LOCK-DOWN

Activates Tech's Benefits Through Business Process Socialisation

You likely haven't heard the term 'business process socialisation' before. Yet this concept manifests one of the qualities that companies hope to gain from their digital investments. It can enable customers, to help make companies more agile and, in a time of workplace separation, greatly improve an organisation's ability to continue doing business from anywhere - especially when its staff are not together.

"When you look at business continuity planning, most business people looked at continuity or disaster recovery in terms of providing a third party environment or another building where the staff could go and work from," says Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings. "But this epidemic hit the business community from the left field. It said 'No, you will not work together, you have to work apart'."

Thank goodness for technology. Were it not for the availability of networks, the size of their pipes, platform services, and a myriad of other digital factors, the impact of the pandemic and lockdown would have been much worse. Firth can see this among his financial services customers, many of which qualify as essential services.

Thousands of people in these companies have moved their work to their homes, and it's largely been going very well. This speaks volumes of the digital maturity that South African companies have attained.

Changing The Workflow

But while the pandemic is allowing digital to prove its worth, there is also a growing need to further automate business processes and thus smooth out business workflows for customer service. Herein we find the concept of business process socialisation - a step beyond basic automation. In this model, processes follow users or customers, and intelligently decide on the next course of action.

The fundamental principle is built on the fact that customers are now users, by virtue of interacting directly with business processes. For example, you once had to go to a bank to interact with your account details. Someone would sit there and call up the information. But now you do it directly through a variety of different channels. You are essentially in the same seat as that employee who used to do the typing for you.

BUSINESS PROCESS SOCIALISATION

A STEP BEYOND BASIC AUTOMATION

"In this new world, I'm not phoning the physical building containing the customer call centre. Rather, I'm phoning a central number hosted in the cloud infrastructure that says 'Oh, I need to route you to this physical address in Alberton, where I've got a person who knows what you need to do'. That person will be able to access my account and help me do what I need to do remotely from the actual physical infrastructure."

This example may seem contradictory to what was said earlier, but it's not. Business process socialisation is not the act of removing human interaction. That is the focus of business process automation. Socialisation takes matters to the next level. It accepts that a certain number of processes will always be or need human interaction, especially while we are in the transition of full digital automation. The key is for the system to distinguish between the manual and automated processes, then make the right choices on where the user should direct their efforts.

"That's why we place such a big emphasis on business process socialisation. The process that's being executed by the customer, as a user, will be decided on by the process. Who needs to get back to that customer? Can I answer the customer directly? The system can answer that quezzstion and route the process correctly."

True Service Automation

Even basic workflow automation is fundamental for any business to be able to service someone remotely. This counts both for customers accessing systems and employees working remotely. Prior to the pressure created by remote-working, most organisations could pave over these considerations. But as the pressure builds to have effective and reliable processes operating at arm's length, there is a need to create more dynamic process environments.

Hence socialisation, which can operate through artificial intelligence. This approach can rapidly close the remaining gaps within process and workflow automation.

"With the addition of apps, IoT and digital channels, workflow is now able to talk directly to customers," says Firth. "So that's why we talk about business process socialisation. Technology is enabling workflows to talk outside of the traditional "brick and mortar" of the organization and drive a self-service capability for customers and employees. It's worked to allow people to work from home. But you have to have processes to be able to manage a distributed staff base."

Impressive? Yes. Possible? Absolutely. But you need to map and understand your processes and the events triggering them. Fortunately, many years of pursuing process automation has given rise to many mapping and auditing tools for processes and workflows. Then it's a matter of using digital platforms to start automating those relationships.

The outcome should provide multiple benefits, such as easier customer access to services, faster responses by employees, and the confidence that your business systems can continue to operate even under difficult conditions. If you have been pondering how to take your automation strategy to the next stage, you'll want to learn more about business process socialisation.

MIP
A SOCIAL SOLUTION IN A DIGITAL DIMENSION

By Richard Firth
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