

The Economic Impact of Document Automation & Digital Ecosystems



Executive Summary

Many industries have come to the realisation that automation solutions bring together various software applications to create digital process automation. This essentially forms part of a larger digital ecosystem, that helps customers streamline business processes, reduce costs, and improve security.

There are increasing studies in this area, the latest from Forrester Consulting to conduct an economic Impact study to examine the potential return on investment (ROI) enterprises may realise by deploying digital ecosystems.

Forrester interviewed and surveyed customers who were using software such as Zapier and Power Automate. This paper looks specifically at the benefits and costs associated with using solutions such as Power Automate and Zapier to connect multiple software solutions. The Businesses surveyed, stated that by streamlining and automating workflows, they were able to increase worker efficiencies and reduce total elapsed process times.

Prior to using connectors to harmonise the different software's in use, organisations struggled to automate many of their business processes, which were not within resource planning. This meant that there were many manual process steps, information sharing was slow and disjointed, and the business could not easily scale.

Key Findings

According to Forrester research, by setting up three autonomous workflows an enterprise level business can typically save 26,660 worker hours per year. There are a multitude of ways in which document automation can be used to streamline and digitise business processes.

Research discovered several 'quick win' examples:

- Automating recruitment and onboarding processes – allows new team members to have system access from day One. Typically, the first week is focused on new starts completing starter packs and getting set up, significantly reducing productivity. This example is worth £514.6K in total savings over three years, for an enterprise business.
- Credit control - Incoming, emailed invoices are usually manually processed. When a large business automates this process, it can eliminate the effort of two finance administrators. This example is worth £280.5K in total savings over three years.
- Customer support – a surveyed business had a help-desk ticketing system that was built on SharePoint with manual routing. This was replaced with an email-based system with automated routing. This reduced ticket

Key Benefits



Reduced errors due to increased automation

25.1%



Reduced workflow development effort

17.2%



Faster time value realisation versus other solution alternatives:

25.1%



ROI
199%



BENEFITS
£1 Million



PAYBACK
<6 Months

submission time for 30,000 tickets each year. This example is worth £75.3K in total savings over three years.

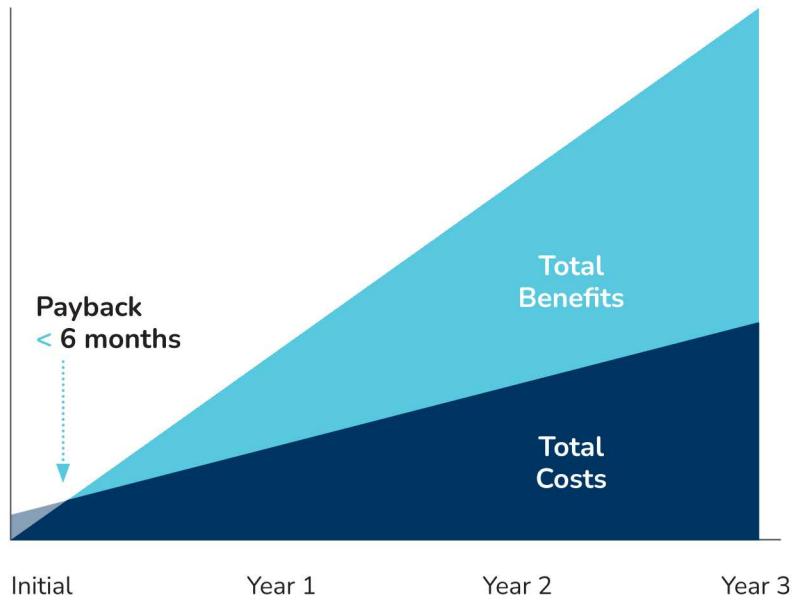
- IT streamlining – Surveyed businesses stated that IT departments were able to automate many low-value activities and free up time for work on other projects that deliver greater value. For the financial analysis, that this is typically worth £214,742 in total savings over three years
- Business transformation - Interviewees described many ways that their businesses have improved. This includes happier employees, reduced time-to-market (33% according to the survey), and increased revenue (4.3% according to the survey). Because these benefits can vary greatly from one organization to the next, Forrester did not include them in the financial analysis.

Organisations realise additional value with other Platform Microsoft solutions – Interviewees described how solutions such as Dynamics CRM and Teams, being part of the Microsoft stack, enable them to build on prior investments to create more value. Using connectors such as Power Automate and Zapier allow businesses to merge existing software purchases and improve efficiency. With both Power Automate and Zapier, Businesses can save time and money on roll out and training as teams already have working experience of the software's within the digital ecosystems

Digital ecosystems make organisations more secure – creating autonomous workflows within your very own, bespoke ecosystem, allows businesses to control permissions at the data and application levels. Additionally, users building in these tools reduce the potential of shadow IT taking place. This can also significantly assist with GDPR compliance

Forrester's interviews with five large scale businesses found that an organisation experiences benefits of £950,000 over three years versus costs of £377,433.

