



**Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study  
2019-United States**

## **ENGAGING EMPLOYEES EARLY ON IN PROCESS AUTOMATION IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS**

A recent study conducted in the United States and two other countries confirms that employees want to be engaged early on in the process of identifying automation opportunities, like RPA, in their organization. More than anything they want honest communication and the information and training they need to excel in an increasingly digital and automated world. This is good news for them and their employers.

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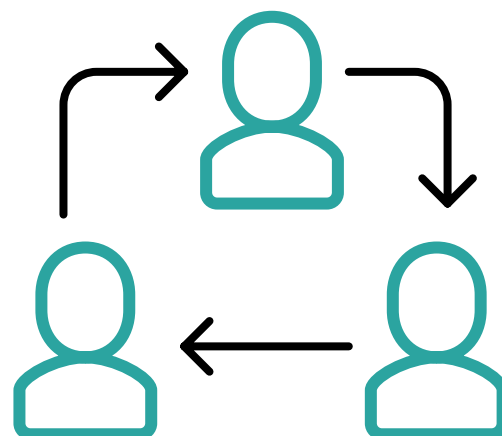
# INTRODUCTION

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) – software tools that help automate routine, repetitive business tasks – is quickly becoming a mainstream business solution that helps companies improve productivity, reduce operating costs, and free up employees' time to make a difference in their business. With RPA adoption generally considered to be around 50% among mid-sized to larger enterprises in the United States, the opportunity is there for businesses to do more when it comes to automation.

But they face the challenge of how best to implement and scale RPA while ensuring that employees are not only engaged, but also full participants in the process, to optimize the chances of success. One key reason why they need to address this challenge urgently is - there's a skills gap. With over 500,000 open positions for developers in the US alone, and only 30,000 new Computer Science graduates entering the job market each year, engaging business people to not only actively participate in RPA initiatives, but also to start developing their own automations, isn't just a 'nice-to-have' – **it's essential**.

## Current approach to RPA is not the full answer

Rationale	Traditional, top-down approach
Upfront Investment	Higher
Risk	Higher
Development Method	Hybrid
Automation Discovery	Limited
Scope	COE / Center of Excellence
Employee Engagement	Low



<sup>1</sup>Softmotive Global Study 2018, RPA Solutions for Growth Companies.

Softomotive's People<sup>1st</sup> approach is a fundamentally new way to deploy RPA by putting the power in the hands of the end user. People<sup>1st</sup> ensures that employees are properly equipped with the full support and collaboration of their company's IT function to automate what they want, when they want, within pre-defined boundaries. At the end of the day, it is the end users or citizen developers who have the best understanding of the work required to accelerate process discovery and automation for better business outcomes. Logically, it makes sense that they should be part of any RPA project from the start. **Nevertheless, key questions remain...**

- ▶ Is a People<sup>1st</sup> Approach in alignment with today's employees in terms of their own interests and outlook for the future?
- ▶ How involved do they really want to be in the RPA implementation process?
- ▶ What's in it for them?
- ▶ What concerns do they have? How can an organization help alleviate them?
- ▶ What types of training do they need?
- ▶ Are certain types of employees better equipped to lead the way?



Feedback from over

**529**  
employees  
in the US

To help answer these questions, Softomotive, in partnership with KS&R, Inc., a global market research and consulting firm, conducted an in-depth study with employees to better understand their point of view on these issues, and provide senior management with fresh perspectives to help guide decision-making as it pertains to creating the right environment and support structure so people can flourish in this new era of citizen RPA development.

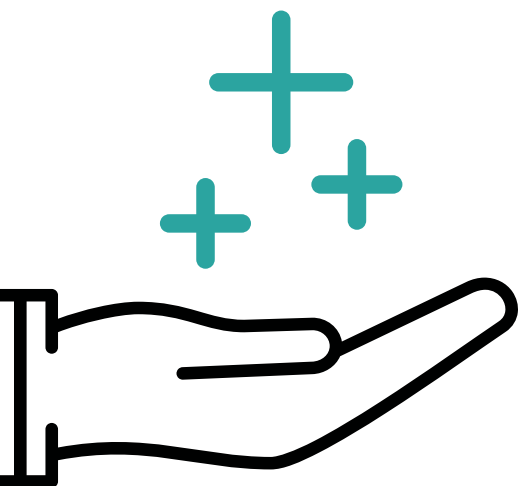
Included in this study is feedback from 529 employees based in the United States (US). All are full-time employees that work at least 35 hours per week in organizations with 5,000+ employees (47% work in companies with 20,000+ employees). Employees interviewed work in a variety of different fields including manufacturing, financial services, healthcare and telecommunications and in a number of different functional areas including sales, finance, customer service and IT. Roughly 20% of those interviewed are under the age of 40.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results from the study revealed six key findings that should be considered in terms of when and how companies should engage employees in the RPA process:

