



Empowering Efficiency:

Automation's Potential in Public Sector Workflows

Public sector organizations face ongoing challenges with productivity due to manual processes and outdated technologies. Automation represents a powerful opportunity for public sector agencies to modernize their operations, reduce inefficiencies, and improve the work experience for employees.



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Executive Summary

Public sector organizations face ongoing challenges with productivity due to manual processes and outdated technologies. Automation represents a powerful opportunity for public sector agencies to modernize their operations, reduce inefficiencies, and improve the work experience for employees. The report has three major findings:

1. Manual processes and outdated technology result in significant time lost and frustration among employees.

The slowness of these processes causes government employees to lose an average of 46 minutes per day. This inefficiency stems from slow approvals, redundant workflows, and paper-based systems, which create widespread frustration and reduce the ability of agencies to achieve their missions.

2. Automation is already understood as an important tool for eliminating redundant tasks, reducing frustration, and improving overall workflow efficiency.

Automation is widely seen as a solution to inefficiencies, with 82% of employees acknowledging its potential to streamline workflows and improve productivity. By eliminating repetitive tasks and accelerating decision-making, automation enables employees to focus on higher-value, mission-critical work while boosting morale.

3. Security and internal resources pose the biggest challenges.

Despite its benefits, automation faces adoption challenges, including security concerns (cited by 73% of respondents), limited internal expertise (62%), and insufficient training (49%). Addressing these barriers through phased

implementation, robust employee training, and secure, user-friendly tools is essential for success. Bringing in larger, top-down automation pathways instead of individual task-based automation could address some of these barriers more cohesively.



Introduction

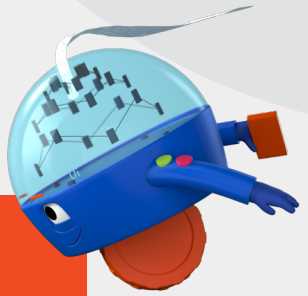
In today's fast-paced work environment, productivity remains a critical focus for government employees and public sector organizations. However, manual processes and outdated technologies continue to impede efficiency, contributing to widespread frustration. These inefficiencies not only impact the productivity of individual employees but also affect the overall ability of public sector agencies to deliver on their missions.

On average, employees report losing 46 minutes each day to inefficiencies caused by manual workflows. When multiplied across teams and agencies, these lost minutes translate into significant productivity losses, missed opportunities, and unmet goals. For government employees, whose work often involves high-stakes missions and critical services,

these delays can have far-reaching implications. Even one hour of lost productivity for one federal employee can cost taxpayers up to \$13,260 a year. For an agency of 100,000, that's over \$1.3 billion in potential lost productivity.¹ For state and local governments, these lost minutes translate into reduced capacity to deliver critical services, increased operational costs, and missed opportunities to drive efficiency a key priority to optimize resources and meet the growing demands of their constituents.

As public sector organizations look to modernize, automation offers a compelling solution. By streamlining workflows and reducing inefficiencies, automation tools can significantly improve productivity and morale,

helping employees focus on mission-critical tasks. This paper explores the challenges posed by manual processes and outdated technologies while highlighting the transformative potential of automation in empowering federal employees and improving agency outcomes.



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1 - Based on [average 2024 federal salary](#) of \$106,462 and typical of 260 days worked p/year.

Employee Frustrations and Productivity Challenges

Manual processes and outdated technologies have long been a source of frustration for public sector employees, impeding their ability to work efficiently and effectively. These challenges are especially pronounced in areas such as data entry, approvals, and reporting, where slow and error-prone manual processes create significant bottlenecks.

The negative impact of these inefficiencies is profound. A significant majority (88%) of respondents report that manual processes, such as slow approval workflows and manual data entry, adversely affect their ability to complete tasks in a timely manner. This frustration is particularly acute among state and local employees, with nearly half (48%) indicating that these

delays occur frequently or even constantly.

Time lost to inefficiencies is a critical concern. On average, employees lose 46 minutes every day to issues caused by outdated systems and manual processes. For more than one in five employees, this figure exceeds an hour each day. Handling physical documents, in particular, represents a significant drain on productivity, as these processes often lead to duplication, redundancies, and delays. Over 22% of respondents lose more than an hour each day handling physical documents, and 53% of respondents cite duplication, redundancy, and delays related to paper-based processes as significant problems. Outdated infrastructure further

compounds the problem, with 70% of employees identifying legacy technology as a major barrier to efficiency.

These challenges highlight the pressing need for public sector organizations to modernize their workflows. Without addressing these inefficiencies, employees will continue to face unnecessary obstacles that prevent them from performing their duties effectively.

