

# It's Time To Automate: Why and How

The business disruptions caused by the global pandemic have highlighted the need for businesses to dramatically improve their ability to withstand any interruption and guarantee business continuity. And that means adopting automation throughout the enterprise right now. Inside, we explore why it's so critical and how to find the right automation projects for maximum impact.



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# Why it's time to automate: Lessons from the pandemic

Since the initial outset of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the world has been adapting to living with the virus on a day-to-day-basis. The ways we interact with each other—and the ways that we conduct day-to-day business—have been completely transformed in the blink of an eye.

**Most of the world's businesses simply were not prepared for a disruption of this scale.**

Companies find themselves strapped for resources to meet changing demands. Their long-term strategic initiatives have been derailed. In many cases, their operations were completely shut down when the virus hit. As one customer told us, any process that required paper just completely paused for weeks. Weeks.

Leaders need to ensure that they're never caught this unprepared again. They must harden their processes to withstand any interruption and guarantee business continuity.

At the same time, they need to take steps to build flexibility into their operations that will allow them to react to the changing environment around them, now and in the future.

Automation can help leaders accomplish both these goals. So, **leaders need to convince**

**both the C-suite and employees to embrace automation** as an enabler that will help them not only get through the challenges of today but also to thrive when the economy recovers.

How do leaders pull this off?

Over the last four months, we have spoken to dozens of customers about the challenges they are facing and have tracked the general sentiment of the world's most influential publications and thought leaders.

**One theme has emerged clearly: it's time to automate.**

We're no longer just responding to a crisis. **We are entering an accelerated pace of digital transformation.** Enterprises must now glean and apply the lessons from the early days of the pandemic to prepare for the next normal.

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In this world, some things will snap back to previous form, while others will be forever changed. Playing it safe now, understandable as it might feel to do so, is often the worst option.

— McKinsey Digital, Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis

From McKinsey & Company to Harvard Business Review to Deloitte to Forrester Research and others, reports show automation as the key to short-term survival and long-term success in the new future of work. These experts point to the pandemic as a key factor in **accelerated digital transformation, with automation as the technology at the center of it all.**

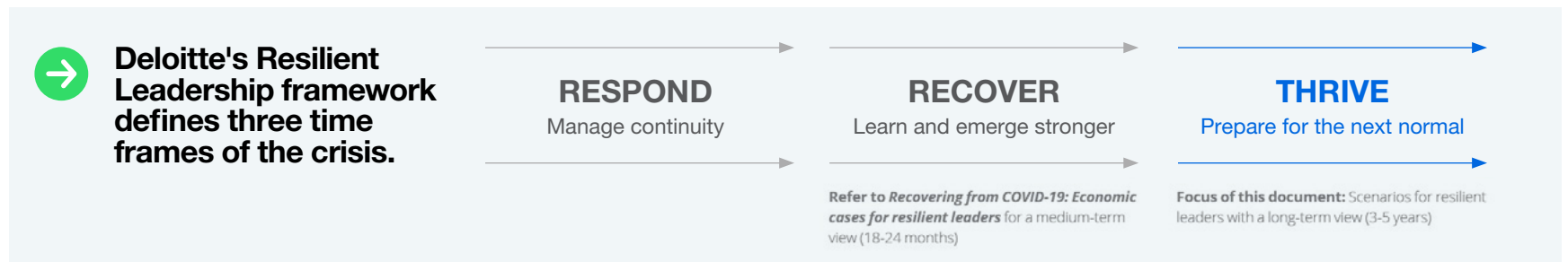
Report after report confirms that automating today ensures the business continuity and adaptiveness needed not just to survive, but to thrive in the new reality.

**The good news: companies won't need to reinvest in their underlying technology stack.**

Their core enterprise applications remain vital systems of record. Automation technologies can augment these legacy systems to bring the adaptiveness and resiliency companies seek.

Automation bridges the gaps of an existing application architecture to enable lines of business owners, as well as IT, to design new workflows in hours rather than months.

And a hyperautomation platform—with Robotic Process Automation (RPA) at the center, flanked by artificial intelligence (AI), process discovery, citizen development programs and analytics capabilities, brings together key technologies and capabilities into one place.



## From the experts: Use this opportunity to accelerate automation adoption

We've been keeping a close watch on what industry thought leaders have been saying over the last several months about the impact of the pandemic on business and technology.

Three main observations have surfaced from industry experts and reports:

- **Agility and adaptability** are essential for crisis response and planning.
- **Business resiliency and continuity** were undervalued and are now in prime focus to ensure survival in changing markets.
- **Leadership must embrace automation** and show employees its potential in order to increase adoption.

Let's dig into what experts have to say concerning these three themes.

