USING AUTOMATION TO DELIVER REAL TRANSFORMATION FOR NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

How robotic process automation is enabling the authority to do more for less, while increasing productivity and strategic focus

"Arvato has transformed how we structure and deliver our HR service. The efficiencies we can generate as a result of the programme are significant and we've been able to free-up our employees to spend more time on providing the best possible outcomes for our residents. Alongside this, our staff have had the opportunity to learn new skills and we look forward to reaping the benefits as we automate more processes."

Anthony Taylor, Deputy Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council and Cabinet Member for Transformation

CYNGOR CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT
NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

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Challenge:

Empowering the authority to create significant new efficiencies

Robotic process automation (RPA) is providing councils with the opportunity to transform their back-office operations to enhance the services they provide for citizens, while delivering large cost savings.

HR departments offer huge potential to implement the technology due to the high volume of highly repetitive, administrative tasks. Neath Port Talbot Council recognised the value of partnering with an outsourcing provider with specialist capabilities to automate their HR processes and free-up employees to spend more time on business-critical work.

Arvato was chosen because of its strong track record in delivering and managing automated solutions in both local and central government environments.

The business designed a project that could transform and streamline Neath Port Talbot's HR operations using ProcessAutomate – an industry-first solution which combines public sector process expertise with RPA technology.

Solution:

A technology-driven approach to transforming HR

RPA uses software to create an agile, virtual workforce able to mimic human processing of labour-intensive tasks, following rules-based business processes and interacting with systems in the same way that people do.

The programme with Neath Port Talbot is a combined, end-to-end solution involving Arvato's back-office transformation expertise and robotic software from automation specialists, Blue Prism.

Working in partnership from the outset, the team conducted a thorough review of the council's HR department to ensure the solution was auditable and scalable.

A successful pilot delivered cost savings of up to 95 per cent per transaction for three processes - the management of both Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requests and returns for new and existing staff, and completing employee information change requests.

Automated uploading removes any room for human error in processing DBS requests, transferring information on expiring certifications to a third-party DBS system. It also manages the returns process, storing passed checks in the Council's records and alerting line managers of any actions needed if employees fail.

Changes to employee information are now continually uploaded directly from spreadsheet records onto the Council's staff portal in real time, which has eradicated a backlog of more than 4,000 pending updates.

Following the success of the trial, the team has now rolled out these processes into a live environment and has also automated a further one for contract expiries. RPA now automatically alerts line managers via email when decisions on employee extensions or terminations are due and issues new contracts as required.

Strong governance

A dedicated governance team comprising of six key stakeholders from Arvato and the Council was created at the beginning of the programme to run the project, drive collaboration and ensure success.

An RPA manager was put in place to manage the design, development and implementation of each new process. A project lead manager was also assigned to work directly with Neath Port Talbot to create certified automation capability, enabling governance and change management to be set up and ensuring compliance with security and audit regulations.

The build-and-deploy model has enabled the Council to receive best practice consultation and training from Arvato to upskill three employees to run and monitor the processes moving forward.

Success:

A transformative solution that is making a real difference for Neath Port Talbot

The combination of Arvato's public sector back-office expertise and technology has created a successful and scalable RPA model for the authority to build on.

Delivering significant efficiencies

95%

RPA has reduced the cost-per-transaction of each process by up to 95 per cent

The cost of updating an employee file has been reduced from £1.11 to £0.15

The time taken to process employee change requests has been cut from five minutes to less than two minutes

12,000

Since August 2018, Arvato has handled more than 12,000 transactions, saving 1,000 hours of employee time. The HR team previously manually dealt with over 7,000 every year

from £1.50 to £0.10

The technology has delivered a cost-per-process reduction from £1.50 to £0.10 on DBS requests and £1.11 to £0.05 on DBS returns, with an average of 300 DBS requests completed per month

Cutting-edge technology

RPA is fully auditable, ensuring compliance with all statutory and legal regulations

30 days

The technology requires no integration with legacy systems, reducing set-up costs and ensuring the programme can be in place within 30 days per process

100%

The technology is 100 per cent accurate

Enhanced staff satisfaction

Back-office employees are happier in their roles due to the removal of mundane and repetitive tasks from their day-to-day routine, allowing them to focus on more proactive work

Three employees have received training as part of the build-and-deploy service to enable them to become self-sufficient, with plans to train further employees

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