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The Automation Solution

Automation offers a transformative solution to the challenges posed by manual workflows and outdated technologies. By streamlining repetitive tasks, reducing errors, and accelerating decision-making, automation enables employees to focus on more strategic and impactful work.

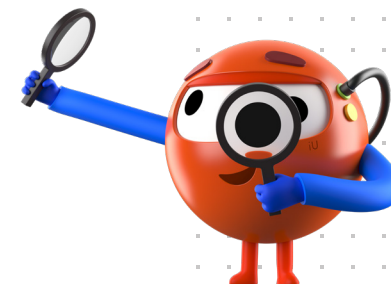
Public sector organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of automation. A vast majority of respondents (82%) report that their organizations understand the benefits of automating processes. This widespread awareness reflects the tangible impact automation has already had in eliminating redundant tasks and improving workflow efficiency.

Improving internal processes is also a priority for many organizations, with 67%

focusing on enhancing efficiency and 65% actively working to automate workflows. Common targets for automation include tasks such as data entry, approvals, and reporting. Automating these processes not only reduces delays but also enables employees to dedicate more time to mission-critical activities that require their expertise.

This ability to accelerate workflows is one of the key benefits of automation. For more than half of respondents, this is the most valuable benefit of automation, surpassing other advantages such as improved remote access to documents, by a twenty-three-point margin. This is particularly important for state and local respondents. Speeding up decision-making—a key challenge

for 70% of respondents—is another significant advantage. By addressing these inefficiencies, automation helps public sector employees work more effectively, improving outcomes for both employees and the agencies they serve.



Empowering Employees

Beyond improving efficiencies, automation can play a crucial role in enhancing the day-to-day experience of employees. Automation contributes to a more positive and productive work environment through reducing frustration and delays.

Streamlined workflows have a direct impact on employee morale. Three quarters (74%) of respondents believe that automating processes would lead to noticeable improvements in workplace satisfaction. By removing repetitive and time-consuming tasks from their daily routines, employees can focus on more meaningful and rewarding work, which ultimately boosts morale and job satisfaction.

However, the successful adoption of automation tools depends on more than just the technology itself. Training plays a critical role in ensuring that employees can use these

tools effectively. Almost half of respondents (49%) cite a lack of training as a significant barrier to adoption. To overcome this hurdle, organizations should invest in comprehensive training programs that demonstrate the practical benefits of automation. Such programs should highlight how these tools address everyday frustrations, making them indispensable assets in employees' workflows.

How this automation is adopted matters as well. "In the last year, we have seen a tangible shift in customers focusing on larger automation initiatives rather than the aggregating smaller automation use cases," says Christopher Radich, Chief Technology Officer of Public Sector with UiPath. "We believe this is a result of automation programs maturing and AI capabilities crossing the chasm into the

mainstream." Automation no longer must be individual – it can be an agency-wide, holistic shift.

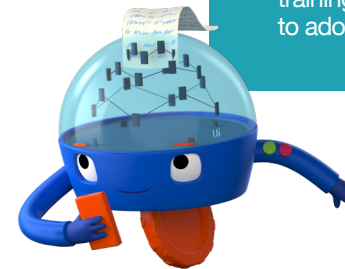
This is particularly important as organizations look to the future. Automation strategies can support organizations in fully embracing the potential of artificial intelligence (AI). One-third of respondents have already begun the process of adoption or are substantially or completely done implementing process automation and AI-assisted automation. Combining automation and AI enables faster and cost-effective service delivery that reduces employee frustration and propels the mission.

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Overcoming Barriers to Adoption

