

Make The Business Case

For Your IT Automation Initiative

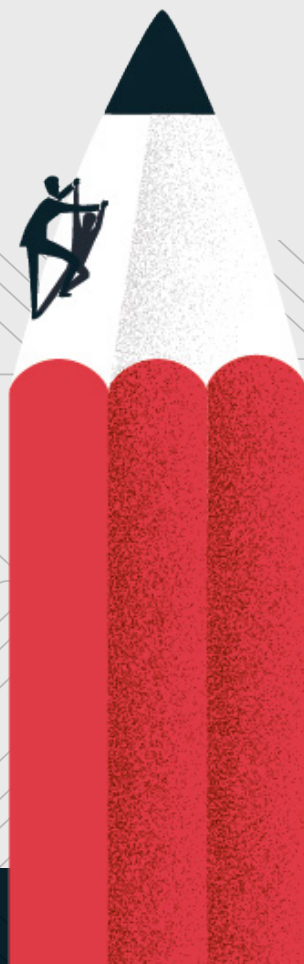


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Make The Business Case For Your IT Automation Initiative

Organizations are pushing the pace of digital transformation, leveraging cloud infrastructure and emerging technologies to overcome business challenges and better meet company goals. Research by [Forrester](#) found that half of enterprises made cloud-centric transformation a top priority in the wake of COVID-19.

To support these transformations, IT departments manage processes and workloads across on-premises data centers, dedicated private clouds, multiple public clouds, legacy platforms and colocation centers.

The status quo is unsustainable. IT environments are increasingly complex, relying on manual processes to tie together disparate systems. In a study by [Dynatrace](#), 74% of enterprise CIOs admitted that cloud-native technologies were creating more manual tasks and time spent keeping the lights on.

IT departments are ramping up their automation initiatives in order to meet these new challenges. But getting buy-in for new IT investments isn't easy. Decision makers in IT and the business can have conflicting priorities, additional budget spend can be scarce during economic downturns and cultural resistance can pose additional barriers to automation initiatives.

Gaining buy-in and building a business case for automation isn't something most IT professionals spend much time on – but really need to. So we've put together five strategies that will help you get the buy-in you need from stakeholders and decision-makers.



What Goals Will Your Automation Initiative Address?

Start by clearly identifying the problem you want to address when making a business case. Identify the major challenges you plan to address with your automation and communicate those first.

For example, many IT teams are stretched thin, trying to deliver on a growing number of projects while still managing legacy systems and new additions to their tech stack. As a result, projects are being delayed or derailed due to a lack of IT resources.

Automation can free up critical IT resources so your team can spend more time on high-value, strategic projects, while providing more efficient services in less time.

Challenges that are commonly addressed with IT automation tools include:

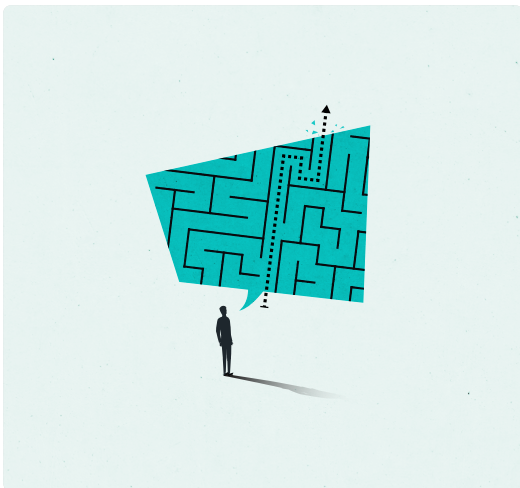
- Long run times for critical processes and workloads
- Lack of visibility into automation workflows and other tools like RPA
- Time-consuming troubleshooting and slow remediation
- Inability to complete all projects on time
- Too much time spent writing and maintaining automation scripts
- Unreliable processes causing delays and failures
- Fragmented environments that make it difficult to integrate new tools, processes

Include specific examples and numbers when possible. How often do you fail to meet your SLAs, and how would automation help improve it? If processes are being delayed, how many hours were lost and how many can be gained with automation?

You know that long-term business success depends on IT, but to be truly effective you need to show how business goals will succeed – or fail – without the proper IT support. Without scalable, cloud-based environments, real-time data and always-on digital services, many businesses will fail to compete. Work with business leaders to understand their project and then align your IT projects to these initiatives.

