Magnitude™

Whitepaper

Streamline SAP Business Processes with Robotic Process Automation RPA

The Magnitude Process Runner RPA tool set for SAP relieves human operators from the need to perform repetitive and error-prone tasks. This technology increases efficiency and accuracy, and improves business outcomes while also freeing staff up for more value-added work.

Across industries, businesses share the imperative to drive greater efficiencies into their processes by helping lower costs to improve profitability and competitiveness. A critical ingredient to improving these outcomes is to identify manual processes that can be automated, which reduces the resource requirements to carry out those tasks so the human operators involved can focus on work that delivers more value to the business as a whole. At the same time, automation improves consistency and accuracy while cutting the likelihood of human error.

Data manipulation and management processes surrounding SAP systems are excellent examples of routine, repetitive tasks that occupy significant human capital, making them great candidates for automation. For example, operators spend many hours creating, updating, moving and reporting on SAP transaction data. The environment itself, and the tools and processes available for these roles can be quite complex, leaving SAP users to struggle with manual approaches that can be tedious, resource-intensive and error-prone.

RPA is an emerging set of technologies that automates repetitive jobs using software "bots". Those bots are designed to carry out tasks in the same way a human would, interacting with an easy-to-use graphical user interface. RPA offers a flexible, automated approach that enables human operators to focus on higher-value tasks, while delivering remarkable increases in productivity and ROI. Bots act as digital workers that use structured inputs to perform pre-defined tasks automatically. These computer routines can handle simple or complex processes, including parsing, scanning and analyzing, manipulating and uploading/downloading data faster and more accurately than people can. In the context of SAP, this approach can greatly streamline workflows while also improving data quality significantly.

> **Magnitude enables businesses to unify fragmented data, deliver actionable insights for critical business decisions and transform enterprise data into competitive advantage.**
>
> **Magnitude Process Runner, the industry-leading SAP Data Management platform, is the foundation for Robotic Process Automation (RPA) solutions that digitally transform how businesses operate with SAP.**

The Process Runner RPA tool set is a native platform for automating routine SAP processes; it drives down complexity and makes organizations more efficient. Right out of the box, the tool set provides pre-built templates that automate SAP transaction codes, and additional SAP tasks can be automated by business users, without IT involvement or changes to the SAP environment. With the Process Runner RPA tool set, users employ automated processes that handle much of the heavy lifting in their day-to-day workloads.

Automating Manual Processes in SAP Workflows

RPA performs tasks the same way a human operator would manually, but without requiring their involvement. For example, an RPA process could extract data from documents, perform data entry or modification in the ERP system, or import data from legacy backend systems into SAP. This approach can streamline processes, dramatically improve productivity among teams and increase the return on your SAP data investment.

RPA is an example of a growing enterprise focus on measures to improve legacy systems and infrastructure. A recent Voice of the Customer study by 451 Research found RPA to be one of the top four areas for technology investment in 2020, with 40% of respondents reporting their intent to increase spending on RPA technologies.

As an industry leader, Magnitude is deeply conversant with the front-line business environment occupied by SAP users, including the types of tasks they face, as well as the associated challenges and

opportunities. That immersion in the business needs of SAP users has enabled Magnitude to create more than 1,800 built-in templates—considerably more than anyone else in the industry— to execute pre-defined work on production SAP platforms.

Process Runner RPA tool set for SAP simplifies and automates complex processes, increasing data quality and accuracy while reducing operating costs. The tool set is built for business users acting independent of IT.

Users can also create custom RPA tasks using a point-and-click interface. RPA processes can even be launched automatically, based on anything from specific data relationships to email notification. The core function of RPA is to free up employees to do more meaningful work by automating common processes across the business, such as:

Sales and Distribution

- VK11 (Create Condition)
- MIRO (Enter Incoming Invoice)
- T-codes VA01 (Create Sales Order)

Finance

- FB01 (Post Document)
- FB60 (Enter Incoming Invoices)
- XD01 (Create Customer – Centrally)

Human Resources

- PA40 (Applicant Actions)
- PA61 (Maintain Time Data)
- PB30 (Maintain Applicant Master Data)

These are just a few examples of processes that Process Runner RPA tools can automate, streamline, and simplify across any T-code and any SAP module. In addition, the tool set can perform common SAP tasks in seconds across functions such as material management, back-office functions, and traditional process workflows.

Developing an RPA Practice and Selecting the Right Platform

To start assessing the potential role of RPA in assisting with SAP processes, planners should begin by recognizing the processes that are good fits for the technology. Ideal candidates are low-complexity tasks that are repetitive, done at high volume and prone to human error. This approach empowers teams with technology, setting the stage for them to make more strategic contributions to the business by eliminating time-consuming tasks and streamlining operational areas that are prone to tedium and inefficiency.