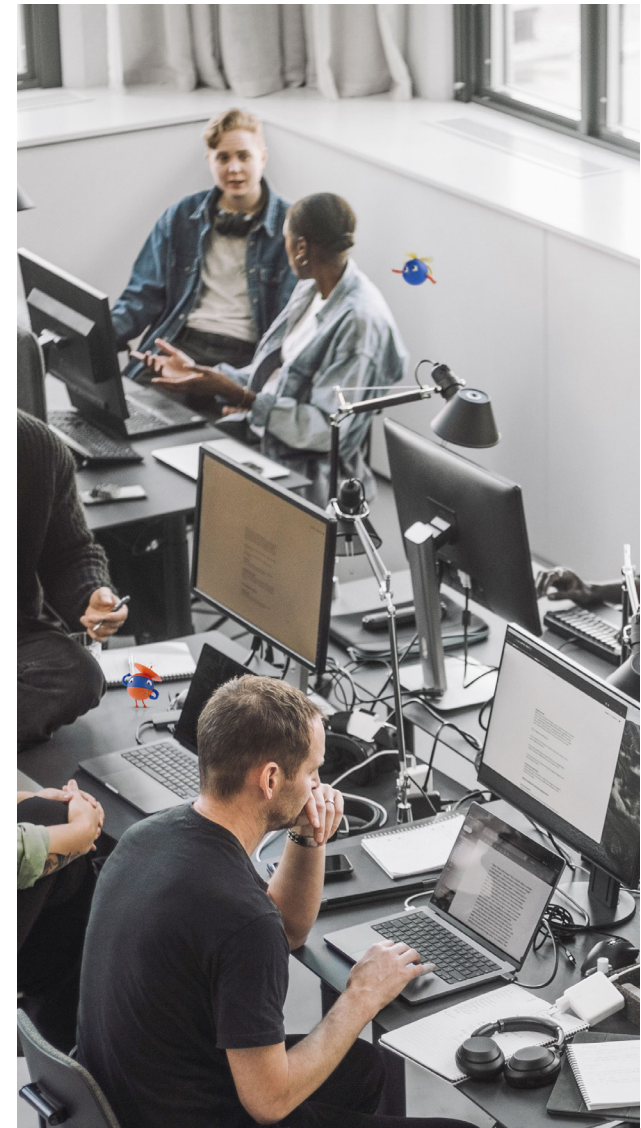
Over a third (33%) of respondents have begun or are substantially along the process of implementing process automation and AI-assisted automation, and 29% are currently planning for adoption. Still, despite its clear benefits and widespread interest, the adoption of automation in the public sector is not without challenges. Public sector employees and leaders recognize the potential of automation to improve productivity and simplify workflows, but concerns around security, resources, and expertise often stand in the way.

Security is the most commonly cited barrier to adoption, with 73% of respondents expressing concerns about the safety of automation

solutions. Addressing these concerns requires comprehensive, enterprise-wide automation governance capabilities. Demonstrating that automation is an organizational priority can also help pave the way for governing AI applications as they arise.

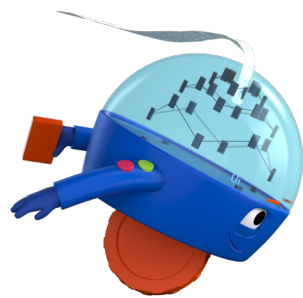
Resource limitations are another significant challenge. A lack of internal expertise is reported by 62% of respondents, while 61% point to insufficient internal resources as a barrier. To overcome these challenges, organizations can explore partnerships with experienced vendors and implement scalable solutions that fit their unique needs.

While budget constraints do play a role – 71% of respondents mention budget constraints as a barrier – 53% also say that automating processes is not too costly for their organization. This finding suggests that, with careful planning and prioritization, automation investments can be both feasible and impactful.



Best Practices

To ensure the successful implementation of automation, public sector organizations must adopt a thoughtful, strategic, and comprehensive approach. Gradual adoption, training, and ongoing support are key to maximizing the benefits of automation while minimizing disruptions.



Establish automation as an enterprise-wide priority.	Implement automation boldly	Focus on employee training	Offer employees long-term support and engagement	Choose thoughtful partners
Automation should be a strategic business imperative, with high-level leaders like a commissioner or a secretary as the overall champion. Amid changing regulatory and political environments, automation can be the most effective way to ensure mission outcomes.	Start by digitizing paper-based processes and automating repetitive workflows to quickly reduce delays while allowing employees to adjust gradually to new systems.	Comprehensive training is essential to reduce hesitation and resistance toward new automation tools. Programs that focus on showing how these tools directly reduce everyday frustrations will foster buy-in and ease transitions.	Continuous engagement with employees and refining the use of tools based on feedback will ensure that the solutions effectively address the root causes of delays.	Choosing the right automation tool and vendor partnerships makes a difference. A secure and user-friendly tool ensures rapid adoption and scalability, enabling agencies to meet their goals while addressing employee concerns about safety and usability.

Conclusion

“Automation leaders are gaining confidence to tackle core mission challenges such as systems modernization, DevOps, digitization, citizen and employee engagement,” says Radich. As automation tools become more complex and document-led, following automation pathways, government leaders are finding more ways to improve productivity and enhancing workplace satisfaction. By addressing inefficiencies and enabling employees to focus on meaningful work, automation helps agencies fulfill their missions more effectively. Public sector organizations should prioritize investments in automation and employee training, adopting a gradual and thoughtful approach to implementation. With the right strategies and tools, automation can transform the public sector work environment, empowering employees and driving mission success.

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