- IT teams spend on average 59% of the time keeping the lights on¹
- 46% of CIOs say their IT teams are stretched too thin²
- 56% of IT teams can't complete the tasks they've committed to because too much time and resources are spent keeping the lights on³
- 63% of CIOs report that complexity in cloud environments has surpassed human ability to manage⁴
- 69% of CIOs say they need a radically different approach to IT and cloud operations management⁵
- 25% of CIOs at large enterprises will be accountable for business operations by 2024⁶

Speak Directly To Business Strategy



The role of the CIO is evolving. The most successful CIOs are closely involved in strategic planning and business decisions. This is part of a larger trend that places IT closer to the center of day-to-day business operations, customer experience and the overall business model.

This is one reason why your business case should speak directly to business goals – business leaders know that IT is a critical part of their success. Tie your automation initiative to key business goals instead of positioning it as a one-off, standalone IT project.

You've spent the first part of your business case explaining the challenges that you face. Now show how those challenges are impacting business goals, and how automation will help achieve those goals.

For example, your automation initiative can:

- Free up IT resources for higher-value tasks, accelerating project timelines
- Create a “single pane of glass” for all automation workflows, improving visibility and control
- Consolidate multiple automation tools and schedulers into one scheduler used across the organization
- Make it possible to scale resources efficiently and cost-effectively
- Deliver data to decision-makers and customers faster, allowing the business to make better decisions ahead of others in the market
- Enable developers to rapidly build, test and deploy new processes
- Prevent process failures and reduce MTTR so that impacts on the business are minimized
- Reliably automate processes across cloud and on-prem platforms, tying business services to disparate databases

The more specific you can get, the better. Perhaps your automation initiative can streamline customer billing for faster payment processing or provide more reliable, consolidated automation.

Additionally, speak to the specific concerns of stakeholders. For example, how will your automation initiative help the CTO deliver SaaS services? How will it help the CFO expedite the close cycle?



Understand Barriers To Buy-In

The COVID-19 pandemic has helped to reduce barriers to automation, though perhaps more on the business side than the IT side. Regardless, understanding the concerns that can sink an automation initiative will help you prepare a successful business case.

The top barriers to automation buy-in include:

- Competing priorities
- Cultural barriers
- Budget constraints

The number of projects IT teams are responsible for is expected to grow as organizations become more reliant on digital solutions. IT is only going to get more busy. Automation shouldn't be positioned as an either/or project, but rather as a tool to facilitate those other priorities.

Workload automation gives employees more time to spend on valuable projects that they care about, instead of manually triggering batch processes.

Your business case for automation is also going to have to address cultural resistance. It's not uncommon for people to defend the way they've been doing things for years. But at some point it should be pointed out that custom scripts are brittle, or that manual hand-offs create delays.

More importantly, automation enables employees to spend less time on tedious, manual tasks and more time on projects that require creativity and long-term planning – giving employees more time to spend on valuable projects that they care about, instead of manually triggering batch processes or searching for idle VMs.

Quantify Cost Savings

The last major barrier is getting budget approval. IT spending dropped considerably during the COVID pandemic, and it will take some time before spending fully recovers. Your business case will have to justify the expense, but how?

Most automation initiatives do not achieve expected cost savings. This is important to note.

Many organizations expect that an automation initiative will result in staff reductions, but more often than not, these cuts never materialize. The reason is that there are few jobs that can be fully automated in the workplace. When onboarding gets automated, HR employees spend more time on talent acquisition. When job triggers are automated, IT employees spend more time creating or optimizing services.



So we know that IT automation doesn't provide savings from job cuts. So where does IT automation provide savings?

Gartner estimates that 40% of all enterprise workloads will be deployed in the cloud by 2023 (up from just 20% in 2020). However, workloads aren't static – compute and storage requirements can quickly change. In many cases this leads to sprawl: cloud resources that are forgotten and left unused, causing unexpected operational costs.

40% of all enterprise workloads will be deployed in the cloud by 2023.

As hybrid- and cloud-based environments become more complex, it becomes easier for cloud-based servers or virtual machines to slip through the cracks. IT automation can be used to integrate cloud management tools into workflows, ensuring that servers are spun-down when they're no longer needed.

