

SAPinsider

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SAPinsider Benchmark Report

Integrating Process Automation and SAP S/4HANA

Pierce Owen

June 2020

Research Partner



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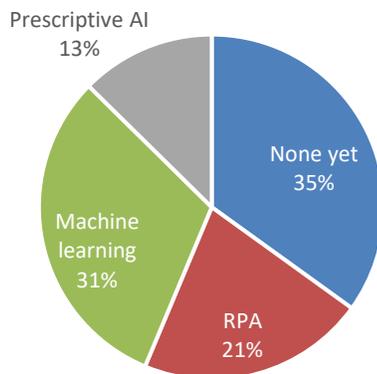
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Executive Summary

To ensure that customer and employee needs are fulfilled, members of the SAPinsider Community document and implement end-to-end processes such as source-to-pay, order-to-cash, and hire-to-retain using products like SAP S/4HANA and the tools within those products. When Community members have the right data feeding into well-documented processes and are producing positive results, they can potentially automate those processes to accelerate outcomes, improve data quality, and drive better business results.

In May and June of 2020, SAPinsider surveyed 204 members of our community to understand their current strategy for process automation as well as how they plan to meet their strategic needs and objectives through automation. We found that although 65% of the SAPinsider Community uses robotic process automation (RPA), machine learning, or prescriptive artificial intelligence (AI) for SAP-based processes within their organization (see **Figure 1**), only 30% felt that their current solutions effectively addressed their automation needs.

Figure 1. Most Advanced Forms of Automation Implemented Thus Far



Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

As a result of having not yet addressed all their automation needs, survey respondents plan to implement more business process management (BPM) solutions, such as workflow modeling and monitoring, analytics to measure automation performance, and RPA platforms.

SAPinsider PERSPECTIVE

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We started off by designing our initial RPA program over three days, but it ended up not much simpler than core system development due to all the errors that can happen. In a heavily customized ERP like ours, it becomes a heavy-duty piece of programming.

”

~ Enterprise Architect,
European Packaging Company

Ultimately, survey respondents want to use these solutions to empower employees with increased capacity to focus on higher-value activities and to take advantage of the opportunities to optimize processes as part of planned SAP S/4HANA migrations.

The survey results revealed several other trends for automation strategies in the SAPinsider Community:

- Among the survey respondents, 19% use SAP Intelligent RPA, and 42% use at least one of the SAP Intelligent BPM products.
- Meanwhile, 48% of respondents use RPA from a third-party vendor, and 76.5% use at least one non-SAP BPM or intelligent automation solution.
- Over one-third (36%) of respondents work for organizations that already run at least one instance of SAP S/4HANA.
- Finance emerged as the most popular function/project in which to apply automation (56%), followed by supply chain (43%) and SAP S/4HANA migration (39%).

Required Actions

Organizations using or planning to use RPA or BPM solutions must:

- **Evaluate the potential impact of automating data migration and testing for SAP S/4HANA.** Many respondents see SAP S/4HANA as an opportunity to standardize and optimize processes and implement automation. To do this, however, they must actually implement SAP S/4HANA and migrate data and operations from their legacy ERP. Some of the most popular applications of automation among survey respondents included SAP S/4HANA testing and data migration for SAP S/4HANA.
- **Do not try to use automation to fix bad processes.** In interviews, companies that tried to fix bad processes by automating them often found that these projects took more time than they saved because automating bad processes only gets bad results faster.
- **Standardize, document, and optimize processes before automating them.** Community members can and have

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When you look at the whole context of process automation, the automation does the same manual work but at a faster and continuous speed. A typical finance example is bank reconciliation. One might have 1,000 bank accounts and need to clear open items while also understanding additional bank charges. This can take an army of people a week to do. They have to download information from the bank and the ERP, create pivot tables, look up fees, and mark open items cleared. RPA can do this process faster.

”

~ Mitch Paull,

Partner - SAP Finance Leader,

Ernst & Young LLP

programmed RPA solutions to apply to customized processes, however more customization in the core ERP can often lead to more pitfalls and potential errors. Also, without well-documented processes, programming and maintaining the RPA can cost more time and money than it saves. RPA tends to run most smoothly on more standardized processes, which also work well with more pre-built bots and pre-defined content.