1. There is significant opportunity to extract more business value from an organization's current talent pool. Employees in the United States estimate that over one-third of their time every week (35%) is spent on activities that do not contribute significant value to the business.
2. Employees currently spend a lot of their time on activities that are not aligned with their own aspirations and the types of work they enjoy doing. Employees in the United States revealed that they spend "too much time" on activities that they don't enjoy, including administrative and repetitive/mundane tasks.
3. Most employees are interested in RPA because it frees them up to focus on activities they enjoy and that contribute greater value to the business. Nearly 70% of employees in the United States are interested in automation tools. 44% of them see in automation a way to free up time to work on "higher value" activities.
4. Employees want to be more than passive spectators in the RPA process; they want a voice early on about where and how RPA is used. In the United States, nearly 70% of employees interviewed want at least "a little" input into the decision to automate.
5. Getting employees trained and involved early on in the RPA process can also help alleviate their biggest concern – that they won't be prepared for a more automated future in the workforce. While 78% of employees in the United States feel prepared to handle an increase in automation, 3% feel "not at all prepared."
6. Aside from information and training, companies that provide employees with the means and incentives to collaborate across the organization stand the best chance of optimizing their RPA investments. In the United States, 89% of those interviewed stated that they are likely to share automation activities/processes with other employees in their business unit, while 73% stated they were likely to share automation activities/processes with other employees in their company.



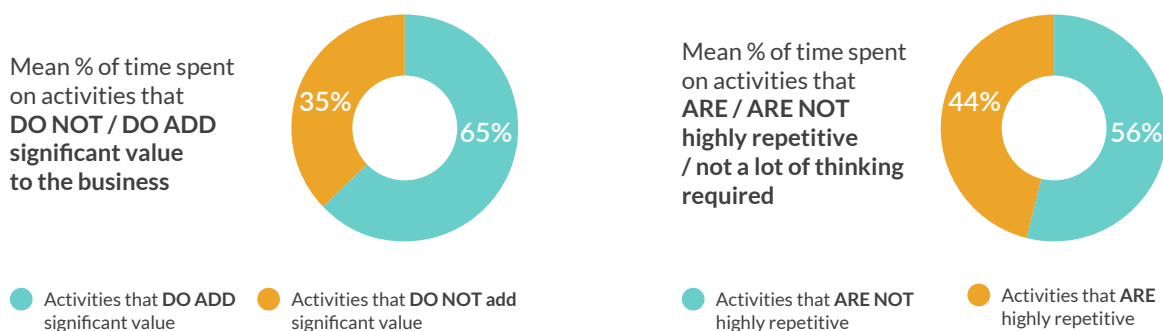
## DETAILED FINDINGS

### KEY FINDING #1

There is significant opportunity to extract more business value from an organization's current talent pool.

By US employees' own estimates, over one-third of their time (35%) in an average week is spent on activities that don't contribute significant value to the business, slightly below the global average (37%). Even more time (44% on average) is spent on highly repetitive tasks that don't require a lot of thinking (**Fig. 1**).

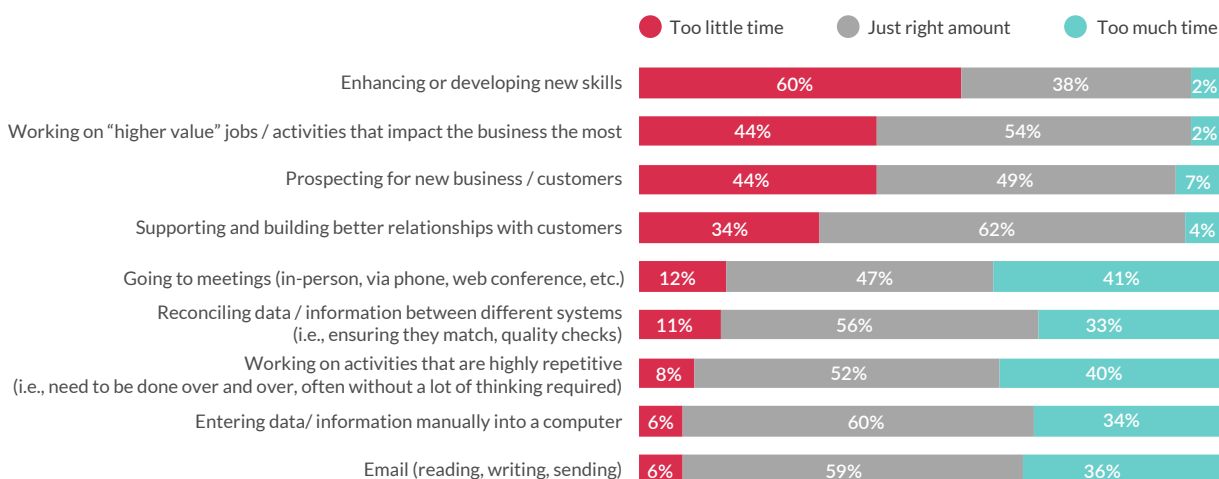
Figure 1: Mean Percent of Time Spent on Activities That Do Not Add Value / Are Highly Repetitive, United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