# Agility and adaptability: Essential for crisis response, planning

Insights from McKinsey & Company, DMEXCO

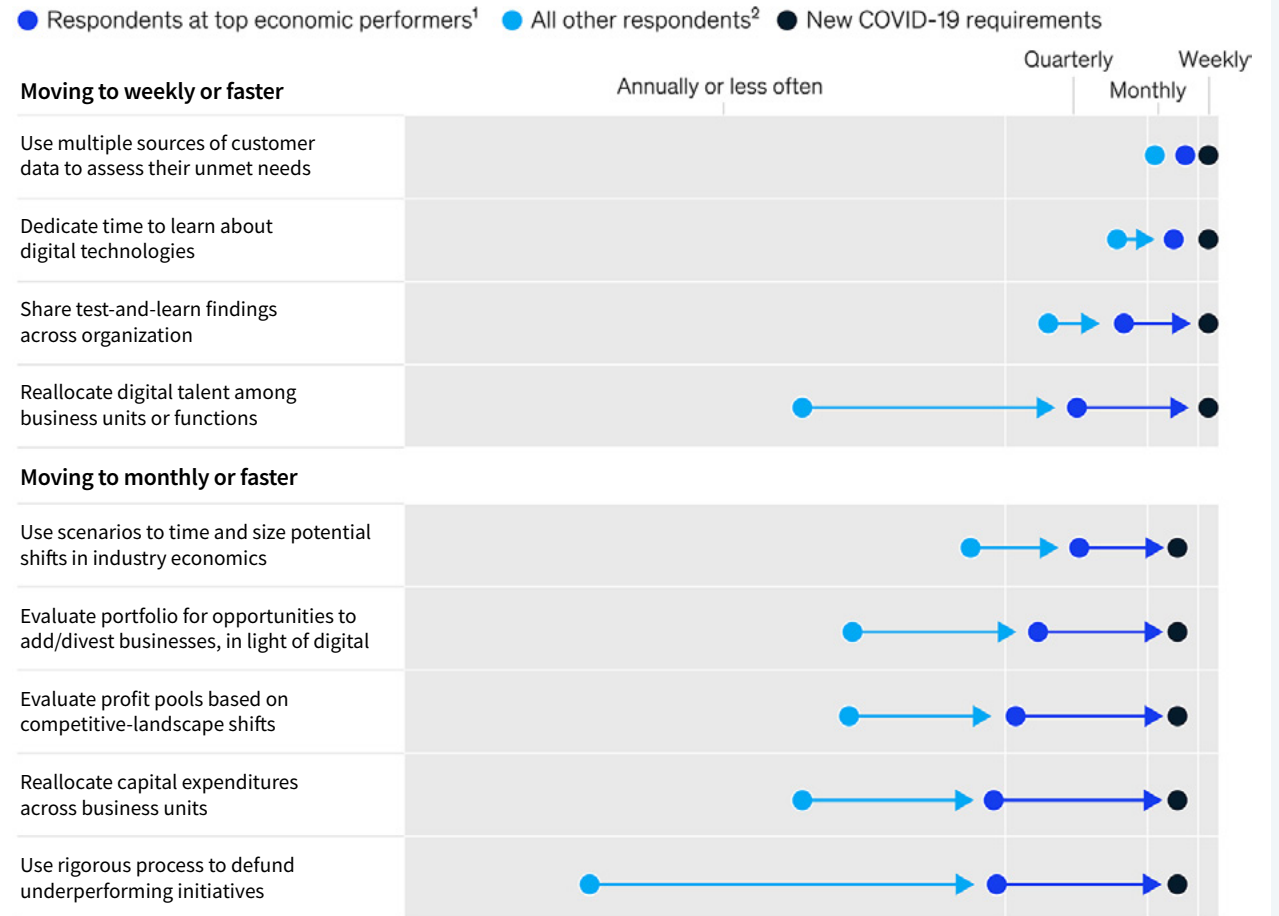
## → The new pace driven by COVID-19

Median values of responses<sup>3</sup>

To quote a [recent article](#) from the global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company: "In a world of extreme uncertainty, a rigid, deterministic plan won't be right for very long."

The luxury of time has disappeared, and with it, predictability. In response, experts say that **companies must significantly improve their agility and adaptability so they can act faster.**

This is not just theory—it's being put into practice as well. The chart on the right reports on a McKinsey survey of ~1,300 business leaders on how much faster they are now taking actions in virtually all aspects of their businesses. (And note how much faster the top economic performers move versus all others. **Speed matters.**)



<sup>1</sup>Respondents who say their organizations have a top-decile rate of organic revenue growth (ie, of 25% or more in past 3 years), relative to other respondents; n = 138.  
<sup>2</sup>n = 1,304.