- **Implement automation solutions that can execute processes across multiple applications, both SAP and non-SAP.** No matter how standardized the processes, most organizations need to collect or re-enter some information into non-SAP systems. To automate processes end-to-end as much as possible, SAPinsider Community members will need automation solutions that can execute within SAP products as well as non-SAP products. Respondents chose integrating automation capabilities across both SAP and non-SAP applications as the most popular strategic action (58%).



PERSPECTIVE



Customers always have a heterogeneous landscape with SAP and non-SAP applications across end-to-end processes. There are integration points with external systems where we can retrieve data. SAP delivers different connectors to automate processes across Microsoft tools and non-SAP tools, but of course, we are strongest on the SAP side. SAP provides support for a holistic portfolio of products from SAP and pre-defined bot content for accelerated adoption.



~ Harshavardhan Bhat,
Senior Director of
Intelligent RPA,
SAP

Chapter One: Process Automation Overview

Most members of the SAPinsider Community want to either get more value out of their employees' time or support business growth through increased productivity. Additionally, a significant number of survey respondents either want to optimize processes as part of a planned SAP S/4HANA implementation or have already implemented SAP S/4HANA and want to get the most out of the new functionality. By optimizing and standardizing processes, SAPinsider Community members can more quickly implement and scale automation applications which can save employees time.

Best Practices Model - DART

SAPinsider grounds all its research insights in its proprietary DART model. This research model provides practical insights that connect business **Drivers** and **Actions** to supporting **Requirements** and **Technologies**. Drivers represent internal and external pressures that shape organizational direction. Organizations take Actions to address those Drivers. They need certain people, processes, and capabilities as Requirements for those strategies to succeed. Finally, they need enabling Technologies to fulfill their Requirements.

Respondents' answers to our survey and interview questions revealed clear trends, including that employees require increased capacity to focus on higher-value activities and how the move to SAP S/4HANA opens new opportunities to optimize processes. To support these business drivers, respondents integrate automation capabilities across functions and both SAP and non-SAP applications, re-engineer and standardize processes as part of their SAP S/4HANA migrations, and configure and execute bots to automate processes. To complete these actions, respondents need flexible automation solutions they can implement quickly, transparency into processes, consistent business rules, skilled IT professionals, and integrations between RPA solutions and both SAP and non-SAP applications. Respondents use or plan to use a wide range of BPM and automation tools to fulfill all the requirements.

These trends are summarized in **Table 1** and will be examined over the course of this report.

Table 1: DART model framework for process automation

Drivers	Actions	Requirements	Technologies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees require increased capacity to focus on higher-value activities (42%) The move to SAP S/4HANA opens new opportunities to optimize processes (34%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating automation capabilities across functions and both SAP and non-SAP applications (58%) Re-engineering or standardizing processes as part of an SAP S/4HANA migration (41%) Configuring and executing bots to automate processes (40%) Deploying business rules and logic (36%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility of automation solutions and ability to implement automated processes quickly (82%) Transparency into operational processes and bottlenecks (75%) Consistent business rules for mobile, cloud-based, and on-premise applications (64%) IT professionals with the skills to design, build, and debug bots or support for non-IT professionals to develop bots (56%) Native integrations between RPA solution(s) and both SAP and non-SAP applications (54%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow modeling and monitoring tools (93%) RPA platform (85%) Analytics to measure automation performance (85%) Business rule management tools (84%) Process oversight and visibility tools (83%) Task management tools (81.5%)

