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Introduction

In today’s enterprise, automation isn’t a nice-to-have – it’s essential. Increasing business resilience, improving employee and customer experience, gaining competitive advantage: Automation plays a pivotal role in these endeavors and more. According to Gartner, 80% of executives think automation can be applied to any business decision.¹

This report illuminates how far AI and automation are embedded in organizations today and how central this technology is to future plans. Ninety percent of IT decision-makers across all industry sectors plan to implement additional automation and they’re doing it at a brisk pace. Ninety percent of planned implementations within IT functions are expected to happen within the next year; 58% within the next six months.

There is a marked shift toward the autonomous enterprise.

26% of respondents plan to implement machine-operated tasks that require limited human input, or to fully transition to autonomous systems, within the next five years.

To maximize automation’s potential, executives must manage employee concerns. More than one-quarter (26%) of IT leaders that we surveyed say the main obstacle to automation is the fear that employees will leave due to a perception that jobs will be made redundant. The figure rises to 41% among those most responsible for people management: VPs and heads of department. This, despite the fact that 74% of respondents reported that automation has improved employee satisfaction.

¹Gartner Survey Reveals 80% of Executives Think Automation Can Be Applied to Any Business Decision, May 2022
An increasingly complex IT environment is creating challenges that automation can help to address. Nearly half (44%) of organizations say their biggest internal challenge is growing IT complexity due to cloud migration or adoption. With 92% operating a multi-vendor cloud strategy or planning to move to one, the problem is likely to worsen. Two-thirds of IT leaders are planning to implement additional automation within the next 12 months to help mitigate the risk.

When it comes to external challenges, over half (54%) of IT decision-makers put cybersecurity as the number one concern for their organization over the next 12 months – more than the prospect of a recession (36%).

The dawn of the autonomous enterprise is visible on the horizon and many IT leaders are charting a course in that direction. Our report examines both the current conditions and future roadmap of enterprises in their autonomous journey.

**Automation definition**

For the purposes of this report, “automation” refers to a machine-first approach that uses software to minimize human intervention in IT and business processes across infrastructure, applications, and systems. Intelligent automation uses advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to give machines the capabilities to continuously learn. This enables them to make judgments based on data history, take actions, and adapt to changing environments, as well as predict incidents, prescribe solutions, and prevent them.
Methodology

This survey was conducted among 601 IT decision-makers working in organizations with over 1,000 employees across the U.S.

At an overall level, results are accurate to ± 4.0% at 95% confidence limits assuming a result of 50%.

The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research in July 2023 using an email invitation and online survey.
Section 1: State of AI and automation adoption in enterprises

Primary areas of adoption

Most businesses (90%) have implemented automation within IT functions such as IT operations and ticket management. But in second position on the list of adoption areas, alongside customer support and success, sits supply chain (sourcing and procurement). The revolution in supply chain operations over the past two to three years is translating into a strong appetite for the benefits automation brings.

Figure 1: Respondents were asked: “Within which area(s) did your organization implement automation? Select all that apply.”

Maturity levels across enterprises

How are the scales currently weighted when it comes to humans performing tasks vs. full automation? Our survey revealed that one-third (33%) of organizations use machines to assist with tasks but still rely on human input, while close to another third (32%) have progressed to an equal balance of automation and human input.
Only 12% report implementing automation that learns and adapts to changing environments, workloads, technologies and policies, requiring little to no human input, or fully transitioning to self-healing automation with proactive resolution using Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Machine Learning (ML). However, the projection for limited human input and fully transitioning to autonomous in the next five years jumped to 26%, more than double the current implementation.

**Q. How do you project your organization will use automation in the next 5 years? Select one**

- We will rely fully on humans to perform tasks
- We will utilize machines to assist with basic tasks and with human input
- We will have an equal proportion of automation and human processing
- We will have implemented machine-operated tasks that require limited human input
- We will have transitioned to an autonomous system that proactively learns and resolves issues and predicts outcomes with limited or no human input

A total of 26% plan to automate the majority of their operations in the next 5 years.

**Test and learn focus areas**

When it comes to experimenting with different types of automation, Generative AI is the most likely to have been trialed (74%), followed by workflow automation (68%) and AIOps (AI for IT Operations) (65%).

*Figure 2: Respondents were asked: “What types of automation tools has your organization experimented with to date? Select all that apply.”*
Section 2: Managing expectations: What enterprises plan to gain from AI and automation

Advantages of automation

Automation is driving improvement in the key areas of time, effort, growth, and profitability. More than half (55%) of IT decision-makers think the main advantage of automation is higher productivity, closely followed by greater efficiency (47%), improved scalability (44%), time savings (42%) and increased profits (35%).

Figure 3: Respondents were asked: “What do you think are the main advantages of automation? Select up to four options.”
Measuring success

Being able to evaluate and report on the impact of automation is key for successful implementation. Survey respondents are measuring increases in productivity/efficiency (53%), profitability (45%), ROI (43%) and analytics to support data-driven decision-making (43%).

Eighty-two percent of respondents have seen increases in employee productivity or efficiency since introducing automation. While better productivity is often the goal in implementing automation, businesses are seeing additional, broader benefits. Eighty-two percent of respondents have seen an improvement in customer satisfaction – with more than one-third categorizing that improvement as “significant.”

