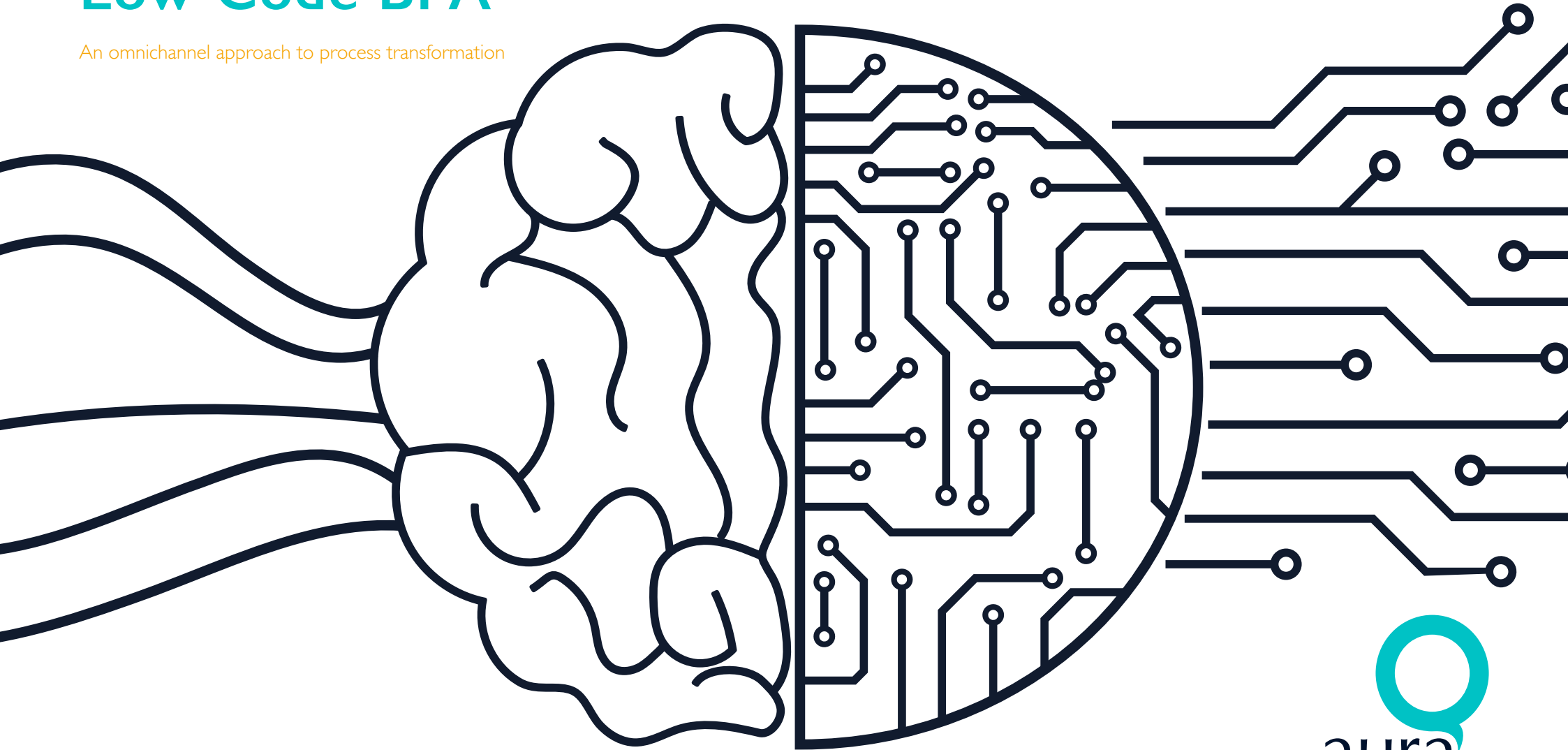


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# RPA & Low-Code BPA

An omnichannel approach to process transformation



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Digital transformation is the watchword of many modern organisations. This can, however, create an environment where constant demands for system enhancements and new business applications place immense pressure on IT departments.

Modern CIOs and their teams must not only maintain the stability and security of core legacy systems, but also deliver a raft of new digital assets to meet the needs of various departments.