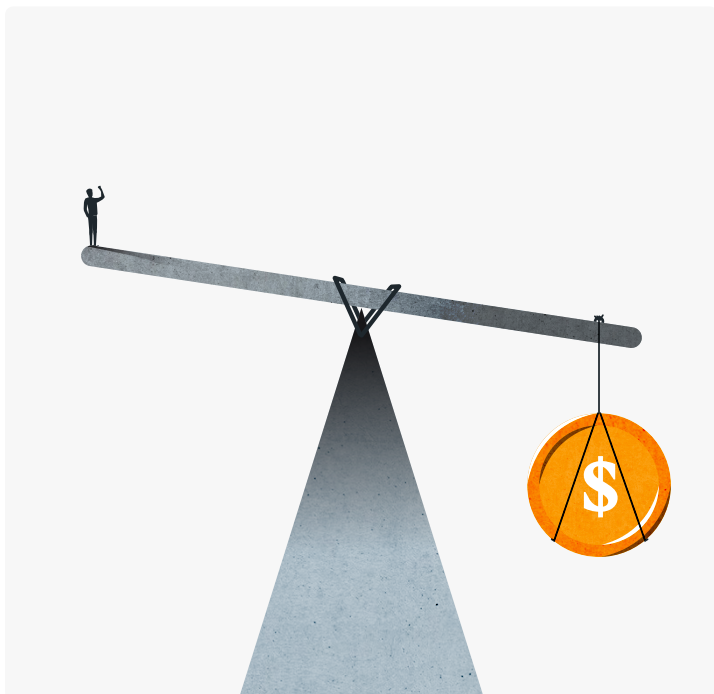
Additionally, as IT becomes busier, you need to empower your team to achieve more without adding more people.

It's estimated that large enterprise IT teams spend almost half of their time keeping the lights on.

It's estimated that large enterprise IT teams spend almost half of their time keeping the lights on, mostly in the form of manual processes, at a cost of \$4.8 million per year. Approximately 38% of manual IT tasks could be automated for an average annual savings of \$2 million.³

With the right automation tools, IT teams can now drastically increase the time spent on innovative projects, accomplishing far more without having to increase resources.

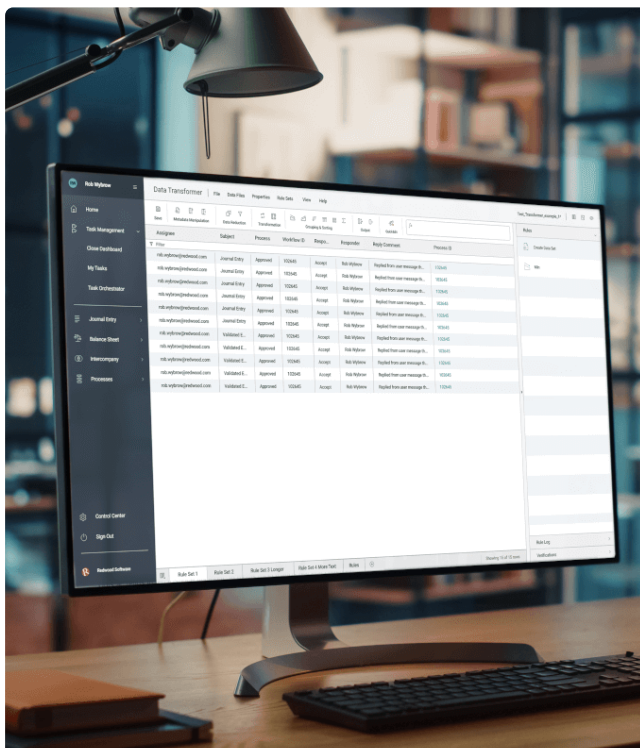
When building your business case, consider what your team's workload will be moving forward. How many more projects do you expect to be responsible for, and will this require an additional team member? Can automation be used to reduce workloads so that your current team has time for more projects?



Quantify Cost Savings

Numbers can be used to great effect and your business case isn't going to be approved without them. But numbers are abstract and it can be difficult to build a strong case that relies only on spreadsheets.

Your automation initiative has the potential to impact day-to-day jobs across the organization, or at least across your team. Make sure your business case includes real-world stories that drive home the need for automation. Include anecdotes where a manual process caused significant delays, or an unexpected issue tied-up senior team members. Focus on specific cases where automation could have saved the enterprise time (and money) while facilitating key business projects.



References

1. Mulesoft, 2021 Connectivity benchmark report [↗](#)
2. Dynatrace, 2021 Global CIO Report [↗](#)
3. Dynatrace, 2020 Global CIO Report [↗](#)
4. Dynatrace, CIOs feel squeezed between the need to accelerate digital transformation and the increasing challenges of cloud complexity [↗](#)
5. MartechSeries, CIOs feel squeezed between the need to accelerate digital transformation [↗](#)
6. Gartner, The Future Of I&O Is Infrastructure-Led Disruption [↗](#)

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