Employees also indicate that they spend too much time on mundane or repetitive tasks and too little time enhancing their own skills, working on things that really impact the business. Some 60% of employees surveyed in the United States believe they are spending "too little time" enhancing or developing new skills, while 44% believe they are spending "too little time" working on "higher value" activities or prospecting new customers (**Fig. 2**).

Figure 2: Time Spent On Different Activities At Current Job, United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

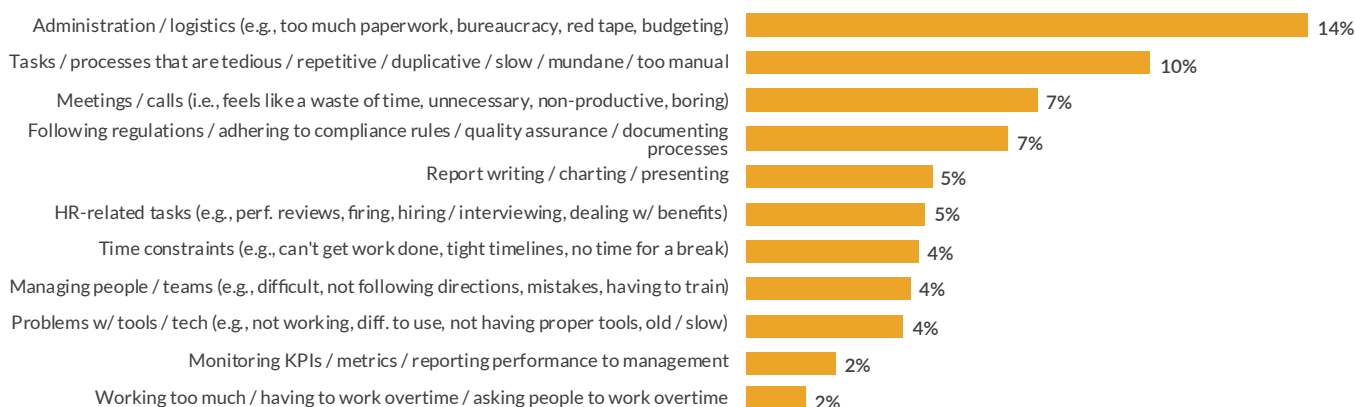
At a time when many companies are hard pressed to add headcount, or find needed skills, it is not sustainable over the long-term to have more than one-third of an employee's time taken up by activities that don't add real value to the business, or that could be performed by better leveraging automation technologies.

## KEY FINDING #2

Employees currently spend a lot of their time on activities that are not aligned with their own aspirations and the types of work they enjoy doing.

Aside from dealing with difficult customers or colleagues, the activities that employees enjoy the least are typically mundane and repetitive, and don't require much creative or analytical thought (**Fig. 3**). In the United States, 14% of employees interviewed listed administrative or bureaucratic tasks as one of the three least favored activities at work, in line with our findings worldwide.

Figure 3: Work Activities Employees Enjoy The LEAST (Unaided Mentions), United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

Spending time on low-value, low-engagement activities is not just bad for business, it also leads to higher levels of employee dissatisfaction and turnover. At a minimum, it will lead to lower employee morale levels that can result in reduced customer satisfaction levels and business performance.

Conversely, activities that employees enjoy the most are generally the ones that add more value to the business and that upper management wants them to focus on. In the United States, over one quarter of employees interviewed cited interacting with customers as one of the top three activities that they most enjoy at work while 19% cited doing analysis as one of the top three activities that they most enjoy (**Fig. 4**). These are among the activities that these same employees believe they are not spending enough time on.

