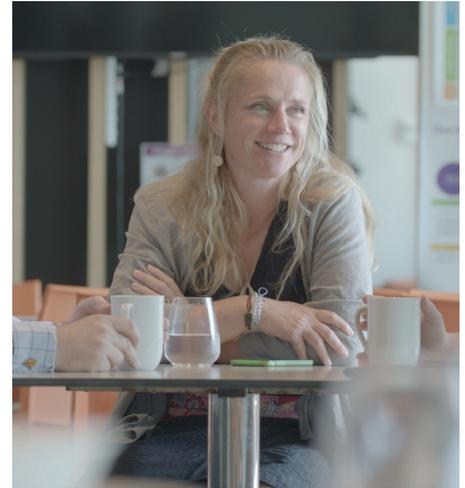
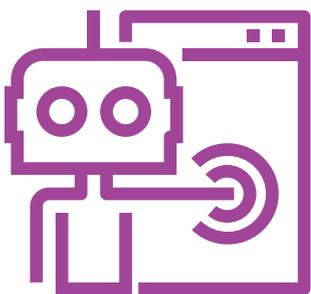


“With the growth in customer numbers in our telecommunications business, there’s just no way we would have kept up without RPA. And when you have this key process automated, your team’s work gets more efficient; people are no longer sitting around doing work which adds no value.”

– Alice Thomson, Head of Delivery
Trustpower



Meet Trustpower’s robot workforce



One of New Zealand’s most innovative energy and telecommunications providers has taken further steps towards business efficiency by introducing Robotic Process Automation. One of the recent steps Trustpower has taken towards the space age ways of working is the introduction of Kofax Kapow, which easily automates repetitive, time-consuming tasks and substantially accelerates the pace of business.

Technology is part of the reason why Trustpower is outperforming its rivals. The company was recently named the top Home Broadband Service Provider in the country and was voted top Home Phone Provider for the past four consecutive years in the annual Roy Morgan Customer Satisfaction Survey. It even won recognition from Netflix, for ten months running which rated Trustpower number one for New Zealand in its telecommunications provider monthly speed index.

Trustpower Limited is a New Zealand stock exchange-listed utilities company, which operates in electricity generation, retail and as a telecommunications provider.

Trustpower is New Zealand’s fifth largest electricity generator and the fourth largest electricity retailer, with around 280,000 electricity customer connections, 33,000 gas customer connections, and 90,000 telecommunications customer connections.

SITUATION

Trustpower and FUJIFILM Business Innovation New Zealand Limited have worked together on multiple business process automation initiatives for many years. Alice Thomson (Head of Delivery at Trustpower), played a central role in modernising work practices at the company by initiating a ‘Paper Intelligence’ project to reduce dependence on printed materials as part of the businesses shift to activity based working when they relocated the Tauranga head office. Since this there has been further changes across the business to look at how both back-end and customer-facing processes can be streamlined.

Trustpower’s approach is process efficiency. “Whenever you have consistent, repetitive, mind-numbing tasks where people are doing little more than copying and pasting from one application to another or doing data transfers without doing anything with the data, you just know things could be done better and faster, using technology,” she says.

Traditional fixes for tasks of this kind is to bring in and train-up another person to help. “That generally means you now have two or more people incredibly bored with the work they’re doing,” says Thomson.



