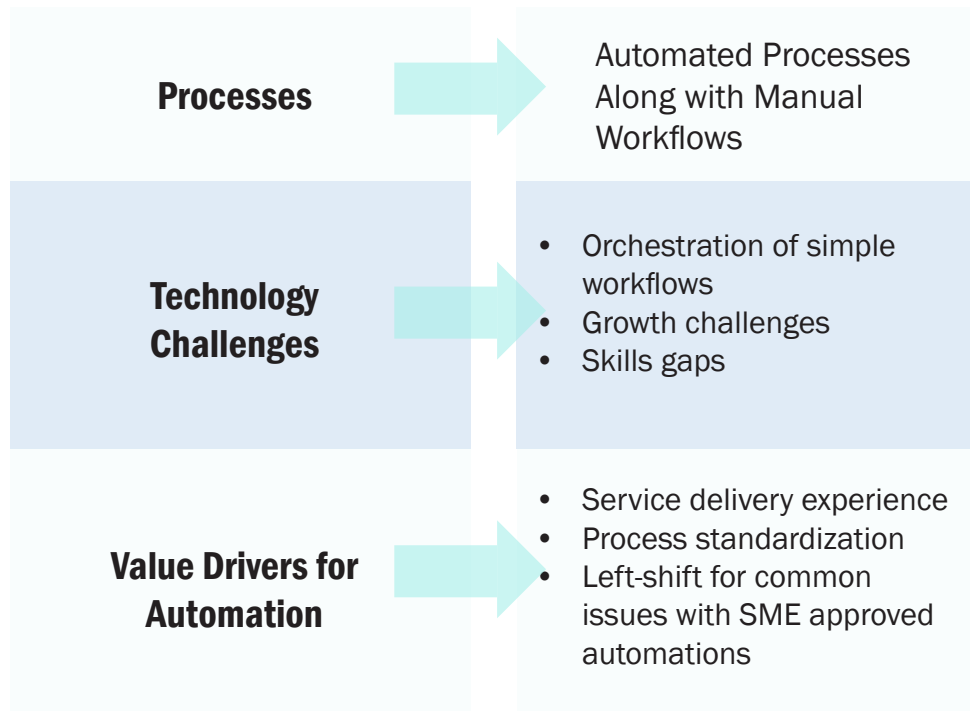
At this stage, IT teams that start to embrace the benefits of automation are willing to dedicate resources to advance it. For example, many IT teams leverage automation to deliver operational efficiency as they manage the complexity of banking applications. By leveraging IT process automation for incident, event, and diagnostics management, infrastructure and application support engineers can then divert their focus toward more customer-centric processes.

Level 3: Cross-functional IT Processes

ITPA, when applied to cross-department IT functions, has the potential to impact more than one silo in one fell swoop because of its proactive ability. Automation is at the core of efficient banking operations. It can help IT teams overcome technical debt in the form of existing monolithic architectures and siloed legacy systems. Leveraging automation to enhance services, optimize operations, and scale the customer experience will enable you to reduce operational costs and energy consumption, all while sustainably increasing customer satisfaction.

The framework's third category focuses on automating cross-functional IT processes. Financial services enterprises extend their automation efforts across teams or technological silos to coordinate between applications and complex IT systems. These automation workflows typically involve collaboration across otherwise siloed teams.

ITPA can detect and resolve issues before they occur, as well as enable organizations to map out the full technology process to ensure its efficacy for supporting business outcomes. Automation for cross-functional IT processes includes auto-remediated system outages, web application outages, and managing IT security and compliance.



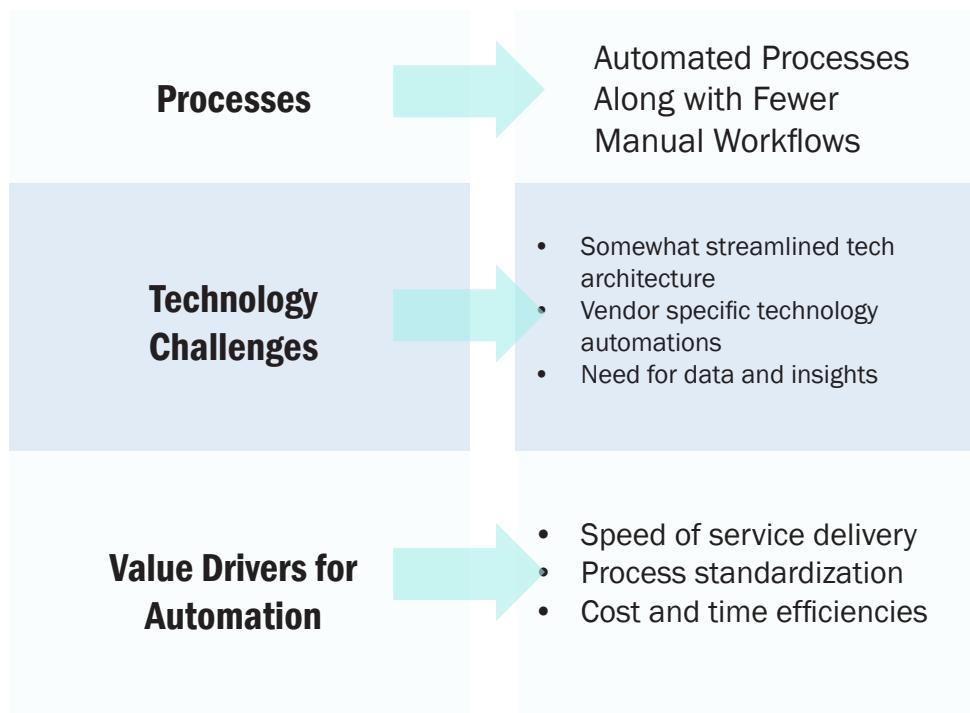
Automation at the cross-functional IT process stage spans team silos and service incidents. One common example is employee onboarding, which can necessitate account provisioning across several distinct applications. Other common automations include service request fulfillment, hardware and software management and monitoring, new technology implementation, compliance and security monitoring, and maintenance.

