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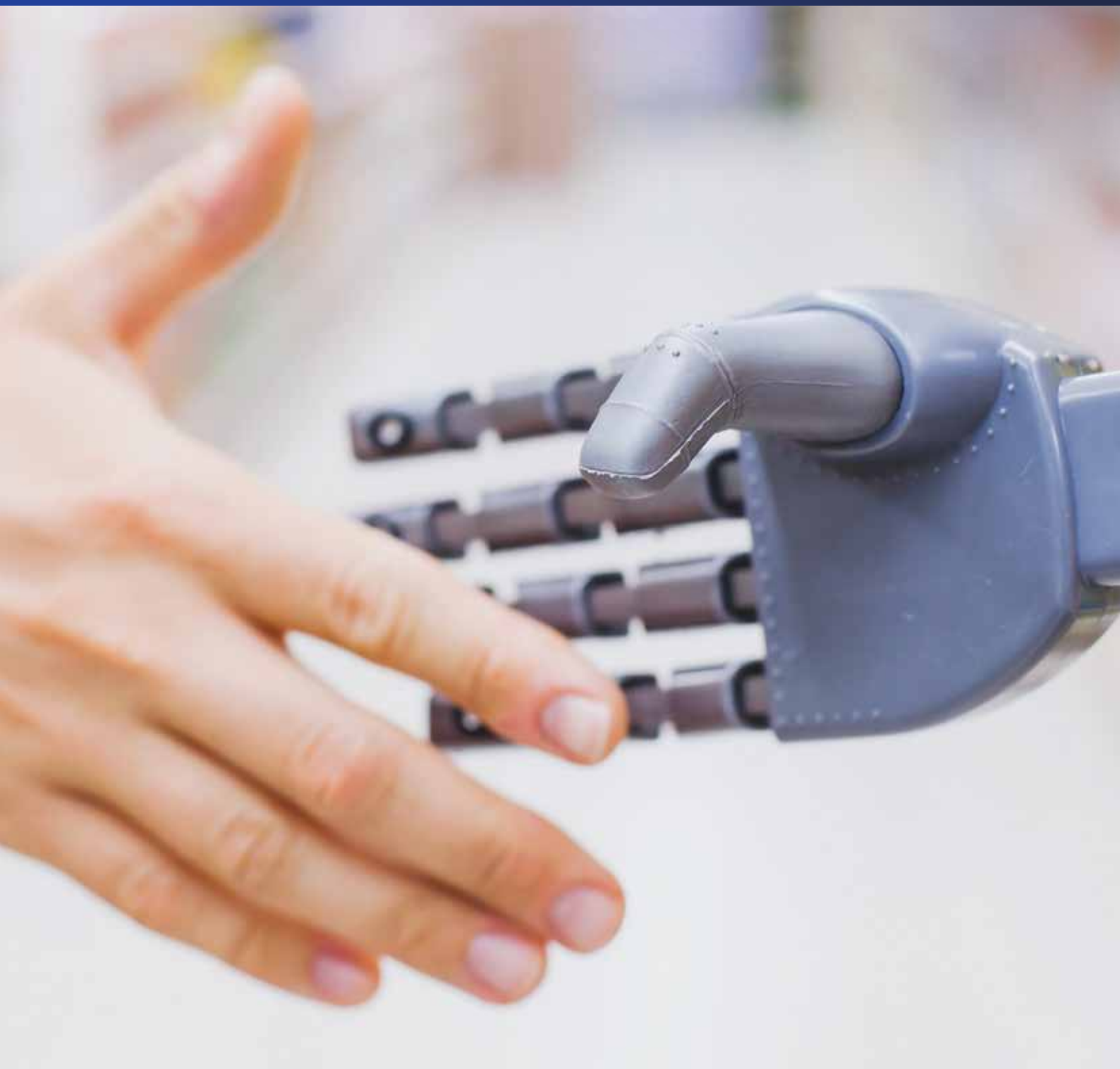
SERVICE AUTOMATION FRAMEWORK®

The Service Automation Framework

An introduction to the design and delivery of automated services

By Jan-Willem Middelburg. Author and Chief Examiner, Service Automation Framework Alliance



Foreword – Richard Pharro

A lot has been written about the need for organizations to become digital and to transform the way they work. There is a wealth of information on the benefits of doing business in the digital age, how start-ups can access a global market within days of launching their innovative products and how existing companies can unlock opportunities through new online services.