<sup>3</sup>Frequencies shown are the median values from a histogram, which was constructed by assigning "weekly" responses a value of 1, "monthly" responses 2, "quarterly" responses 3, "annually" responses 4, "every few years" 5, and "never" 6. The question also asked about the frequency of evaluating M&A opportunities as part of strategy-setting discussions. These responses are not shown, because M&A typically requires a longer time frame than the other 10 operational practices tested, often due to regulatory reasons.

McKinsey & Company: Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis

McKinsey & Company



## Why automation spurs agility and adaptability

In his recent [article for the San Antonio Business Journal](#), CEO Coach and Vistage Master Chair [Tom Cuthbert](#) believes the pandemic is ushering in a tipping point that he calls the “explore and test” stage of recovery, followed by strategy planning, capturing of new business, and sustaining growth.

He writes: “Smart companies will rework their sales playbooks, rebuild business plans and reinvent marketing strategies.”

And whether they’re looking to rethink sales and marketing or to capture greater operational flexibility and cost efficiencies, companies are turning to digital solutions to help them. According to [trend analysis](#) by DMEXCO, the community for key players in digital business, marketing, and innovation, **two-thirds of companies globally say the pandemic is accelerating their digital transformation.**

And automation has a big role to play in this overall digital transformation. McKinsey & Company sees automation technology as key to providing the flexibility and scalability to meet business needs as companies move from playing defense into recovering.

In other words, McKinsey says, **companies must think about moving forward on their automation strategies in weeks, not months or years.**

Business leaders need to develop multiple long-term strategies centered on automation tools and prepare for a variety of possible crises, with automation at the core of each response.

At UiPath, we’ve seen this shift gather momentum in nearly every industry. Companies have found that **hyperautomation, which combines RPA with AI, process mining, analytics, and other advanced tools, can provide the scalability, flexibility, and speed** that make each company, department, and team crisis-proof.

### Some examples:

- Hyperautomation tools have been particularly useful for call centers, **many of which have implemented AI** to handle basic support requests so humans can focus on fostering better connections with customers.
- In the travel industry, AI, RPA, and other automation tools have **made it easier for agencies to handle cancellations and changes.**
- In health care, customer service automation has improved providers’ **ability to keep up with high call volumes.**
- Outside of customer service use cases, automation has helped manufacturers shift to remote operations by supporting **employee access from mobile devices and home laptops.**

Faced with unanticipated spikes in demand—and new types of demands—these companies have found that automation is key to their response.

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If a silver lining can be found, it might be in the falling barriers to improvisation and experimentation that have emerged among customers, markets, regulators, and organizations. In this unique moment, companies can learn and progress more quickly than ever before.

— McKinsey Digital, Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis



# Business resiliency and continuity were undervalued, but are now prime focus

Insights from The Hill and others

Reports from Forrester Research, as well as research from news outlets such as The Hill, indicate that **companies must foster business resiliency through new technologies such as AI and RPA to avoid losing ground in future crises.**

Agile technologies will prove essential in making companies adaptable and fast enough to stay afloat during “gray swan” events—events that are high impact but infrequent—such as pandemics and recessions.

By investing in automation technologies in the wake of COVID-19, business leaders ensure that their core operations are supported even if employees are unable to work at full capacity. They foster greater business resiliency by lowering dependence on manual processes and paperwork.

As [The Hill reports](#), COVID-19 will continue to trigger economic distress, and successful companies will look to AI to reduce labor dependencies in production pipelines, heightening their adoption of automation-centered crisis response strategies.

**Such planning will lessen vulnerabilities to future pandemics and human-centered crises** by ensuring that core operations can continue even if human labor is disrupted by quarantines or other discontinuities.

A report by [Forrester, COVID-19 Crisis Will Accelerate Enterprise Automation Plans](#), explores how automation can provide a reliable backup to operations when onshore and outsourced labor forces can't support them.

New automation capabilities will standardize processes and fuel digital transformation to drive business resiliency and continuity in future uncertainty.





# Leadership must embrace automation— and show employees its potential

Insights from McKinsey & Company, Harvard Business Review, Aruba, and more

In the sage words of *Managing in Turbulent Times* author Peter F. Drucker: “The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself, but to act with yesterday’s logic.”

The [Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis](#) article from McKinsey Digital warns that companies that hold on too hard to the legacy systems that sustained them in the past will struggle to keep up with the rate of change necessary to manage through the disruption around them. Simply put, the old way of doing work won’t work—and the future of business promises a better way. **Leaders must seize the promise of the future.**

And it’s already happening. In the C-suite, chief financial officers (CFOs) and chief information officers (CIOs)

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The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself, but to act with yesterday’s logic.