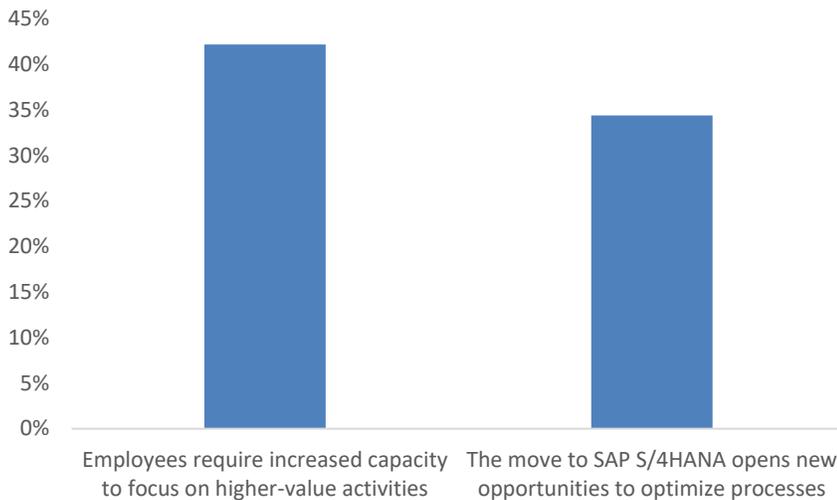
Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

What are the Business Drivers for Process Automation?

Drilling into the data, 43% of survey respondents indicated that employees' need for increased capacity to focus on higher value activities drove their approach to process automation, and 34% said that the move to SAP S/4HANA

opens new opportunities to optimize processes (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Top drivers for process automation



Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

Several survey respondents said that they managed or supported business groups that had increasing amounts of work but limited resources, especially in terms of headcount. To continue growing even faster, they needed to maximize the productivity of their employees for the repetitive and reporting-based tasks to give the employees more time to focus on higher-value activities. Automation can reduce the number of steps that people need to do within repetitive tasks, thereby giving them more time to focus on operational execution or building long-term strategies.

Of course, many SAPinsider Community members run highly customized and siloed ERP instances, which can make it difficult to implement and scale automation solutions. Enterprise architects can scale automation solutions across the entire organization more easily if every site, country, and ERP instance run the same standardized processes. Therefore, many respondents said they now see SAP S/4HANA as an opportunity to start fresh, optimize processes, and implement automation.



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Our accountants needed more time for real accounting activities. We had no resources available to hire more people. We were growing and had more invoices and our accountants had to focus on controls, closing, payments, and connections to vendors. For us, automation was driven by resource issues.

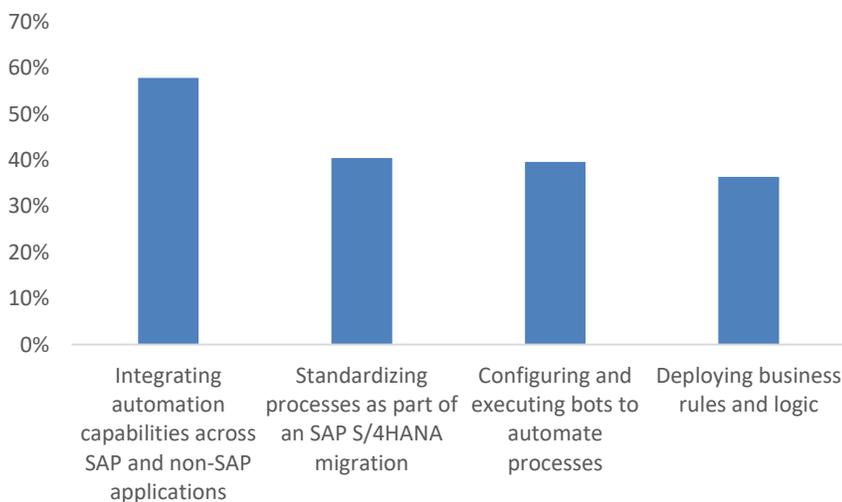
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~ Director of International IT and Organization,
European Luxury Goods Company

How Do SAP Customers Meet Their Business Drivers?

Most (58%) respondents reported integrating automation capabilities across functions and both SAP and non-SAP applications as one of their primary process automation strategies (as seen in **Figure 3**). Additionally, 40.5% of respondents said they focus on standardizing processes as part of an SAP S/4HANA migration. These strategies directly address both major drivers as employees often need to collect or enter information both in SAP and non-SAP systems, and these types of integrations struggle in highly customized instances of SAP ERP. Automation solutions must execute and integrate across all the systems that an organization uses to effectively save employees time. For many companies, however, the complexity of existing systems acts as a barrier. Moving to more standardized processes on SAP S/4HANA will present an opportunity to better integrate their automation capabilities.