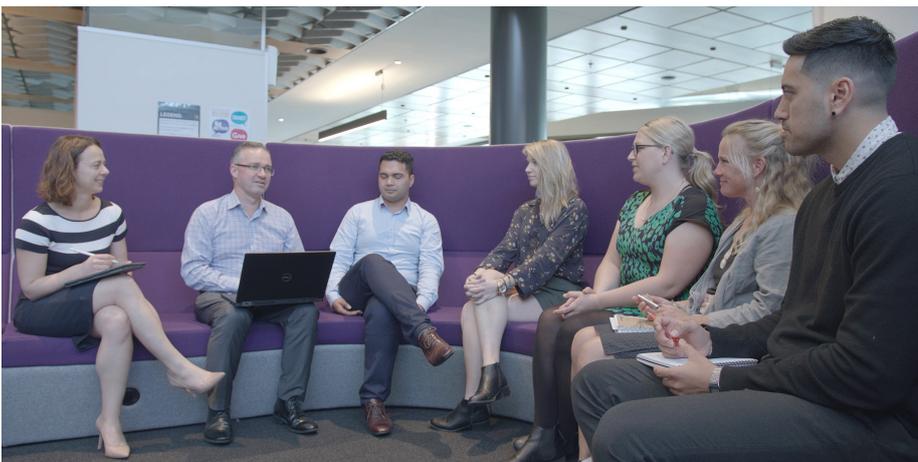


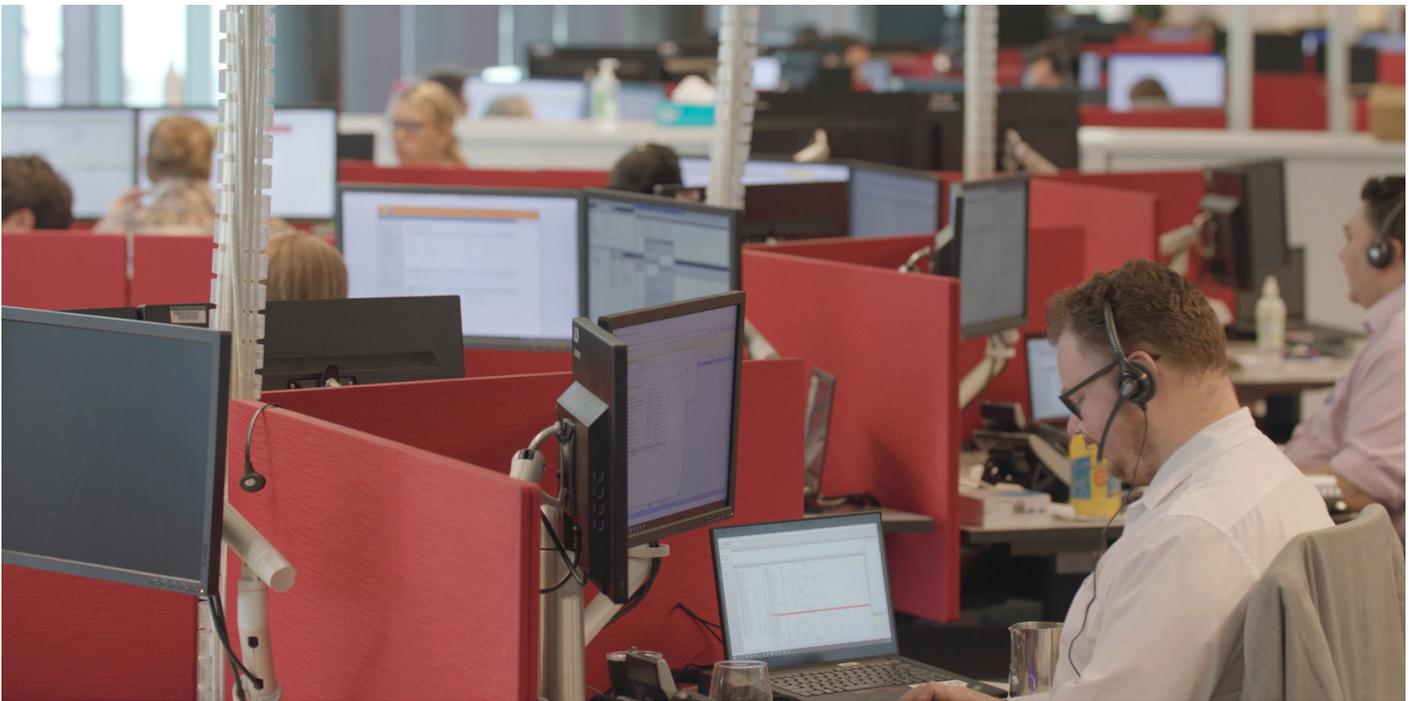
SOLUTION

RPA software is easily programmed by business users to do repetitive tasks across applications just as people do – tasks often described as ‘data entry.’ It incorporates artificial intelligence and machine learning to handle high-volume, repeatable tasks previously handled by human workers. These tasks can include queries, calculations, and maintenance of records and transactions.

“Once we’d seen RPA in action, we realised it can have a huge impact on business today,” says Thomson. The first business process to get the RPA treatment was in Trustpower’s relatively new telecommunications business. “A telecommunications provider is different to provisioning electricity in that you need to work with a third party, for example Chorus, to get new customers connected,” says Thomson. “Like many other telecommunications providers, we started out doing things manually, with people spending a lot of time copying and pasting, screen scraping, just transferring data. The kind of thing sometimes called ‘swivel chair integration.’”

By training a software robot to collect the set of information in Trustpower’s system which is required by the third party to get an internet customer’s line connected, that tedious work immediately fell away.





RESULTS

On just this one process, which served as a test case for the rest of the business, Thomson says processing capability went from tens to thousands of applications in the same amount of time. It is an order of magnitude which she says immediately confirms the power of RPA for any business which performs notable amounts of simple data processing.

“With the growth in customer numbers in our telecommunications business, there’s just no way we would have kept up without RPA. And when you have this key process automated, your team’s work gets more efficient; people are no longer sitting around doing work which adds no value.”

In short, RPA works – and it works well. “One of the advantages of Kapow is that it is a toolset which can be used by the people who know their job best. Once they are aware of what it does and how to use it, they very quickly find the situations where a robot can take care of specific tasks,” Thomson adds.

The major benefit of RPA is time saved – and that time typically goes straight back to people who have far better things to do.

While it is early days, Thomson says across the business, people are starting to realise that when faced with repetitive tasks, there’s no need to hire someone, but instead to look to robot to do it. “This is about being able to do it quickly, without having to get a new individual trained up.”

In fact, RPA works so well that Thomson says it is necessary to introduce a governance layer to manage the rollout of robots in the organisation. “Because you don’t need a developer or programmer to set it up, we’ve run into a different sort of issue with robots popping up all over the place. Now, we need to make sure we are aware of what’s going on in order to avoid duplication of effort.”

Trustpower’s response is to work on transparency (everyone who automates a process is required to let a central team know about it) while providing guidance with best practice and recommendations to those applying RPA within their business units. “It’s a balance between enabling and empowering while maintaining overall visibility of what’s going on,” says Thomson.

While she puts the maturity of the deployment at an early stage (there are around 10 or more processes which have successfully been automated), Thomson says the scene is set for RPA to continue transforming the way Trustpower runs its operations. “As we continue to establish more robust guidelines and processes around when and why new robots are being created, and as we spread knowledge within the business, the expectation is that RPA will continue to grow,” she concludes.





AT A GLANCE

Company:

Trustpower
www.trustpower.co.nz

Industry:

Utilities (Generation, Electricity and Gas retail and Telecommunications)

Business requirements:

- Improve efficiency by eliminating multiple manual data inputs

Solution:

- Kofax Kapow robotic process automation toolset, implemented by FUJIFILM Business Innovation New Zealand Limited

Outcomes:

- Applications processing increase from tens to thousands of applications in the same amount of time
- Substantial and sustained time savings
- Employees equipped with a toolset for automation

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