— Peter F. Drucker, Author  
*Managing in Turbulent Times*

are pushing for change because of cost pressures from the pandemic. They are seeking to build new capacities to carry the company forward with strained resources, while staying competitive in the market.

**But leaders also must focus on the right digital transformation levers and technologies. And that’s where automation comes in.**

Because of automation’s ability to drive cost and efficiency gains at scale, Forrester states in *The COVID-19 Crisis Will Accelerate Enterprise Automation Plans* report that automation is a key strategic initiative during this crisis and future ones, and therefore should be prioritized in board-level discussions.

**But by itself, leadership buy-in to automation is not enough.** To fully capitalize on automation’s benefits, companies must also bring their employees along. Indeed, research reveals that the most effective strategic digital transformation projects are driven from the top—but also have a big “bottom-up” component that ensures that

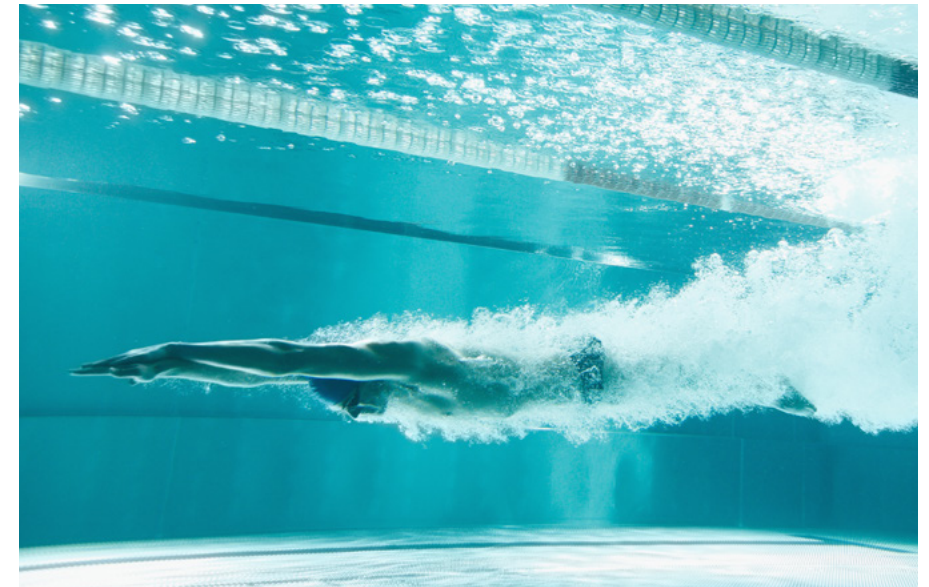
the workforce enthusiastically adopts the new ways.

The good news is that many employees will welcome automation. Even before COVID hit, there was significant employee interest in automation. According to [The Right Technologies Unlock the Potential of the Digital Workplace](#) report by Aruba, before the pandemic made remote activities more common, 71% of employees wanted the future of work to be fully automated.

**Automation at scale is now easier to achieve—and more vital to success—than ever before.** In the past, digital transformation hit roadblocks because it was done in silos between departments.

Now, with top-down boardroom initiatives, combined with bottom-up citizen developer programs, automation at scale—which, more and more, is critical to enterprise survival—becomes possible.

**In the next section, we discuss how you can make the most of this opportunity.**



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With jobs at the heart of how work gets done, leaders have an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine them by rearranging work and having employees take on different responsibilities to better respond to the evolving needs of their organizations, customers, and employees.

— Harvard Business Review, *How the Coronavirus Crisis Is Redefining Jobs*

# What to automate: How to figure it out

Recent advancements in hyperautomation technologies have vastly expanded what's possible to automate. What's more, every use case seems to be as unique as the companies that leverage them. So it's not surprising that many companies don't know where to start when choosing automation projects.

Of course, there's no one-size-fits-all answer—but we're seeing an emerging framework that successful companies are leveraging to determine what processes to automate.

We'd like to share it with you.



## The fundamental components of this framework:



Finding and prioritizing high-value automation opportunities via centralized governance



Democratizing the generation of automation ideas by encouraging the workforce to suggest and build automations themselves



Creating a hybrid model that combines these top-down and bottom-up approaches

On the next several pages we explore these components. But first, we want to introduce you to a very important concept—something we hope you'll be aiming to put in motion—the “automation flywheel.”





# The automation flywheel: Releasing the best automation ideas

When you follow a hybrid approach that combines centralization with democratization of automation development, you can unlock an automation flywheel. And when that flywheel starts turning, you'll never have to worry about what you should automate—it will become very clear.