Some businesses, by their very nature, are using technology to provide an enhanced customer experience. These businesses have transformed the way they work with their customers and have raised customer expectations that in return, affect all businesses. However, little has been written about how an existing business can achieve this transformational change. What are the management and operational issues the business needs to address and how does it go about redesigning its business practices. All too frequently realigning doesn't work to deliver an automated service to its customers.

The Service Automation Framework addresses this problem, not as a technology issue but as a management and business process issue. Drawing on his wealth of personal experience and that of his colleagues, Jan-Willem Middelburg has developed a comprehensive framework that works for any size of business and will provide a blue print which shows how to respond to both societal demand and market pressures to provide their services with as little human intervention as possible.

Richard Pharro
CEO APMG-International

An Introduction to the Service Automation Framework

This white paper provides a high level overview of the Service Automation Framework, which was launched in 2017. The aim of this paper is to explain the key business drivers behind service automation and to provide an overview of the structure of the framework.

What is Service Automation?

Service Automation – the concept of delivering services through smart technology – is a rapidly growing area of interest for most organizations. Companies such as Spotify, Netflix and Uber (who deliver 100% automated services) have proven that organizations can achieve rapid growth and gain a competitive advantage by relying on Service Automation.

The core objective of service automation is to transition analog (or manual) steps of the service delivery process into automated steps. By making this transition, service providers are able to deliver their services instantly, cost-effectively and to a potentially bigger market. Taking the steps towards the delivery of automated services is however not straightforward. Many organizations struggle with the question of where to start or which services to automate. The Service Automation Framework was developed to provide an answer to this question.