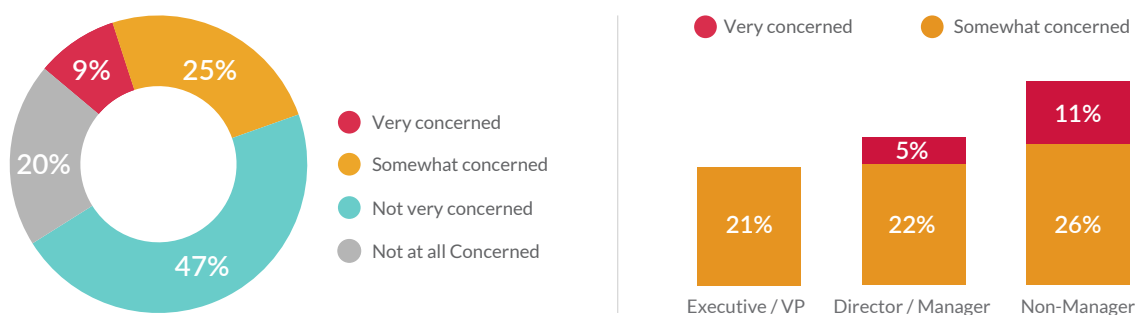
Figure 4: Work Activities Employees Enjoy The MOST (Unaided Mentions), United States

Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"**KEY FINDING #3**

Most employees are interested in RPA because it frees them up to focus on activities they like to work on and that contribute more to the business.

A small share of employees do express concerns about RPA leading to a loss of their jobs. In the United States only 9% of employees interviewed are "very concerned" about losing their jobs as a result of the implementation of RPA, with a further 25% stating that they are "somewhat concerned" (**Fig 5**). The share of "very concerned" employees in the United States is much lower than it is in other countries (globally the average is 14%). As can be expected, non-managers are generally more concerned than their more senior counterparts at the prospect of losing their jobs as a result of RPA implementation. The same is true of older employees (over the age of 40).

Figure 5: Level Of Concern About Future Job If Work Became More Automated, United States

Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

Over two-thirds of employees surveyed in the United States are interested in using RPA, or using it more than they do today. In addition to freeing up their time to work on more impactful activities, employees are also keen on other RPA benefits, including increasing their own productivity as well as the quality and accuracy of the work they do (**Fig. 6**).

Figure 6: Interest In Automation Tools & The Benefits They Can Offer, United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

Interestingly, younger employees (<30) who represent the workforce of the future are the most interested in RPA – 36% indicate they are "very interested" in RPA, compared to 22% of those 30-39 and 16% of those 60 years of age and older. This speaks to the acceptance and expectations of younger workers in terms of the role technology can and should play in all aspects of their life, including work.

When asked what they would do with 60 more minutes in their workday, employees in the United States stated that they'd spend more time on "higher value" activities (55%), learning new skills (40%) and thinking strategically or planning (35%), mirroring global trends (**Fig. 7**).

Figure 7: Activities Employees Would Do More Of If 60 Minutes Of Work Time Was Freed Up, United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

Our study also found that employees personally involved in automation activities at work enjoy much higher satisfaction levels than those who are not involved in automation (**Fig. 8**). In the United States, our study pointed to a more than twenty percentage point difference in satisfaction levels related to “the types of things an employee is responsible for at work” between those involved in automation activities and those not involved in automation activities.

Figure 8: Overall Job Satisfaction By Involvement In Automation Activities, United States



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

All of this ultimately adds up to a workforce that is increasingly receptive to RPA and recognizes the ability of automation technologies to free up time so that employees can work on activities that they enjoy and that contribute greater value to the business.

**KEY FINDING #4**

Employees want to be more than passive spectators in the RPA process, they want a voice early on about where and how RPA is used.

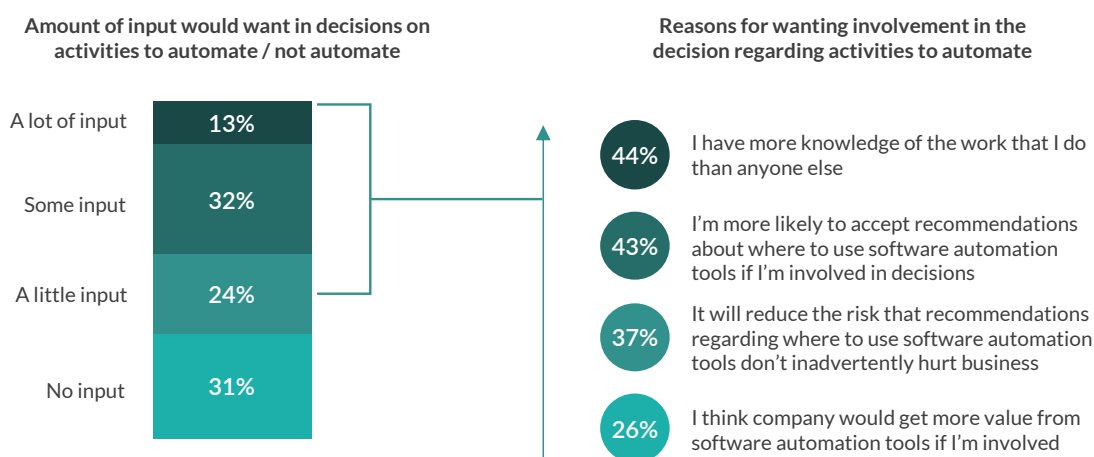
One of the risks of a top-down implementation, where senior management directs where, when, and how RPA is implemented, is lack of buy-in among the very employees that are impacted by these solutions the most. This leads to a lower return on investment as employees are less likely to accept RPA recommendations, and additional opportunities to reap benefits from RPA are missed because those closest to the actual work are not involved in the decision process.

