

Spotlight: Customer Case Study

How Blue Prism's Digital Workforce is increasing Walgreens' HR shared service efficiency by 73%



Walgreens use Blue Prism's Digital Workforce to improve the employee experience and make HR more "human", allowing employees to enhance the customer experience and bottom line — while boosting efficiency in the HR shared services group by 73%.



Walgreens, one of the nation's largest drugstore chains, is included in the Retail Pharmacy USA Division of Walgreens Boots Alliance, the first global pharmacy-led, health and wellbeing enterprise. Across the US, approximately 8 million customers interact with Walgreens — both in stores and online daily.

The business challenges

Walgreens was in the lengthy process of refreshing its core HR and payroll systems — with cloud-based replacements, but supporting this major rollout was stretching the existing staff thin. The company couldn't hire additional people to manage the extra work, so they turned to Robotic Process Automation (RPA). RPA takes existing labor-intensive, transactional work performed by team members and shifts these tasks to Digital Workers for completion thereby freeing up the employee's time and bandwidth.

“Implementing a Digital Workforce gives us the ability to pivot our focus from transactional processing to the employee experience — and then to improving our customer experience too.”

— CURT BURGHARDT, Walgreens' Vice President of HR Shared Services & Systems

For example, approximately 2,000 Walgreens employees are on leave of absence on any given day. Blue Prism automatically loads the necessary data, including whether it's a paid or unpaid leave, into all the required systems. In the workman's compensation process, the Digital Worker instantaneously feeds data back and forth between Walgreens and its claims management service provider.

Walgreens' Vice President of HR Shared Services & Systems, Curt Burghardt, led the RPA initiative. Most business cases call for the business to fund RPA, but after learning from other organizations how difficult that can be, Curt took a different path to self-fund the initiative for Walgreens' HR shared services group. He worked with the finance team to develop a self-funding plan — versus a funded business case which eliminated any expectation of him to reduce team headcount and ensured that they were in full control of the initiative.

To demonstrate RPA's ability to operate effectively within its infrastructure, Walgreens initiated a proof of concept and ensured that all team members who would be using a Digital Workforce were onboard at the start. Communicating with these members early and involving them in identifying eligible processes for RPA — was deemed a critical factor in the success of the initiative, along with engaging with the IT department for assistance with security and personal data related requirements.

Multiple partnerships — shared success

Walgreens researched, spoke with RPA vendors and other companies implementing the technology and chose Blue Prism's enterprise RPA platform along with IBM as its partner for implementation of its cloud-based, core HR and payroll systems. Blue Prism was considered the best choice due to its superior process modelling software — which makes it highly robust, its greater IT security capabilities and the ease with which it would adapt to future system changes. Walgreens also noted the vast number of Blue Prism Digital Workers being successfully employed by other customers — which reassured them about the platform's scale potential.

Even though Walgreens' HR shared services funded the Digital Workforce transformation, various other groups are contributing to its success. Walgreens' internal IT department has been deeply involved in the entire RPA initiative: the team helped in the Blue Prism selection, and established governance around adherence to data privacy laws, network security, and ensured the solution would scale across other portions of the company -beyond HR.

RPA in action

The initial proof of concept made it clear that RPA would be much more than just an efficiency enabler for Walgreen's HR shared services group — it would underpin the transformation of the overall HR function. For example, approximately 2,000 Walgreens employees are on leave of absence on any given day. Blue Prism automatically loads the necessary data, including whether it's a paid or unpaid leave, into all the required systems. In the workman's compensation process, the Digital Worker instantaneously feeds data back and forth between Walgreens and its claims management service provider.

As well as the time savings and improved efficiencies being achieved by automating this transactional work, Blue Prism's ability to go between the different systems was very helpful at demonstrating RPA's ability to Walgreen.

Curt Burghardt was impressed with Blue Prism's OCR integration capabilities and its ability to pull up documents and go between the different systems. He provides an example;

“It is able to read the employee ID and the store number on the document — it knows the difference. You can program the difference into whether it's a store, a distribution number or distribution center, or whether it's somebody in the support office. And if there's something specific that we want to do differently with a distribution center, it can kick it out into a separate queue. It then creates an email to the appropriate address, sends it and saves it to the hard drive for case management. This is all done within a fraction of the time of a human performing the same tasks.”



WALGREEN'S 4 STEP RPA VISION

1. Automate processes to allow for the Digital Workers to assume transactional and repeatable tasks
2. Continually look for ways to optimize processes and improve Digital Worker productivity
3. Deploy team members onto higher value work
4. Continue to develop and integrate artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and effectiveness — while optimizing the employee and customer experience

The business impact

Blue Prism's RPA platform provides Walgreens with the bandwidth to deliver additional work and allows employees to enhance the customer experience and bottom line — while boosting efficiency in the HR shared services group by 73%.

Burghardt added, “Whatever the process, and whatever combination of cloud-based and home-grown on-premises HR systems need to be tapped to perform the process, shared services often plays the connector, and Blue Prism's enterprise-level RPA becomes the glue that ties the different pieces together. Implementing a Digital Workforce gives us the ability to pivot our focus from transactional processing to the employee experience — and then to improving our customer experience too.”

Moving forward, Walgreens is currently exploring how enterprise RPA can bring a consumer-type experience — aka Alexa and Google Home — to its employees and team members. For example, whether it's done by voice or text, a Blue Prism RPA solution could manage a chatbot-driven process. That would give the team much more time to serve employees and make everything move more quickly and easily.

This case study was created off the back of the March 2018 episode of the Blue Prism Café, Blue Prism's thought leadership webinar series. To view a full recording of this webinar, please visit: www.blueprism.com/upcoming-webinars

About Blue Prism

As the pioneer, innovator and market leader in Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Blue Prism delivers the world's most successful Digital Workforce. The company's intelligent digital workers provide business leaders with new operational capacity and intelligent skills to automate mission critical business processes, while meeting the requirements of the most demanding IT environments, where security, compliance and scalability are paramount.

Blue Prism provides a scalable and robust execution platform for best-of-breed AI and cognitive technologies and has emerged as the trusted and secure RPA platform of choice for the Fortune 500.

For more information visit www.blueprism.com.