## Here's how it works

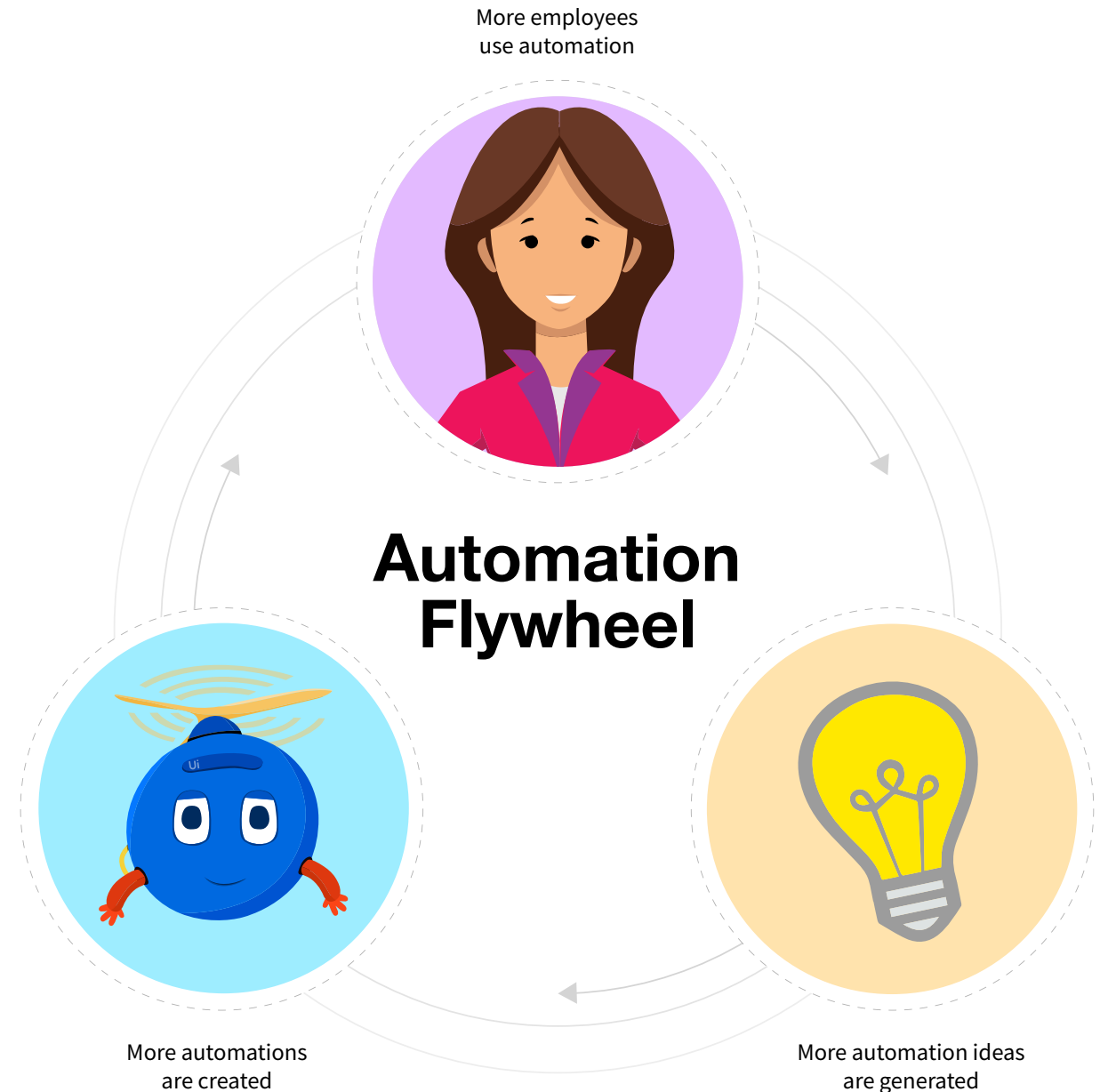
It all starts with the automation **Center of Excellence** (CoE), which initially builds and distributes automations that employees use and benefit from.

Once employees get used to working with automation and see what it can do, they start to have ideas for more **software robots**. If they are technically savvy, human workers can

start building those automations themselves. Or they can simply suggest ideas to the CoE, which will evaluate and prioritize them.

Now the flywheel is starting to move. And when it gets going, uncovering what to automate becomes a natural offshoot of all that released energy.

If your evaluation framework is good, your use cases will quickly become apparent. AI suggests what to automate based on data, while your people tell you what work needs to be automated based on their everyday work life.



# Find and prioritize high-value automation opportunities via centralized governance

By empowering your CoE to create and carry out a top-down automation strategy, you allow this central governance body to figure out which processes will drive the biggest value for the company when automated.