Our study bears these points out (**Fig. 9**). Of the US employees surveyed, 69% want at least “a little input” in decisions about where RPA should be leveraged. Interestingly, in the United States only 13% sought “a lot of input,” compared with 24% seeking “a lot of input” worldwide. In the United States, we found that young workers (those under 30), as well as older workers (those over 60), were generally twice as likely to seek “a lot of input” in RPA-related decisions compared with those aged 30-59.



These same employees point to multiple reasons why their engagement early on in the RPA process is so critical. Forty-four percent of employees surveyed in the United States cite that they should be involved given that they have more knowledge of the work that needs to be done than others. Forty-three percent of US-based employees state that they are more likely to accept recommendations if they are directly involved in RPA decision-making.

**Figure 9: Level Of Input Employees Want In Automation Decisions & Why, United States**

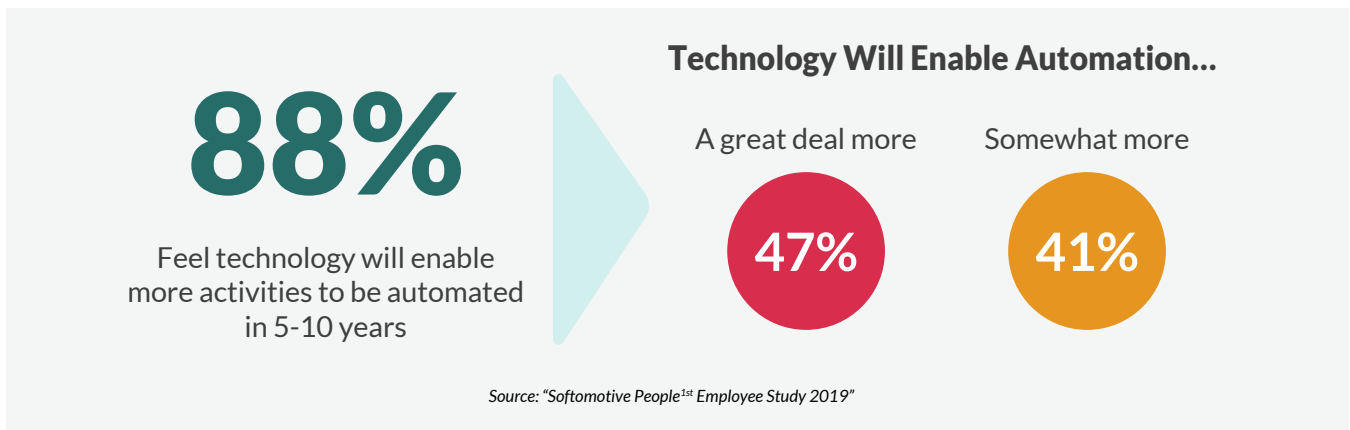


Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

**KEY FINDING #5**

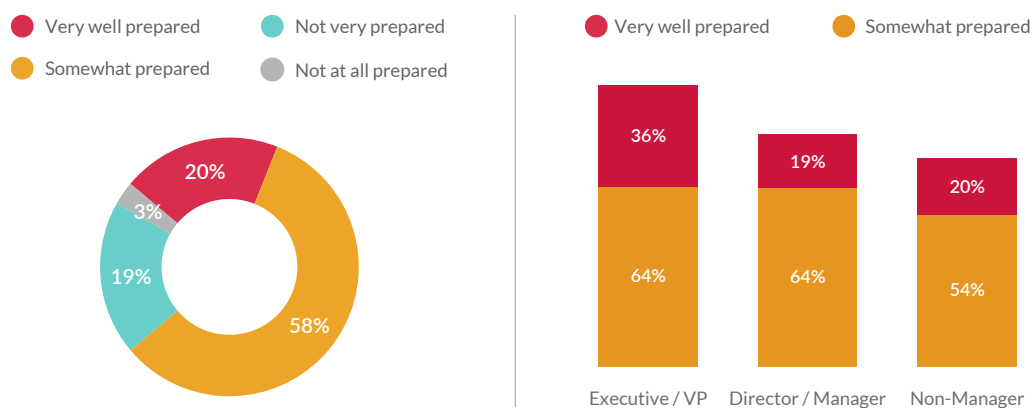
Getting employees trained and involved early on in the RPA process can also help alleviate their biggest concern – that they won't be prepared for a more automated future in the workforce.