Level 4: Business Outcomes

In this last category of customer-focused automation, IT focuses on the mission-critical processes that touch the customer experience. By concentrating on customer experience, IT can leverage automation to respond more effectively to customer requirements, build customer loyalty, and create a stronger value perception in the minds of customers. In doing so, these customer experience improvements can generate sustainable competitive differentiation, improve long-term profitability, reduce operational costs, and increase agility.

These types of automations impact both the customer experience and the bottom line. As an example, imagine that a fiber optic cable gets inadvertently cut, interrupting critical services in the process. Finding the incident, filing a ticket, and routing it to the right team with the relevant diagnostics information can make all the difference between a momentary blip and a disruptive outage. Digitized and automated field workflows give your dispatch staff the map-based data needed to identify which field crew is closest to the site, while ensuring they have the requisite skills and equipment to do the job. With full visibility into the situation, you can make optimal scheduling decisions to ensure the best customer service.

Leaders tap into the full potential of ITPA and start to customize automations so that they cater to their unique, specific use cases. The more automations build onto each other, the greater impact they gain, and can powerfully differentiate a business in a highly competitive market.



Automation for business outcomes includes solving customer problems completely in the background, preventing credit card fraud, and improving configuration processes.

A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Self-service Transformation

For one leading global bank, which operates in more than 50 countries with \$2.3 trillion in revenue, improving productivity and reducing costs was proving to be a problematic feat.

The bank needed a self-service solution for its global service desk organization to accelerate incident resolution from request submission to self-remediation, as well as a way to address critical gaps in knowledge management tools among those already in place within the ITSM.

Faced with complex challenges, the firm of over 200,000 employees partnered with Resolve for an automation solution that offered flexibility and scalability, and the ability to cover multiple functional boundaries within the organization.

- ✓ Kicked off an automation pilot project in the command center with a technology that would support additional automation projects in the coming years to minimize the use and reuse of existing technologies.
- ✓ Automated the work of 10 operations employees and used the solution's built-in ROI calculator and baselining techniques to tie an automated process back to its manual equivalent.
- ✓ Utilized automation to handle 20 of the most frequently occurring alerts, which accelerated responsiveness and lowered costs.
- ✓ Expanded the pilot project into coming years to manage a broader range of "sense and response" scenarios within the enterprise command center.

Solution

The global bank rolled Resolve Actions out to 17,000 users. The solution helped the bank work toward solving its efficacy and efficiency goals by:

- Delivering synchronous automation triggered by incidents and end-user interaction.
- Providing guided workflow and decision automation capabilities.
- Offering an intuitive, robust means to maintain knowledge and keep information fresh and actionable.

60%

Reduction In
ticket volume

Cost savings per year

\$1 M

Conclusion

Digital transformation is a must for financial services organizations. Customer demands are driving the adoption of new technologies as organizations look to meet trends in core digitization efforts, automation and orchestration, the rise of digital currencies, customer-centric transformation initiatives, and a focus on security.

IT teams are relying more heavily on ITPA to manage complexity across distributed systems and long running IT processes with multiple decision points.

Financial services organizations must have a thoroughly thought-out plan to construct a sustainable automation pipeline and benefit from long-term results. The Resolve Automation Capabilities Framework guides organizations through the first steps of implementation and builds onto automations as IT teams become ready to progress. This four-level approach empowers financial services institutions to get proactive as they make automation a bigger part of their organizations, with all eyes on growth, meeting goals, and preparing for the future.

References

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2. [Five ways to commit to customer centricity in banking transformation](#), Ernst & Young
3. [Designing disruptive IT for Financial Services: A CIO's guide to building a bank that thrives on change](#). IBM





About Resolve

Resolve's purpose-built IT process automation (ITPA) and orchestration platform addresses every unique challenge across IT Operations, Network Operations, ITSM and Cloud teams, with automated workflows that allow IT teams to respond faster, reduce the impact of incidents, and consistently maintain and deliver on service-level agreements (SLAs).

As a true end-to-end automation platform, Resolve frees up IT teams from time-consuming and error-prone manual work and empowers them to drive business innovation. From simple IT tasks to large scale service orchestration, IT process automation is the backbone for business growth.

Ready to complete your automation journey?

[Request a Demo ▶](#)