New consumer-grade technologies like robotic process automation (RPA) and low-code application development platforms are re-shaping the automation landscape. When embarking on a transformation journey, the decision of which technology to use and where it's best applied can be daunting for decision-makers, often because the two technologies can appear to deliver similar benefits. However, they are two very different offerings that are, in fact, very well-matched.



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## Business-led digital transformation

Understanding the differences between RPA and low-code business process automation (BPA) platforms is essential, because they are both capable of solving unique business problems.

These new automation technologies take a user-centric rather than a developer-centric approach to solution delivery, providing business-side users with tools to automate manual tasks and streamline their business processes without leaning too heavily on IT. This way, teams or departments can access

the applications they need in a much shorter timeframe than they would in a traditional application delivery environment.

The most effective approach is often to combine these technologies. When used strategically, RPA and low-code BPA are complementary – and can work synergistically to meet a much wider range of requirements than either technology could on its own.



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## Playing to the strengths of each automation approach

Robotic process automation is a hot favourite in the digital transformation space; and Gartner predicts that the RPA software market will grow by 41% year-on-year until 2022<sup>1</sup>. This technology uses software robots (also known as 'bots') to execute routine, rule-based tasks by interacting with business applications and systems on the same interfaces that humans would use.

Firstly, this means that RPA configurations can be rolled out rapidly (often within weeks), without the organisation having to undergo substantial IT change projects. Secondly, RPA can be configured to take over the robotic tasks that consume humans' time, enabling these employees to focus on more skilled, complex, creative or strategic work.

**The RPA software market will grow by**

**41%**

**year-on-year until 2022**

Traditionally, RPA has been well-suited to automating tasks that are high-volume, well-defined and rely on data that's available in a standardised digital form. Examples include screen scraping, data capture and rule-based workflow automation. However, when processes require exception handling or require a

deeper fix than simply automating existing manual tasks – a low-code BPA technology can step in.

Unlike RPA, which focuses on automating existing tasks, low-code BPA platforms focus on optimising entire business processes from the ground up before automating the relevant tasks within these processes. Users can build web and mobile applications, digital forms and workflows using visual tools and pre-built components (instead of relying on a programmer to code these). In this environment, teams can re-design processes, introduce automation and then continue to access process data and insights to drive continual improvement.

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## Combining RPA and low-code BPA: key business benefits

### **End-to-end process transformation:**

Because RPA operates at the user interface of any application or system, it can be seamlessly integrated into a low-code BPA platform, which in turn can act as a process orchestration engine to manage the flow of tasks and data between bots, humans and multiple other systems. The result? Seamless, end-to-end process automation and optimisation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/doc/3891486/forecast-snapshot-robotic-process-automation>



### Continual improvement:

When an entire process is managed – across bots, humans and line of business systems – by a low-code BPA platform, team leaders have full visibility into process status and task performance. This provides data that can be used to mine greater value from both RPA and BPA assets.

### Resource optimisation:

Using RPA and low-code BPA together enables organisations to gain maximum value from all resources – including technology, employees, data and content. By delegating the repetitive, rule-based tasks to bots and allowing employees to focus on handling exceptions to the rule, complex customer service cases, or decisions that require strategic or creative thinking – the business gains optimal value from technology and human capital. Simultaneously, process efficiency is elevated, because the low-code BPA platform makes sure that the right people (or RPA resources) are involved in the process at the right time and that they're provided with the correct data or content to complete their tasks.