While potentially uncomfortable for some (change often is), the vast majority of employees realize that more workplace automation is on the way, if they're not seeing it already. Nearly half expect that technology will increase automation activities.



Companies should view this as good news – more automation is coming and few employees will be surprised by it (the "word is out" as they say). The real challenge then is preparing employees for this change. In the United States only 20% of employees feel they are "very well prepared" for more automation at work, compared with 25% globally. And, while 100% of C-level executives and VPs in the United States feel "somewhat prepared" or "very well prepared," that ratio drops to 74% in the case of non-managers, suggesting that additional work needs to be done with the employees that often will be the ones implementing RPA and feeling the impact of automation more directly (**Fig. 10**).

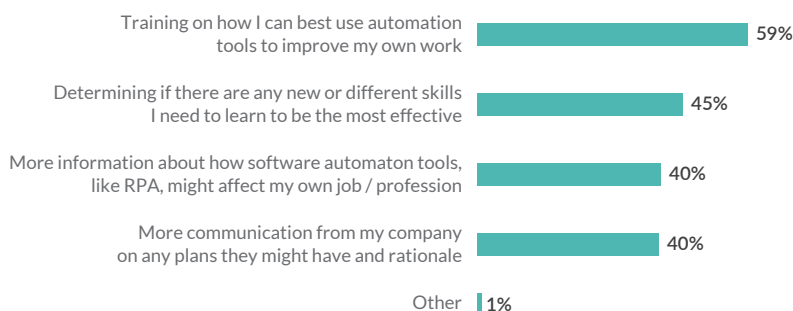
**Figure 10: How Prepared Employees Feel To Handle An Increase In Automation, United States**



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

When we asked US-based employees what would make them feel better prepared for an automated work life, the answers were revealing (**Fig. 11**). They want training on how best to use automation and help identifying new skills they might need to develop to be more effective in their roles.

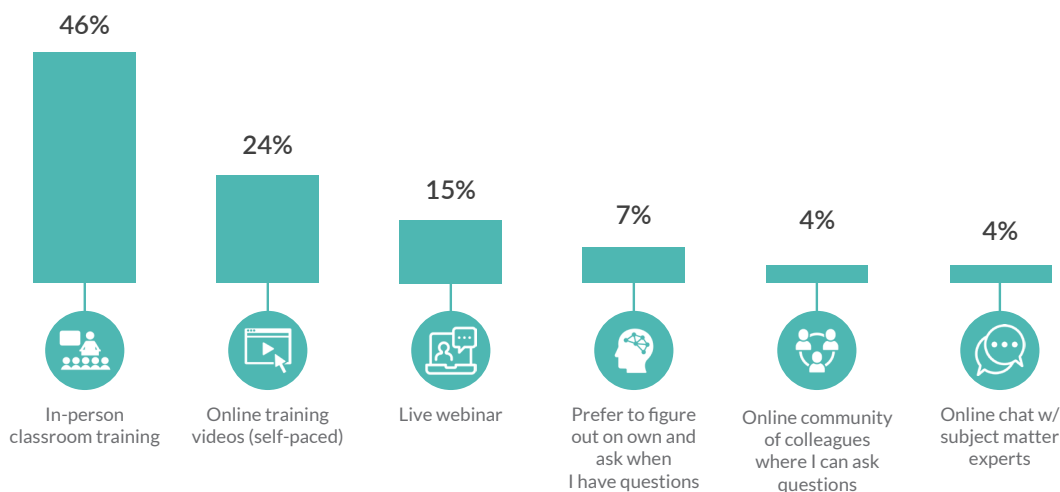
Figure 11: What Would Make Employees Feel More Prepared For Automation, United States



Source: "Softmotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

The method of training they prefer is also revealing (**Fig. 12**). Rather than more passive methods (online communities or chats with subject-matter experts), employees in the United States prefer fuller immersion approaches to training. Most notably they prefer in-person classroom training, with online training videos and live webinars serving as secondary choices. In other words, they are prepared to take the time to "get smart" about software automation solutions like RPA.

Figure 12: Automation Training & Support MOST Interested In (% Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), United States



Perhaps the bigger lesson here is that rather than trying to circumvent or "spare" employees from potential discomfort when it comes to RPA, it's much better to engage them early. By doing so, organizations stand a much better chance of reaping all of the benefits of RPA while providing employees with the training and tools they need to excel in a more digital and automated world.