## Where to get ideas?

The short answer is: from business experts AND through science. First, make sure that the CoE includes champions from each department and team—who each have their own soft and hard incentives—to advocate for different business interests within your company.

Advocates from your lines of business

and finance will certainly be able to point to processes that have significant scale and/or cause the most pain for people in their day-to-day work.

In addition to input from human champions, make sure your CoE has new advanced scientific discovery tools—such as [UiPath Process Mining](#)—to find automation opportunities across the enterprise. Guided by your overall automation strategy, these tools will uncover large, high-value opportunities that you might otherwise miss.

## Now prioritize the list

Once you have a robust list, your CoE can prioritize projects based on their

potential return on investment (ROI) and efficiency savings with [UiPath Automation Hub](#). This cutting-edge tool lets the CoE manage the entire automation lifecycle with [data-driven process prioritization](#), ROI visualization, and a central production command center.

## Monitor, measure, improve

After automations are built and rolled out, your CoE can monitor robot usage and performance with a central licensing model through [UiPath Insights](#) to track, measure, and model performance across your entire automation program.

Top-down automation strategy and management, plus a suite of powerful discovery tools like the ones in the [UiPath 2020 FTS](#) release, create a groundbreaking combination. Together, they support the process automation needs of your company and employees to ensure the smooth adoption of automation today and success tomorrow.

Next, you need to move from top down to bottom up, democratizing the process...

## Democratize the generation of automation ideas from your workforce

No matter how powerful a top-down strategy might be, it can only get you so far without involving your people. Each person does their work in a unique manner. This means that the opportunities for automation can be as specific as the needs of each employee in your organization.

### Individual ideas lead to huge collective productivity gains

On a single-employee level it may not seem like a big deal, but when you add up the productivity that can be gained, it is staggering.

Imagine if every employee at your company finds a way to use automation to save one hour of work per day. That adds up to about 250 hours a year—approximately six full 40-hour work weeks. In other words, you'll achieve greater ROI than would have ever been possible with a top-down approach alone.

### How to get the gains

This isn't a pleasant daydream. It's achievable, as numerous [customer success stories](#) demonstrate. But it can only happen if you get every employee on board and give them the tools to build and submit their own automation ideas.

First, every person should have their own [robot assistant](#) that can load automations provided by the CoE.

Second, you need to give technically savvy [citizen developers](#) the tools, such as [UiPath StudioX](#), that enable them to build their own automations.

The results can be transformative. For example, after [Singtel](#) partnered with UiPath to run a bot-a-thon, their employee automation adoption skyrocketed.



A Singtel employee was able to create a robot named Valbot that turned a 285-click, 4.5-hour process into a one-click, 12-minute workflow (that's 4.3 hours saved every time the process runs). All thanks to employee empowerment with the right automation tools.



## Leverage employee enthusiasm to drive innovation and automation adoption at scale

When you empower employees to submit and build their own automation ideas, you make it easier than ever for people to drive their own productivity gains. As a result, you set the stage for **'a robot for every person,'** which is key to achieving automation at scale.

### Employees are enthusiastic about automation

And your secret weapon? The majority of your employees really want automation to happen.

According to one of our recent surveys, **68% of workers** believe automation can improve their productivity and save time in their day-to-day work.

This enthusiasm and openness to new technologies can be leveraged to help employees learn new skills that support automation and innovation throughout the company, according

to the Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis article by McKinsey Digital.

So it's not surprising that leading companies are riding this wave of employee interest in automation by combining top-down corporate strategy and enterprise-wide initiatives with bottom-up, employee-led programs.

### Harnessing employee enthusiasm delivers results

The ability to put automation power in the hands of employees and enable them to create their own automations with UiPath StudioX helped **Dentsu leverage the most valuable skill sets** of their workforce.

The bottom line: when you empower your people with automation tools within a hybrid governance framework, you lay the groundwork for innovation at scale like never before.

Want more inspiration from organizations around the world empowering employees with automation? Check out our [library of UiPath customer stories](#) (you can filter by industry, geography, and more).



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You want your employees to be digital and be part of the change... This whole initiative is not an investment in robots; it's an investment in people.