Figure 3. Top strategies prioritized to address the top drivers of change



Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

Another 40% of respondents chose configuring and executing bots to automate processes and 36% selected deploying business rules and logic. These strategies support the drivers because with SAP S/4HANA, companies can deploy the same business rules and logic on mobile SAP Fiori apps as they have on their instances of SAP S/4HANA. They can then configure and execute bots based on these rules to retrieve information,



“

In our current system, we have a homegrown Access database from a legacy ERP implementation. Each factory has overlaid a local change management process that involves working in unique Excel templates from fifteen years ago. We process hundreds of customer changes per week, and our existing tool accommodates all that, but we keep one guy on retainer who knows how to fix it because our IT department disowns it. We need SAP S/4HANA integrated with the standard product information system to move faster.

”

~ Product Engineer, American Electronics Company

process accounts payable or receivable, clear invoices, and perform other tasks faster than any human so that their employees can spend time on higher-value operational or strategic tasks.

Key Takeaways

Based on our research with respect to drivers and strategies for process automation, the following takeaways are clear:

- **Use automation to empower employees with increased capacity for higher-value activities.** Every organization has limited resources – especially people – but to accelerate growth, companies need to minimize the time that employees spend on repetitive tasks so they can instead focus on operational execution or building long-term strategies.
- **Consider standardizing processes as part of the plan to migrate to SAP S/4HANA.** Moving to standardized processes makes it easier to integrate and scale automation solutions across the enterprise.
- **Integrate automation capabilities across both SAP and non-SAP applications.** Automation solutions must execute and integrate across all the systems that an organization uses to effectively save employees time.
- **Configure and execute bots that follow consistent business rules and logic.** Consistent business rules go hand in hand with standardized processes, and with SAP S/4HANA, organizations can deploy the same business rules and logic on mobile SAP Fiori apps as they have on their instances of SAP S/4HANA.

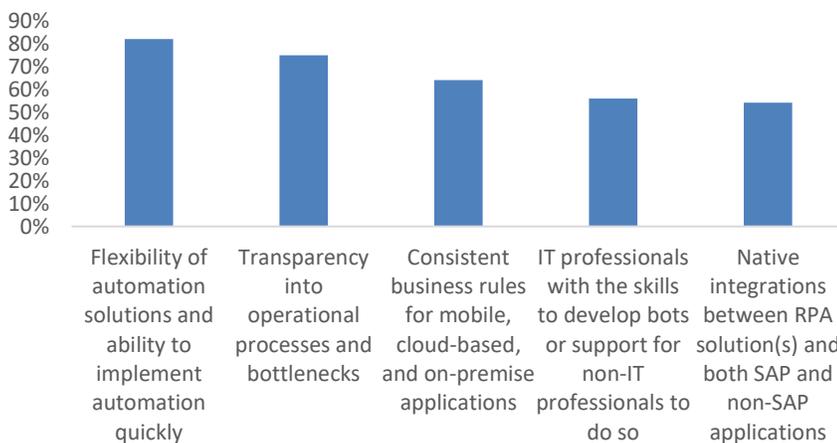
Chapter Two: How Do SAP Customers Approach Process Automation for SAP S/4HANA?

Automating end-to-end processes across separate applications requires several different capabilities to succeed, and a complicated IT landscape such as SAP S/4HANA integrated with many cloud-based and on-premise applications often means that the solutions need a certain level of flexibility. This section explores how organizations prioritized the different requirements and capabilities they needed for a successful process automation strategy and the tools they used and plan to use to meet those requirements.