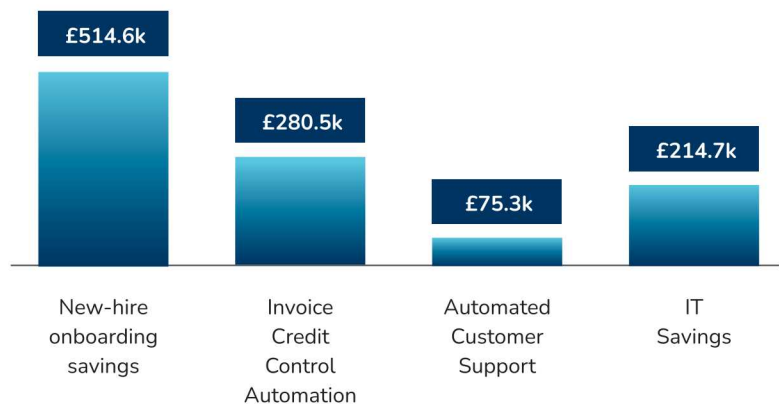
Financial Summary



E-Sign wants to help companies demonstrate, justify, and realise the tangible value of IT initiatives and digital Ecosystems.

Thomas Taylor
Managing Director

Benefits (Three-Year)



The Digital Ecosystem Customer Journey

(Before and after Project Investment)

Surveyed Organisations

Industry	Region	Interviewees	Users access to connectors
Beverage distributor	US regional	- Cloud services manager	1,600
Power generation	North America and Australia	- Enterprise architect	2,200
Financial services	UK	- Head of CRM solutions - Chief data officer	3,500
OilField services	Global	- Director - IT operations - Digital transformation manager	10,000
Bank	HQ in Africa	- BI specialist	3,000

Key Challenges

The interviewed companies faced common challenges around delivering modern IT, supporting more users and growth, and managing increasing costs.

- **IT had to support more first-line and mobile workers.** Moving to a software such as Microsoft/Office 365 can significantly increase the number of users who are consuming IT services. Additionally, companies are putting more effort into making mobile workers more effective and efficient. Increased user counts mean that processes need to be more efficient and automated for IT to be able to handle increased demands.
- **IT systems did not meet current needs, and there was a limited budget to make changes.** Interviewees described an IT estate that could not support new initiatives and volumes. Using connectors such as Power Automate or Zapier to drive processes can create a wrapper around existing systems to create more workflows without directly modifying any of the existing software.

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In the past we received zero advanced notice of a new hire and would scramble to deliver. We applied Power Automate to a process and now have twelve days advanced notice

Cloud Services Manager

Beverage Distribution

- **The lack of process automation hurts business performance.** Existing business processes did not fully meet the needs of employees in terms of the scope of activity and completion times. This can hurt employee satisfaction as well as the business in terms of innovation, growth, and customer satisfaction.

The top four adoption drivers from the survey included:

- Replace paper-based process steps
- Address IT's inability to keep up with development requests.
- Deliver more actionable insights.
- Reduce system complexity.

Key Results

The interviews and survey revealed several key results from implementing a digital ecosystem via connectors such as Power Automate and Zapier

- Process automation streamlines and Systemati processes that enable business transformation. Interviewees provided examples of reworking old nonsensical processes and creating totally new ones as part of digital transformation initiatives. This consolidation of processes allowed employees to spend more time on, higher-value activities. The head of CRM at a financial services firm said: "Adopting document automation saves us an incredible amount of time on a simple query that we have to run ten times per day. This is time that can be put to much better use."
- Process automation saves IT organisations time and money. IT departments save time in several ways. They can automate processes that would have required previous manual involvement. Also, workflow development efforts take less time, especially if they would have otherwise involved modifying existing software products. Process automaton empowers business users to create their own automated workflows instead of relying on the IT Systematizin. An interviewed IT director said: "We were able to create processes on top of our existing systems to support 2,000 users. They don't even know it involves Power Automate. They just get help quicker. Without Power Automate, it is not something we could not have done."
- Process automation improves security. Automating and Systematizing processes improves data security. Sensitive information no longer needs to be emailed around, and there are better safeguards. Additionally, building workflows on top of a software such as the Microsoft platform comes with built-in security. A head of CRM said:

“ There are a lot of little processes we can easily automate and bat out of the park.

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Cloud Services Manager
Beverage

“From a security perspective, the biggest piece is Azure AD. We benefit from all the security built into the Microsoft stack, including all of the workflows and apps that we create.”

The top five business benefits from the survey included:

- Improved IT team productivity.
- Faster time-to-market with new products/services/solutions.
- Faster solution quoting.
- Increased revenue.
- Better customer service.

Creating Business Efficiencies

Automating business processes makes things happen faster by eliminating (or reducing) manual steps and removing bottlenecks. This means workers spend less of their time waiting on processes to complete and receiving the necessary information to complete their responsibilities. With Power Automate and Zapier, many processes from the very small to the very large can be digitised.

The efficiency benefits described freed up users' time to work on other, higher-value activities. Power Automate can also improve business outcomes in other ways by compressing process times and improving your customers experience.

The value of flexibility is clearly unique to each customer, and the measure of its value varies from organization to organization. There are multiple scenarios in which a customer might choose to implement Power Automate and later realize additional uses and business opportunities.

The research shows how utilising Process automation makes organisations more agile, allowing them to see the future-state possibilities for these tools. Companies are promoting more use of 'citizen developers' in digital Ecosystems to digitise even more business processes.

Companies are now looking to automate legacy applications that do not have APIs or off-the-shelf connectors. Softwares such as Power Automate and Zapier enables a whole new area of optimisation and digitisation, which builds upon the benefits quantified in the research.

The reader is encouraged to think of examples of business processes that can be automated in their own organisation, and to then apply those to this framework. E-Sign has a team of Digital Transformation specialists that are happy to assist and discuss your digitization needs.

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We greatly improved the productivity of workers in the field. We've replaced paper-based, manual steps and automated many processes.

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Director
Field Services



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