



Adding value with automation

Manufacturing rough and fully-machined cast components, one of South Africa's largest foundries has more than 40 years' worth of foundry knowledge in metallurgy and casting techniques. The business, which is divided into two main business units – the foundry and a machining facility – produces more than 165 000 high quality products, most of which are exported to Europe and America. Since 1980, this foundry has also been producing high-quality cast iron automotive components.



The challenge

Like most traditional industrial businesses, the foundry relied on a number of manual processes in its day-to-day operations. Originally looking only to digitise specific processes, the foundry quickly saw the sense in iOCO's recommendation to do a full business process analysis before it embarked on any projects.

Once the company had received the BPM Consultant's recommendations, it chose to start digitising and automating in the finance department, with all of the other departments to follow in a

systematic way. The finance department elected to begin with accounts payable, as this was one of the most inefficient processes.

Two people were entirely dedicated to accounts payable invoices due to the sheer volume of paperwork required, and the company was still using and storing hardcopies of all invoices. Boxes of these hardcopies took up an entire room, wasting space as well as costing the company valuable time in retrieving and managing invoices when necessary.



The solution

iOCO developed a solution that automated the foundry's accounts payable process. Building an RPA process using the Automation Anywhere platform in Cape Town, iOCO helped the business not only automate the manual processing of invoices, but integrated the solution into its ERP system, Syspro.



iOCO's solution allowed the foundry to receive invoices from multiple channels such as emails and website downloads, run the invoices through an ML and AI solution to extract the metadata, and then store all the metadata and process transactions into a database for redundancy and auditing purposes. To further ensure that no data will ever be lost, iOCO helped the business migrate to the cloud, where all invoices are now stored and classified. The IQBot, which performs all of these automated functions, also ensures that all invoices are correct, checking certain rules within the ERP system such as valid PO for Invoice, GRN delivery notes received, and quantity matching.

The automation of this finance process required a great deal of teamwork between iOCO and the foundry. Over and above the development and implementation of the solution, iOCO had to liaise with the company's IT team to ensure that the IQBot could have uninterrupted performance.



Since most of the foundry's systems are on premise, iOCO had to assist the cloud migration in a number of areas. Security, being of paramount importance, was a major concern, and the two teams had to reconfigure the company's firewalls to ensure that the automated process would work without any vulnerabilities. In fact, the foundry's IT team ended up restructuring how the company's network runs to enable secure connectivity to the cloud. The Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) made this even more complicated, but together iOCO and the foundry were able to automate all of the tasks and processes without any intrusive measures to disrupt day-to-day operations.



The foundry has already started saving time thanks to the automation implementation, allowing the people who were previously dedicated to capturing and processing invoices to move into more strategic roles. Not only does the automated system reduce time spent on repetitive actions, it has helped minimise errors. Providing a standardised way of doing a process, the IQBot eliminates all human error and the need to re-do tasks. Only taking time saved into consideration, the foundry will achieve full ROI in approximately 9 months.

Benefits

- ✓ Improved process efficiency
- ✓ Increased productivity
- ✓ Quick ROI
- ✓ Improved accuracy
- ✓ 24/7 workforce
- ✓ Increased employee engagement
- ✓ Cost saving on staff overtime
- ✓ Admin staff allocated to more value-adding work
- ✓ Improved risk and compliance



This project proved the importance of communication. Listening to the customer's needs led to us providing advisory services before any technology was implemented, ensuring that the customer not only got the right solution, but that it was based on a solid understanding of the business. Communication was also the only way to make sure that our solution worked with the company's other systems, as was the close teamwork with the customer's IT team.

iOCO spokesperson

Get in touch to get more info

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