— Chiron Lum, Associate Director of Group Digital Office, Singtel, UiPath Live: The Release Show

# Determine what to automate by combining top-down and bottom-up approaches

## Top down, or bottom up? Yes.

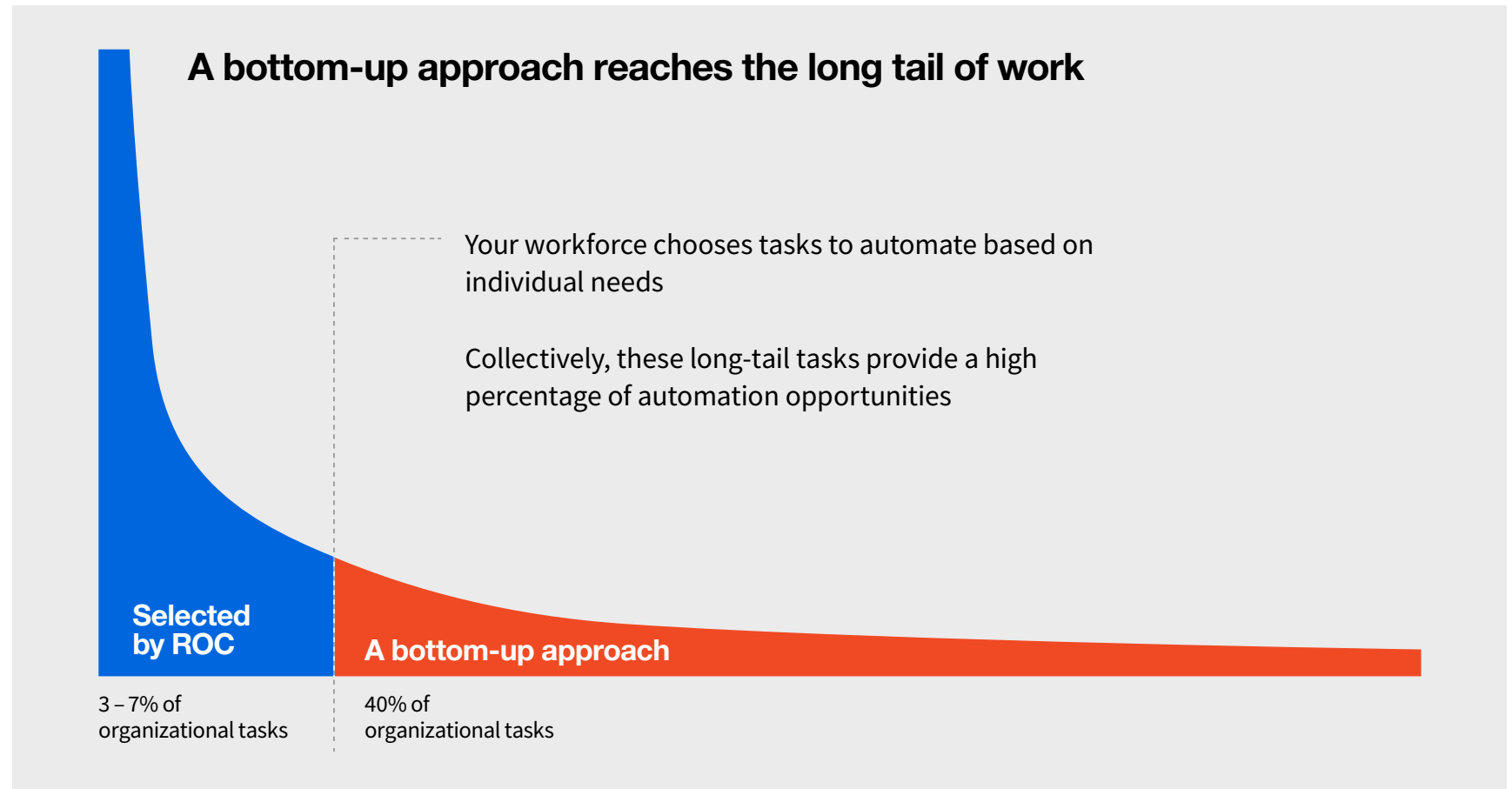
When you implement both a top-down and bottom-up approach to determining what to automate you'll create a feedback loop that amplifies the use cases and benefits of automation and drives adoption forward quickly.

So, we strongly recommend you pursue both paths in order to make which processes to automate surface organically in your organization.

## Capture the 'long tail' from the bottom up

One major benefit: combining both top-down and bottom-up approaches increases the scope of automation reaching the long tail of work, as illustrated here.

Again, individually the added value might be small. But altogether, the 'long tail' represents most of the automation opportunities—and a big portion of the overall potential value of automation.