Top Requirements for Process Automation Strategies

Respondents to the survey selected flexibility of automation solutions and the ability to implement automation quickly as the most important requirement, with 82% indicating this was important or very important to the success of their process automation strategies (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Top requirements for process automation



Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

In interviews, several Community members said they do not want employees spending more time programming and maintaining bots than they would have otherwise spent on the processes they automate. Rather, automation should save time and address the top driver. This also

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The top RPA platforms have advantages and disadvantages in comparison to each other. Automation is not a set it and forget it procedure. Processes and formats can change and evolve. Without machine learning or AI, bots will not adapt to this change. One will need to periodically nurture the bot and change the recipes/formulas for them to work correctly. Ease of use is key for the change process to be effective. An army of people "repairing" the robots that replace the prior army of processors is not cost effective.

The tools embedded within the RPA product must facilitate this ease of use.

”

~ Mitch Paull,

Partner - SAP Finance Leader,
Ernst & Young LLP

ties in with the requirement for support for non-IT professionals to develop bots (56%) and shows demand for simple low or no-code development tools for non-IT users and flexible solutions they can implement to their specific processes easily and quickly.

Respondents chose transparency into operational processes and bottlenecks as the second most important requirement (75%). This supports the strategy for re-engineering and standardizing processes as part of an SAP S/4HANA migration because companies need visibility into their processes to optimize them. Also, to integrate automation capabilities across processes shared by multiple functions or teams, those teams all need transparency across the process.

Other top requirements included consistent business rules (64%) and native integrations between RPA, SAP, and non-SAP applications (54%). Consistent business rules for mobile, cloud-based, and on-premise applications support the action for deploying business rules. Keeping business rules consistent will only rise in importance as SAPinsider Community members integrate SAP S/4HANA with more applications and deploy more SAP Fiori applications.

The need for native integrations between RPA solutions and both SAP and non-SAP applications clearly supports the top strategy of integrating automation capabilities across all relevant applications. These requirements all tie together to support the strategies of integration and standardization of processes as part of planned SAP S/4HANA migrations.

Which Tools Do Respondents Use to Support Their Process Automation Strategies?

RPA platforms and workflow modeling and monitoring tools represent the most popular types of automation and BPM technology, with 56% currently using RPA platforms and 55% using workflow modeling and



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First and foremost, I want a solution that can easily show proof of value or concept. If it takes too long to set up that means that it is not very flexible.

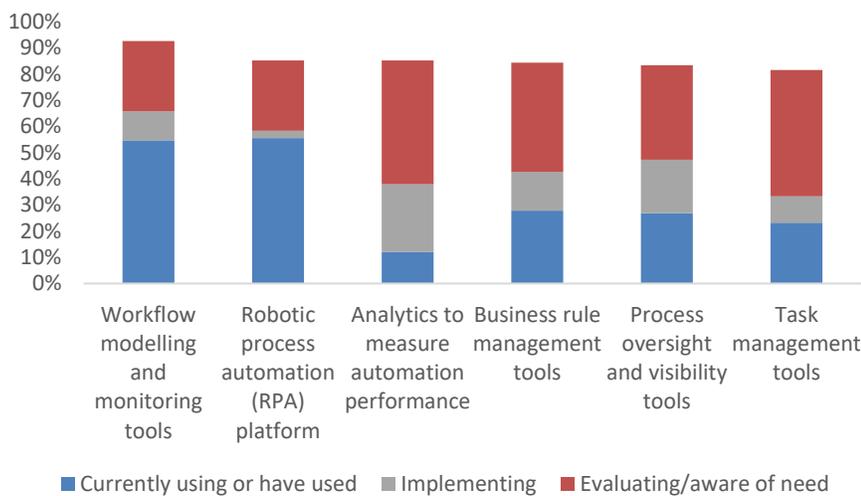
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~ CIO,

Filipino Real-Estate Company

monitoring tools (see **Figure 5**). Workflow modeling and monitoring tools help organizations increase their transparency into processes and optimize the processes to make it easier to implement RPA. RPA platforms provide tools for designing, building, and executing bots across different applications and some platforms also include integrated test automation, process mining, and task mining. Survey respondents may have already adopted these platforms at a relatively high level. In interviews, however, many said they have struggled to scale RPA applications across the enterprise.

Figure 5. Popular technologies and process automation solutions



Source: SAPinsider, June 2020

Most respondents will invest in analytics to measure automation performance, task management tools, business rule management tools, and process oversight and visibility tools. These tools help keep automation consistent across different interfaces and further improve transparency into processes and bottlenecks for continuous improvement.