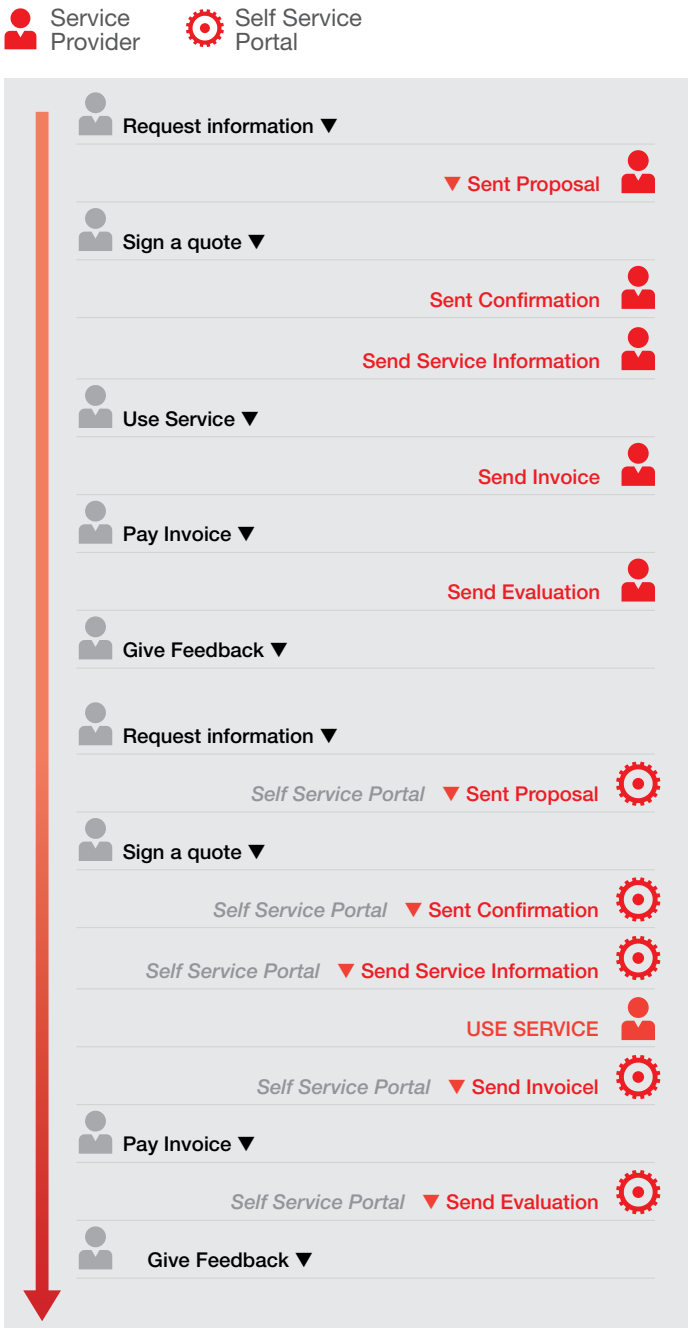
Services as processes

The first step towards the delivery of automated services is to realize that every service can be broken down into a process. Every service – small or large – consists of a number of interactions between a service provider and a user.

A frequently used example in the domain of service automation is the ride sharing companies such as Uber, Lyft and Grab. Their primary service consists of a number of steps: searching and requesting a ride, driving from A to B, paying and reviewing the service. A simple service that has been around for decades. Yet, what these companies did differently is that they completely automated every step of the way (with the exception of the actual ride itself).

Similar to the example above, most organizations can break down their services into a number of steps – a process. Once these services are broken down into these smaller steps, these actions need to be scripted into workflows and scripts, effectively making it automated services. The process of service automation in depicted into figure 1 below:

figure 1: The process of service automation.



The Service Automation Business Case

Service Automation is not so much an internal process model through which organizations can organize their service delivery, but a business model that enables an organization to gain competitive advantage in the future. Organizations that establish automated services that are better, more efficient and more focused on user experience have the potential to become tomorrow's leading companies.

Both digital disruptors (think AirBnB, Spotify and Uber) as well as existing service conglomerates (think IBM, Genpact or Accenture) have proven that it is possible to outperform other competitors by focusing on the delivery of automated services. As with any strategic question, the motive of change is primarily driven by increased earning capacity. Service Automation has five key business drivers that enable organizations to outperform their competition:

1. Service Automation facilitates a *scalable* business model by which companies can enter new markets more easily and attract new customers;
2. Service Automation assists companies in making *data-driven decisions* based on earlier interactions with users and customers. More accurate information provides companies with a competitive advantage;
3. Service Automation is *user centric*. Services are always designed with the objective of providing an optimal user experience;
4. The aim of Service Automation is to automate unnecessary manual labor, providing a *more cost-efficient* service delivery organization;
5. And last but not least, by breaking down services into easy-to-understand steps, Service Automation provides a framework for consistently exceeding *user expectations*. By adopting the concept of *Serendipity Management*, organizations can transform customers into fans.

The emergence of technology-enabled automated services together with the five key business drivers makes a sound business case for many organizations. Yet the dynamics of trends in modern service technology contrast with the speed through which organizations focus on delivering automated services. Maybe the potential of automation technology is not fully understood in boardrooms yet, or perhaps automation is currently stuck too much in the IT domain? Service Automation, however, is a topic that is quickly climbing up executive agendas, since it is a model designed to increase market share in today's 'experience economy.'

A High Level Overview of the Service Automation Framework

The Service Automation Framework was developed to provide organizations with a practical model to start the design and delivery automated service. The objectives of the framework are to:

- Provide a uniform and simple model that everyone can use to start with service automation;
- Provide uniform terminology for practitioners involved with the design and delivery or automated services;
- Provide a number of practical techniques and templates that makes the process of designing automated services as easy as possible.