**KEY FINDING #6**

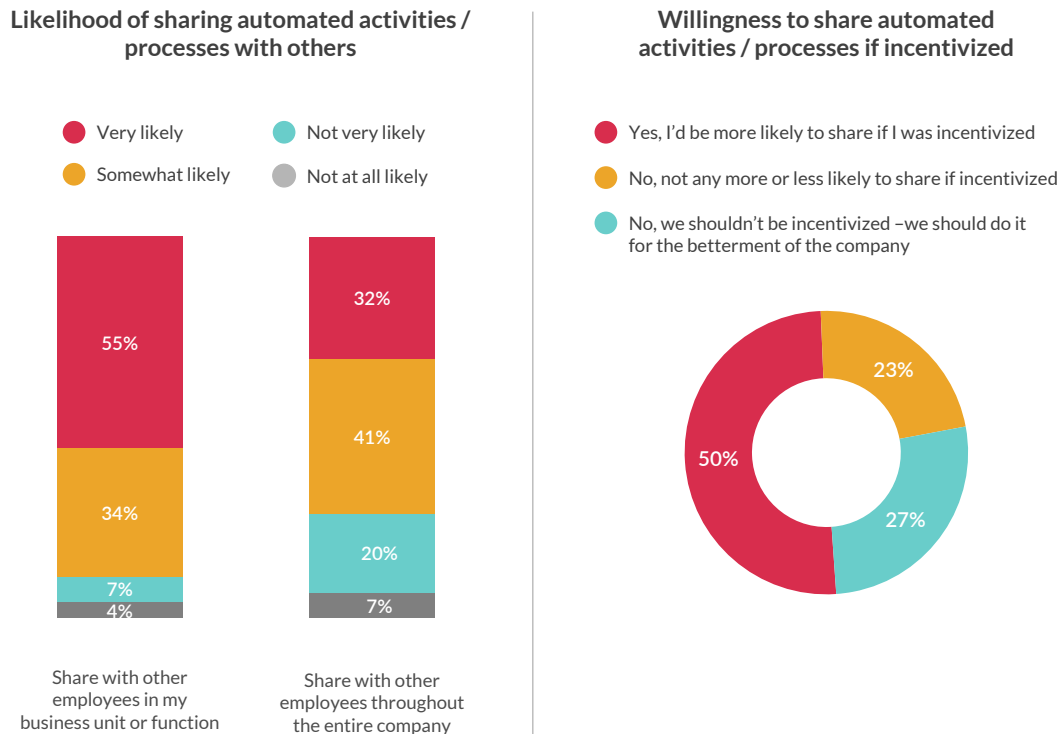
Aside from information and training, companies that provide employees with the means and incentives to collaborate across the organization stand the best chance of optimizing their RPA investments.

A key guiding principle of Softomotive's People<sup>1st</sup> approach is to fully disseminate automated activities and processes across the organization, rather than keeping them in smaller silos. If, for example, an activity or process is automated using a software solution like RPA, it makes good business sense to share that tool across the organization so that other business units may also benefit. Taken a step further, organizations that find a way to continuously collaborate across functions and business units are much more likely to discover new and differentiated ways to leverage these software automation tools.

We asked employees if they'd be willing to share software automation tools they develop with others in their company and the results were encouraging (**Fig. 13**). Among US-based employees, 89% are likely to share automation tools within their own business unit (55% are "very likely" to share) and 73% are likely to share across the broader organization.

Can organizations incentivize employees to encourage this collaboration behavior? Half said that they'd be "more likely to share if incentivized," indicating that while many employees are willing to share, a significant portion could also use some encouragement in doing so.

**Figure 13: Sharing Of Automated Activities – Likelihood & If Incentivized, United States**



Source: "Softomotive People<sup>1st</sup> Employee Study 2019"

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For organizations looking to optimize the ROI of their RPA efforts, consider the following:

- ▶ **Be clear about how you expect RPA to impact employees and emphasize the positive aspects in terms of providing them increased opportunity to work on things that give them personal satisfaction and contribute greater value to the business.** Most are aware of the aspects of their job that are more repetitive and mundane. RPA is an opportunity to eliminate many of these activities (that they don't like) so they can spend more time contributing to more substantive business issues and developing stronger, more collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers.
- ▶ **Help employees adapt by providing them with a clear vision, change management guidance, and ongoing communication.** For many people, and particularly those that have been doing things the same way for a long time, change can be difficult. Provide the organization with a clear vision of how work will get done in the future, how employees are critical in taking that step forward, and how their own roles will evolve and expand if they are active and collaborative participants in the process. Communicate often to reinforce the message while providing employees with the support they need along the way.
- ▶ **Provide the right training to help employees identify activities and processes that are strong candidates for software automation and how they can assist in the process.** A key concern employees have is not knowing how to best prepare themselves for a more digital, automated work life. They want to know if they need new or different skills and the training to acquire them. Offer in-person classroom training, online training videos, and live webinars – employees are asking for these more immersive approaches to learning.
- ▶ **Involve employees EARLY ON in the process – they want to be involved early and it makes good business sense to do so.** Buy-in and increased ROI from RPA investments is much more attainable if employees are involved in the process of identifying when, where, and how to best implement RPA. They know their jobs best. It stands to reason they should be involved in identifying where software automation can best help the business. Hypothetically speaking, what is the likelihood someone would fully participate and buy-in to software automation if they were asked to help identify where it can best be leveraged, compared to a scenario where senior management tells them where it should be implemented?