Having identified places in the business where RPA can alleviate manual processes and improve productivity, due consideration must be placed on the technology stack best suited to the job. The first considerations are usability (both front-end and back-end) and breadth of coverage for the RPA solution across the full range of business processes, ensuring ready adaptability and scalability across the organization. The ability to adapt the solution to the existing IT infrastructure with minimal changes required is another important consideration.

The following factors can help guide decision makers as they select RPA solutions:

Governance and audit

- How easy is it to manage and track transactions within business processes?
- Does the system provide clear records of all activities, by user, according to relevant governance and security protocols?

Maximizing human capital

- Does the solution optimize the efficiency of employees and enable them to operate and maintain the solution without assistance from IT?

Troubleshooting and correcting data and workflow errors

- Does the system validate data sufficiently before posting it to SAP?
- Does it provide simple means for business users to understand and correct errors?

Speed of execution

- Is automation robust enough in the solution to offload repetitive tasks from humans?
- Does it provide simple means for business users to automate new tasks?
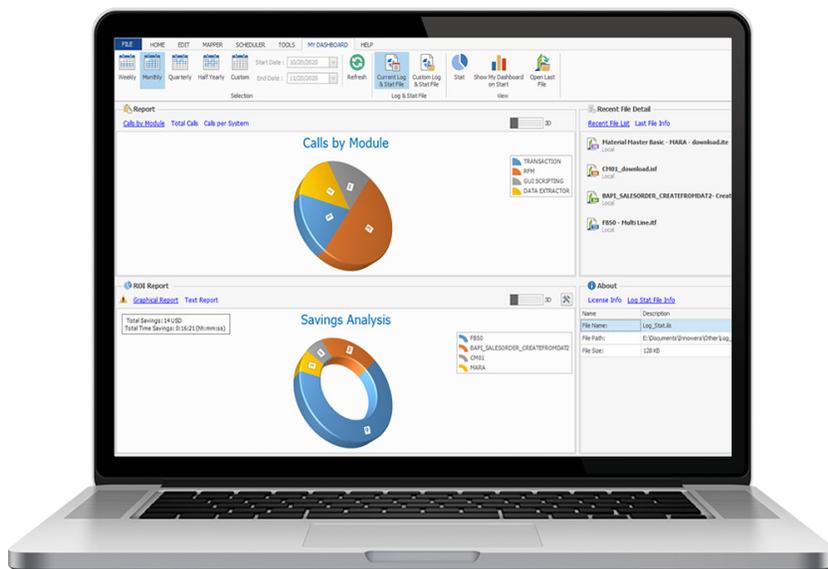
Flexibility to adapt to dynamic SAP environments

- Does the solution provide templates and scripts to automate large numbers of tasks right out of the box?
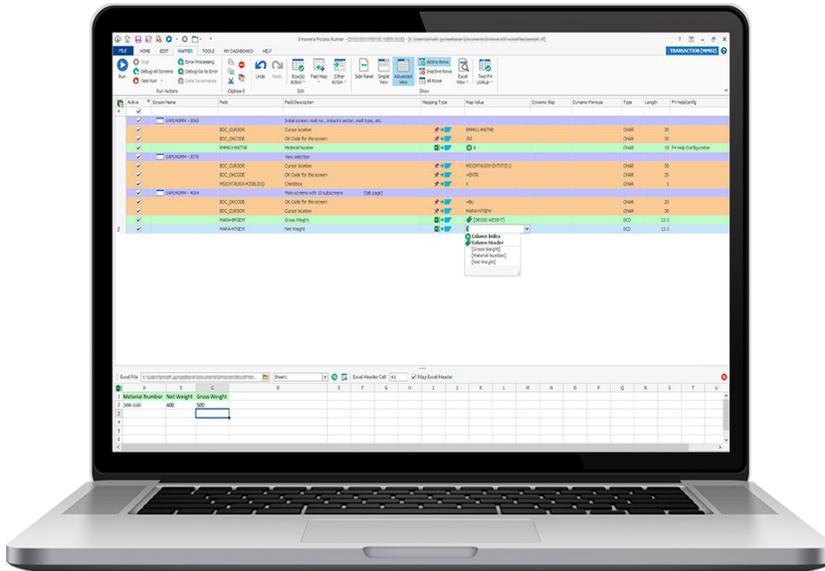- How closely are they aligned with the needs of the business?

Process Runner RPA tools deliver excellent results across these requirement areas.

Robotic Process Automation for SAP

The Process Runner tool set offers simple adaptation of SAP data and business logic. Commonly used automation scripts are predefined and ready to go, right out of the box, and the solution is fully compatible with all established SAP security protocols.