One surprising finding is that, despite concerns in some areas about the potential for AI and automation to eliminate jobs, 74% of IT decision-makers have seen improvements in employee satisfaction thanks to automation.
Section 3: The challenges of AI and automation implementation

The automation implementation balancing act

Businesses are introducing automation to improve efficiency and effectiveness – but naturally there are challenges along the way. Forty-four percent of respondents believe the main drawback to automation is higher levels of maintenance, closely followed by workplace insecurity for employees (43%).

More than one in four (26%) feel that the main obstacle to automation in their organization is a fear that employees will leave, or the perception there will be job redundancy. This opinion is particularly strong among heads of department and VPs (41%), underlining the tough balancing act these executives face in improving productivity while ensuring staff feel valued and perceive their jobs to be safe.

Other notable obstacles to automation are availability of the right tools and solutions (24%) and lack of tangible or measurable ROI (23%).

Figure 5: Respondents were asked: “What are the main obstacles to automating within your organization today? Select up to three options.”
Section 4: Wider context: Risks impacting IT leaders and their organizations

Managing complexity and change

The complexity of today’s IT environment is causing headaches for technology leaders. The top internal challenge – identified by 44% of respondents – is the growth in IT complexity due to the migration or adoption of cloud technology. And the situation is likely to get worse: 92% of organizations have a multi-vendor cloud strategy or are planning to move to one in the next year.

Willingness to change is vital if businesses are to adapt in line with the technology environment. Nearly one-third (29%) of the C-suite say that their biggest internal concern is resistance to change – a higher figure than among other roles. The same issue troubles decision-makers at larger organizations (10,000+ employees), where it was cited as the top challenge by 35% of respondents.

Figure 6: Respondents were asked: “What are the biggest internal risks/challenges that you foresee for your organization over the next 12 months? Select up to five.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing IT complexity due to migration / adoption of cloud technologies</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving profitability</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving productivity / efficiency</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of AI and machine learning</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing hybrid work environment</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee retention</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty hiring valuable skillsets</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change resistance</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting digital transformation targets</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing return to work transition</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing technical debt</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of executive support</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization siloes</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Automation to address risks – internal and external

Automation is welcomed as a way of dealing with internal challenges: 57% of IT decision-makers plan to implement automation within the next 12 months to reduce the impact of internal risks, while 39% have already implemented it with that aim.

The most significant external risk over the next 12 months is cybersecurity, cyberwarfare and/or ransomware attacks, according to over half (54%) of respondents. To date, only 38% have implemented automation to address the risk, while 49% are planning to do so over the next six months.
Conclusion: Looking into the future

There is an overwhelming sense that automation has become critical to business success. Ninety percent of organizations plan to implement additional automation within the next 12 months. Over two-thirds (67%) are planning to do so within their IT function – and there’s a sense of urgency here, with 90% of respondents saying this will happen in less than a year, and 58% in less than six months.

Other areas planning additional automation include **supply chain (45%)**, **business operations (37%)**, and **finance and accounting (36%)**.
The top departments (outside of IT) where organizations will invest in automation within the next year are customer success and support (89%), finance and accounting (89%) and sales (88%).

But some organizations risk getting left behind. Ten percent of businesses responding to our survey rely completely on humans to perform tasks. Three-quarters (75%) rely on humans to perform at least 50% of tasks.

Speed of adoption may vary, but automation will reach the vast majority of organizations: 90% are planning to implement some level of automation in the next five years. More than one-quarter (26%) have ambitions towards full autonomy: implementing machine-operated tasks with limited human input or fully transitioning to autonomous systems in the next five years. A further 30% expect to have an equal proportion of automation and human processing.

Figure 9: Respondents were asked: “How do you project your organization will use automation in the next 5 years? Select one.”

AI and automation are integral to business success. Those who can negotiate the pitfalls and grasp the opportunities on the road toward the autonomous enterprise are those most likely to thrive in an ever-changing technological and business environment.
About Digitate

Digitate is a leading software provider bringing agility, assurance, and resiliency to IT and business operations. Digitate’s flagship product, ignio™, is an award-winning AIOps solution that reimagines the enterprise business landscape with its distinctive closed-loop approach. It combines context, insights, and intelligent automation to resolve, prevent, and predict issues autonomously. Our customers span multiple industries and include global enterprises that are leaders and innovators. To stay up to date on ignio™ news and learn how our clients across the globe have benefited from our innovative solutions, visit us at www.digitate.com and follow Digitate on X and LinkedIn.

About Sapio Research

Sapio Research is a full-service B2B and tech market research agency that helps businesses grow thanks to high quality, efficient, and honest research solutions. We are an enthusiastic and purpose-driven team of expert market researchers and we’re passionate about supporting brands and PR & communications agencies in all areas of quantitative and qualitative research.

We deliver valuable evidence to support our clients so they understand their audience, create extraordinary content and headlines, and make vital business decisions relevant to their market.

We’re based in the UK and have access to over 149 million people across 130 countries, working with clients that range from top tech companies to global consultancies, PR & communications agencies, and household name brands.

Find your voice, captivate your market, and power your growth with Sapio Research.

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