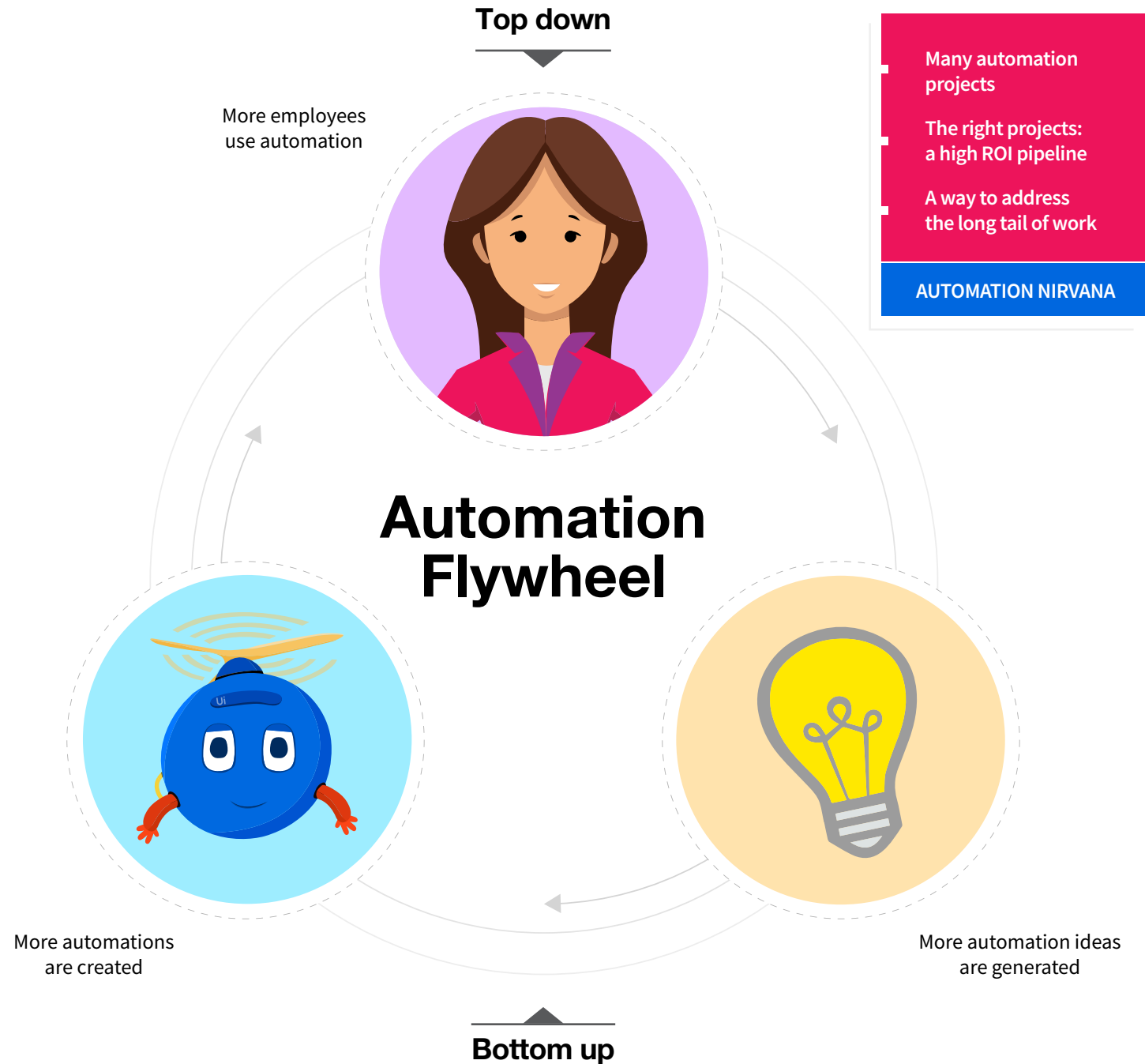
## Get the flywheel moving

Think back to the automation flywheel we discussed in the beginning of this section. In the same way that top-down prioritization of automation opportunities creates more and more automation ideas as time goes on, bottom-up employee ideation uncovers unseen opportunities.

As the flywheel starts spinning from the top down, it picks up new ideas and opportunities from the bottom up.

And then, you no longer need to wonder about what to automate. The process automation ideas and opportunities will be organically provided to you from all directions, whether it's through AI, business leaders, or your employees themselves.

Determining what processes to automate becomes less a question of finding opportunities, and more about prioritizing and selecting the best ideas.





# The future of business is here, and it's time to automate

COVID-19 and the economic crisis may have been a rude awakening—but anyhow, now we're all awake. We all have to build more flexibility, adaptability, and resilience into the ways we do business.

**And automation is key to making it happen.**

By adopting automation technology now, you can not only address shorter term issues and problems. You'll also position yourself better for the recovery post-pandemic—and for future crises that will also, inevitably, come your way.

If you're thinking that you don't have the resources in house to drive automation at the level you need, know that the UiPath Platform built for hyperautomation and our network of expert partners can help. We're here to provide you with the tools you need to automate today and thrive tomorrow.



**Visit [uipath.com](https://uipath.com) to learn more.**