SAP offers several of these technologies, but 58% of respondents do not use any of the SAP solutions. Also, no single solution is used by more than 20%.

“

We are implementing workflow modeling and monitoring tools to streamline and standardize our operational processes and business workflow. We need to standardize the processes before we can implement RPA to ease some of the tedious manual workload we have now.

”

~ SAP Technical Architect,
Asian IT Company

Key Takeaways

Based on our research, the following key takeaways are clear:

- **Choose flexible automation and BPM solutions that do not need dedicated IT personnel to manage them.** If an automation solution requires dedicated IT personnel to manage it, the company has traded business users' time for IT professionals' time. Automation solutions should have flexible low- or no-code development tools to empower business users to keep ownership of their processes but dedicate less time to repetitive tasks.
- **Standardize, streamline, and optimize processes before automating them.** To integrate automation capabilities across processes shared by multiple functions or teams, those teams all need transparency across the process, so it makes sense that 75% of survey respondents ranked transparency into business processes as important or very important. Workflow and process visibility tools can help accomplish this.
- **Once standardized, use RPA platforms to automate processes and scale that automation across the enterprise.** Most survey respondents already have an RPA platform, but many have struggled to scale applications of the platform across customized and siloed processes. With processes standardized across the enterprise, however, the applications of the RPA platforms can scale much more easily.
- **Measure automation performance.** Some RPA platforms include performance analytics tools, which can help benchmark success for continuous improvement. Outside of built-in analytics capabilities, SAPinsider Community members should utilize their existing enterprise analytics tools to measure the improvements in process efficiencies.

Chapter Three: Required Actions

Most (56%) of respondents already use RPA platforms but only 30% say that their current solutions meet their automation needs. Based on interviews with survey respondents, this problem largely arises due to highly customized or siloed processes, which makes it difficult to scale automation solutions across the enterprise.

This partially explains why 34% chose the move to SAP S/4HANA opening new opportunities to start fresh, optimize processes, and implement automation as a key business driver. Additionally, 43% of survey respondents indicated that employees' need for increased capacity to focus on higher-value activities drove their approach to process automation.

While RPA platforms and workflow tools already have relatively high adoption among survey takers, the highest levels of investment lean towards analytics to measure automation performance, task management tools, business rule management tools, and process oversight and visibility tools. Together, all these tools support the requirements for flexible automation solutions, transparency into processes, consistent business rules, low-code bot development, and native integrations between RPA solutions and both SAP and non-SAP applications.

Most (58%) respondents reported integrating automation capabilities across functions and both SAP and non-SAP applications as one of their primary process automation strategies to address the two key drivers.

Steps to Success

Our research reveals that SAP customers should apply the following key steps to execute their process automation strategies:

- **Identify the repetitive tasks that act as bottlenecks or take up the time of employees who could otherwise spend more time on strategic planning or operational execution.** Two of the most popular BPM technologies – workflow tools and process visibility tools – can help fulfill one of the most important requirements of improving transparency into operational processes and

bottlenecks. By automating the processes causing operational bottlenecks, Community members can help meet the top driver of increasing employees' capacity.

- **Evaluate whether these processes could benefit from re-engineering or standardization as part of any planned SAP S/4HANA migrations.** Survey respondents said they focus on standardizing processes as part of an SAP S/4HANA migration (40.5%). For many companies, the complexity of existing systems acts as a barrier. Moving to more standardized processes on SAP S/4HANA will present an opportunity to better integrate their automation capabilities.
- **Implement the RPA platform that will empower your organization to automate these processes in a way that integrates with all the necessary applications, both SAP and non-SAP.** Native integrations between RPA solutions and both SAP and non-SAP applications clearly support the top strategy of integrating automation capabilities across all relevant applications. Automation solutions must execute and integrate across all the systems that an organization uses to effectively save employees time.
- **Continuously improve by analyzing automation performance.** Analytics to measure the performance of automation emerged as the technology drawing the most future investments, with 73% of respondents implementing or evaluating it. To improve automation, users must first understand how well it performs.