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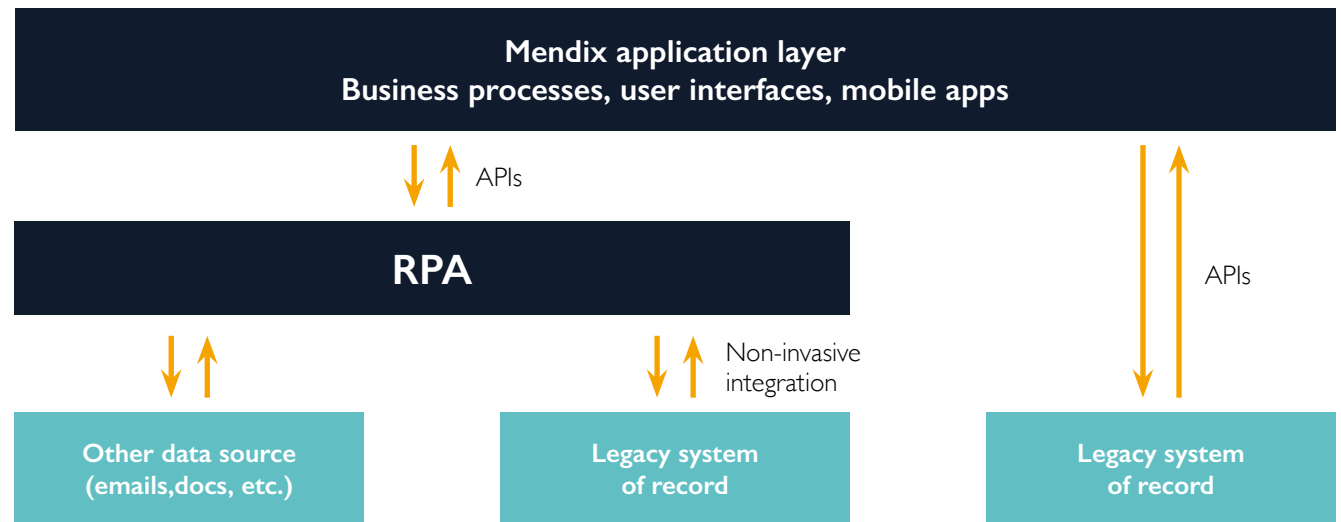


Fig.1: Interactions between Mendix, system of records and RPA

## How to apply RPA and BPA strategically

One key challenge that many organisations face is the fact that transformation needs to happen faster in certain areas of the business – and IT architecture – than others. Some applications and systems need to drive business agility and innovation, while others need to power mission-critical business processes in a stable and non-disruptive way.

A mistake that many IT functions make is treating all application development projects with the same technology strategy. To avoid this, Gartner has proposed a methodology called the ‘Pace-Layered Application Strategy’, which helps IT leaders to categorise their applications according to the rate

at which these assets need to change. They can then apply different technology strategies to each category. According to Gartner, this enables IT to “deliver some systems slowly and robustly and other systems rapidly and flexibly”.<sup>2</sup>

Here’s how organisations can strategically leverage RPA and low-code BPA to deliver maximum value in a Pace-Layered Application environment:

### I. Systems of record:

These are applications and legacy systems that run mission-critical processes and manage master data. As they’re so deeply entrenched (and sometimes

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/binaries/content/assets/events/keywords/applications/apn30/pace-layered-applications-research-report.pdf>

central to regulatory compliance), the rate at which these systems change is relatively slow, with a typical life cycle of 10 years.

RPA is ideally suited to enhancing processes that rely on systems of record, as this technology can automate routine tasks without disrupting underlying systems. In instances where BPA can't access data from legacy systems and integration would be costly or complex, RPA can supplement BPA by replacing integration. Figure 1 illustrates the interactions between Mendix, system of records and RPA.

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**RPA is ideally suited to enhancing processes that rely on systems of record**

### 2. Systems of differentiation:

These applications enable processes that are unique to the company or industry. They tend to have a life cycle of one to three years, because they need to be adapted regularly in line with evolving business requirements.

Agile low-code BPA technology is well suited to this type of application, because it allows for processes to be updated quickly and easily, with minimal disruption. RPA can also allow integration

with systems of differentiation, where no APIs are available. However, RPA solutions will still need to be paired with a BPA platform, for exception handling.

### 3. Systems of innovation:

Typically short life cycle projects of zero to 12 months, these are custom applications that are built to take advantage of new business opportunities or address specific challenges. These lightweight solutions can be developed by users outside the IT department, using low-code BPA tools and pre-configured application components.

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

Working together, RPA and low-code BPA technologies provide both developers and stakeholders outside the IT department with a wider range of tools to meet their diverse application development needs.

When you combine RPA and low-code BPA strategically, you can maintain the stability of core processes and legacy systems, while simultaneously introducing new applications that innovate the way departments operate and serve customers. This powers efficient digital transformation on multiple levels.

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