Comprehensive Reports and Dashboards

Full Control of SAP Processes from Excel

Automation Process Design

Process Runner enables business users to record, map and execute SAP datamanagement processes across master, transaction, and configuration data. Built as the core of the RPA solution set, Process Runner combines an intuitive, point-and-click user experience with powerful capabilities to upload and download data and reports. Processes built using Process Runner can handle myriad tasks, such as mass data creation, changes, updates and verification.

Simple, Powerful Workflow Management Using Excel

With the Process Runner Easy Workflow tool, users can create workflows directly in Excel, making user adoption exceedingly simple. The tool provides out-of-the-box capabilities to route data through business organizations for data validation, approval and reporting. Users can draw from the provided workflow libraries or build their own with intuitive built-in tools that require only fundamental Excel knowledge. Users control workflows right from Excel, including starting, stopping, monitoring and assigning tasks easily.

CMD Tool: Command-Line Control of SAP

With the CMD tool, users can control SAP direct from the command line or script based on VBScript or JavaScript, including initiating bot-driven RPA processes from shell processes or service accounts. Built to be lightweight, the Process Runner CMD tool is ideal for running on a server or calling from an external application, and it does not require a full install of Process Runner or Excel on the computer where it is used.

Email Runner: Process Execution Triggered by Email

To further empower users with new capabilities based on approval processes, protocols and tools they use every day, the Process Runner Email Runner tool enables communication with SAP using email. Users create, change and extract data using simple commands embedded in messages, as well as accepting or rejecting workflows directly in email, including from a mobile device. This functionality can be made even more powerful and flexible through integration with Microsoft SharePoint and the ability to control behavior using custom VB.NET code.

Kimball International

Success Story: Kimball International

As a manufacturer of office furniture, Kimball International faced extensive assignment of classes and attributes to configure its products to order, which involved heavy preparation, formatting, checking and transforming spreadsheets. Those processes slowed down product delivery.

Process Runner RPA allows Kimball to use their existing spreadsheet-driven approach, accelerating it and providing test and validation for data before it is committed to SAP. As a result, the company delivers products to customers faster and saves on operating costs.

Why Process Runner for SAP RPA and Data Management?

The Process Runner RPA tool set is part of a robust set of Magnitude solutions built to help you realize the greatest efficiencies and value possible from your SAP environment. Magnitude SAP Solutions provide an integrated set of capabilities alongside RPA that also includes reporting, analytics, data harmonization, productivity, and data access.

Process Runner incorporates an extensive range of advanced, SAP-specific technologies that make the tool set more powerful and easier to use. For example, the platform implements true batch processing through remote function calls (RFCs). This advanced capability stands in contrast to competitors that rely solely on SAP GUI Scripting technology. This capability helps ensure that RPA tools can deliver efficiency at the largest enterprises.

Likewise, Process Runner end users run automation scripts using Excel, as opposed to the unfamiliar UIs required by other RPA vendors, creating faster adoption and a superior user experience. The more than 1,800 ready-to-run SAP templates—across all SAP modules—provided by Process Runner can significantly jump-start and accelerate end-customer RPA implementations.

Process Runner is also part of a data-management ecosystem of solutions that provides workflow, data governance, monitoring and reporting capabilities. Competitors cannot offer such a deeply integrated set of solutions, and as a result, customers must rely on a hard-to-support patchwork of third-party solutions that can have gaps and overlaps among them, creating inefficiencies in license costs.

Magnitude provides flexible licensing that lowers total cost of ownership (TCO) and accelerates return on SAP Data investment (ROI). Simplicity of implementation adds to these fiscal advantages, by avoiding the need for costly programming or consulting.

RPA can enable massive business benefits, and the strategic approach to enabling SAP workflows should have a broad scope that stretches across parts of the organization as well as functional roles. At the same time, however, it is wise to start small, automating just a few tasks at first to gauge acceptance among workers and establish some successes. At that point, it is also necessary to define how to measure the performance and productivity benefits from RPA. With those foundations in place, expanded roles for RPA can be implemented more broadly.

Conclusion

RPA helps modernize business operations by eliminating repetitive, error-prone tasks so employees can apply themselves to higher value work. The Process Runner RPA tool set for SAP is purpose-built to automate business processes, data management and workflows, optimized by a unique level of advanced technologies specifically created for SAP. Partnering with Magnitude helps businesses meet the challenges of modernization, cutting through complexity and unwieldy processes to enable the agile enterprise.

Contributor:

Matt Gillespie is a technology writer based in Chicago. He can be found on LinkedIn.

magnitude.com

Magnitude™