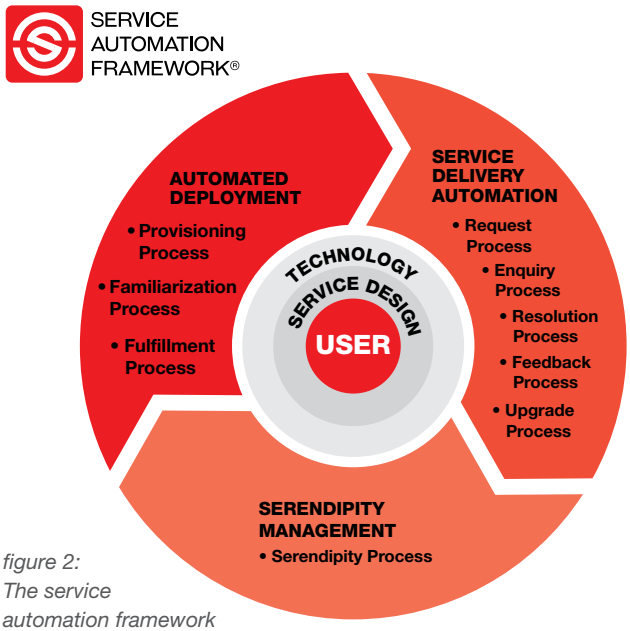


figure 2: The service automation framework

The Service Automation Framework is depicted above in figure 2. The model covers six distinctive building blocks through which organizations can start to design and deliver automated services. Although there is a logical sequence in the order of the building blocks, each one is equally important in achieving the overall benefits and value of Service Automation.

The Service Automation Framework starts with the three concentric circles, which together form the foundational building blocks for delivering valuable services to users. In a similar way to how a human body is structured by its anatomy, a service can be structured by the first three building blocks of the Service Automation Framework. As depicted in figure 2, the inner circles consist of the following elements:

1. **User:** the building block that defines the key characteristics of the groups of people a service provider aims to serve;
2. **Service Design:** the business function that designs and defines the service offering of a service provider. It is solidifying service concepts into an actual design, including the relevant support structures and digital interfaces;
3. **Technology:** the building block that defines the setup and usability of the digital interfaces, connecting service providers with their users

The first three building blocks are at the core of any service provider's business model. Successful service organizations deliver their predefined services (service design) to customers (users) using some assets or tools (technology).

The second three clusters (on the outside of figure 2) introduce the 'automation' elements – the methods and processes that make the service fit for automated delivery. This is the stage where self-service platforms and applications are designed and scripted.

These three elements of the Service Automation Framework make the model 'smart,' which means that they provide the methods and processes that enable the service to interact with users without human intervention. Consequently, these three building blocks can be considered the 'brains' of Service Automation:

4. **Automated Deployment:** the processes that enable a user to start using a service based on his or her own action;
5. **Service Delivery Automation:** the processes that enable a user to change or resolve any aspect of the service based on his or her own action;
6. **Serendipity Management:** the processes that facilitate a planned and continuous approach in order to constantly exceed the expectations of users.

Each of these building blocks is subsequently broken down into a number of processes that can be used to operate the daily delivery of the automated services.

Taking the Next Steps in Service Automation

In this white paper, we have provided an introductory overview of the Service Automation Framework and its key business drivers. In order to learn more about this topic, you can visit the service automation website (www.serviceautomation.org) or visit APMG-International (www.apmg-international.com).

About the Author

Jan-Willem Middelburg is the Regional Director for the Asian Pacific Division of Pink Elephant, based in Kuala Lumpur. He is responsible for Pink Elephant's regional strategy and operations in Asia, an appointment he holds as of January 1st, 2016. Prior this appointment, he was responsible for restarting the office of Pink Elephant in the Netherlands.

In 2017, Jan-Willem published the Service Automation Framework for the design and delivery of automated services, which is internationally considered the first leading publication on Service Automation. As author of the book, he is a frequent keynote speaker and moderator at universities and technology conferences around the world. Jan-Willem holds a bachelor (BSc) in Industrial Engineering and a Master (MSc) in Supply Chain Management from the Rotterdam School of Management.

1 Pine, B. Joseph, and James H. Gilmore. The experience economy. Harvard Business Press, 2011.