Methodology

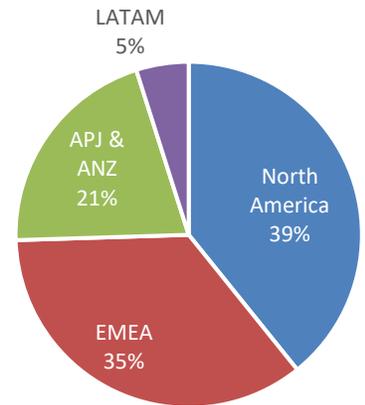
In Q2 of 2020, SAPinsider examined the experiences of business and technology professionals related to their process automation strategies. Our survey was taken by 204 members of the SAPinsider Community and generated responses across a wide range of geographies, industries, and company sizes. Respondents completed an online survey and provided feedback in customer interviews that questioned them on topics such as:

- What are the top drivers for your organization's approach to process automation?
- What actions is your organization taking to address your organization's drivers?
- Which technologies and tools does your organization use or plan to use to support your process automation strategy?
- For what projects/functions has your organization automated, or planned to automate, processes?
- Which financial processes have, or will, your organization automate?
- What represents the most advanced form of automation implemented within your organization for SAP-based processes?
- Which SAP Intelligent Business Process Management (BPM) products and services does your organization use?

Demographic information on the respondents included the following:

- **Job function:** Functional areas reported by respondents include: Information Technology (59%), Finance & Tax (9%), Manufacturing/Production (7%), Supply Chain (5%), Internal Controls/Process Management/Automation (4%), GRC (2%), Data Science (1%), and Human Resources (1%).
- **Sector:** The survey respondents came from every major economic sector, including: Industrial (36%), Software & Technology (28%), Public Services & Healthcare (13%), Financial Services & Insurance (11%), Retail & Distribution (9%), Media & Entertainment (2%), and Hospitality, Transportation, & Travel (1%).

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE



- **Geography:** Of our survey respondents, 39% were from North America, 35% were from Europe, The Middle East, and Africa, 21% were from Asia-Pacific, Japan, and Australia, and 5% were from Latin America.

Appendix A: The DART™ Methodology

SAPinsider has rewritten the rules of research to provide actionable deliverables from its fact-based approach. The DART methodology serves as the very foundation on which SAPinsider educates end users to act, creates market awareness, drives demand, empowers sales forces, and validates return on investments. It's no wonder that organizations worldwide turn to SAPinsider for research with results.

The DART methodology provides practical insights, including:

- **Drivers:** These are macro-level events that are affecting an organization. They can be both external and internal and require the implementation of strategic plans, people, processes, and systems.
- **Actions:** These are strategies that companies can implement to address the effects of drivers on the business. These are the integration of people, processes, and technology. These should be business-based actions first, but they should fully leverage technology-enabled solutions to be relevant for our focus.
- **Requirements:** These are business and process-level requirements that support the strategies. These tend to be end-to-end for a business process.
- **Technology:** These are technology and systems-related requirements that enable the business requirements and support the company's overall strategies. The requirements must consider the current technology architecture and provide for the adoption of new and innovative technology-enabled capabilities.

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UiPath has a vision to deliver *A Robot for Every Person*, one where companies enable every employee to use, create, and benefit from the transformative power of automation to liberate the boundless potential of people. Only UiPath offers an end-to-end platform for hyperautomation, combining the leading **Robotic Process Automation** (RPA) solution with a full suite of capabilities that enable every organization to scale digital business operations at unprecedented speed. As a Silver Partner in the SAP PartnerEdge

Program, UiPath is helping companies get more from their SAP applications and achieve true end-to-end process automation. UiPath has already automated millions of repetitive tasks for over 65% of the Fortune 500 and 8 of the Fortune 10.

Named a [2020 CNBC Disruptor 50](#) company, UiPath was recognized as the fastest growing technology company in the Americas according to [FT Americas' Fastest Growing Companies 2020](#) and named the top company on [Deloitte's 2019 Technology Fast 500](#), a ranking of the fastest public and private technology companies in North America.

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