Another important consideration is the lack of IT development resources available to help with automation efforts. Software automation technologies have evolved to a point where you don't need to be an IT expert to develop effective automation. Employees with a minimal level of technology savvy (increasingly dubbed "citizen developers") can now develop these tools on their own, without having to enter a long queue of requests traditionally facing most IT departments.

- ▶ **Put the right collaboration tools and incentives in place to increase the chance of success.** Use collaboration tools (online hubs, forums, etc.) where employees can share software automation tools they develop for their own function or business area that can also be leveraged in other parts of the business. Even if an automation tool can't be directly lifted from one business activity to another, it's very likely it can be used to spark new ideas and/or used to kick-start automation development of a similar process. Also consider incentive programs that promote greater sharing of automation tools across the business. This can help ignite collaboration early on and help sustain it over time.

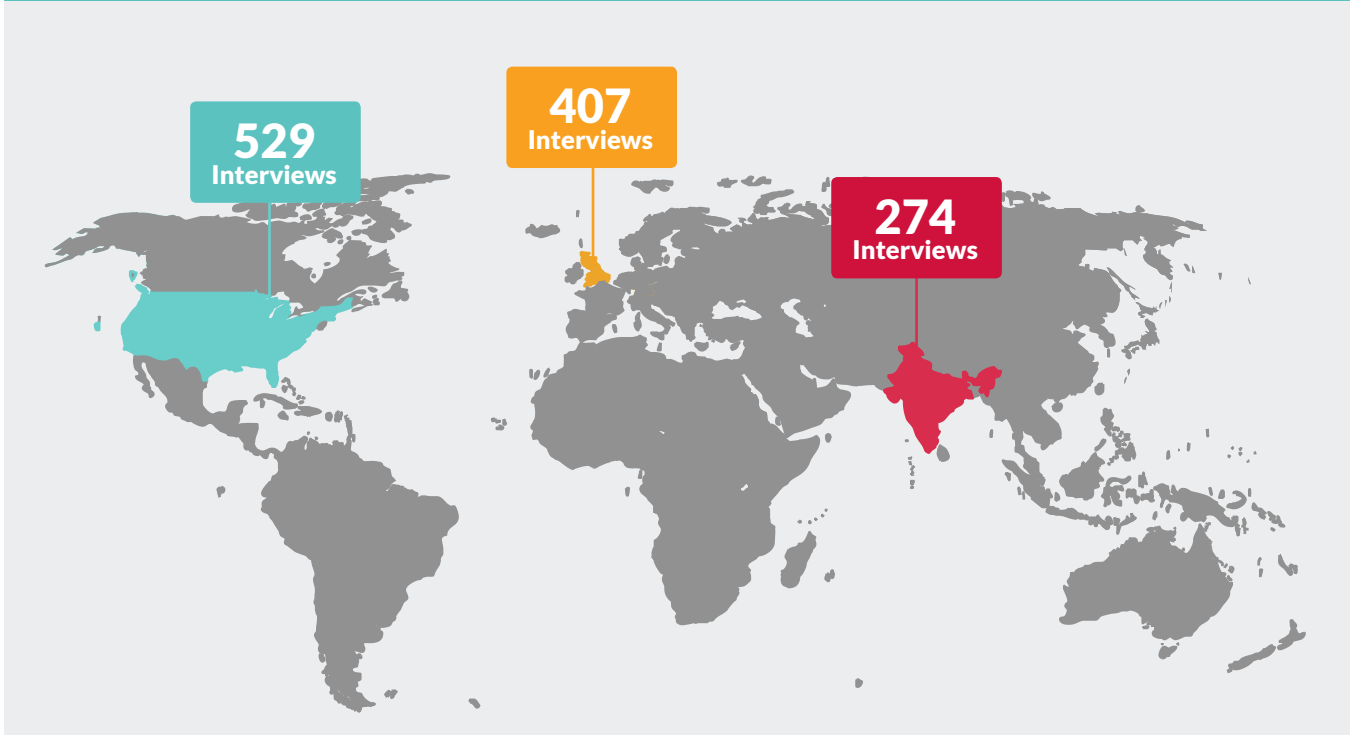
## METHODOLOGY

From March 21 – April 12, 2019, Softomotive conducted online survey interviews with 1,210 employed persons working in companies with at least 5,000 employees across three countries – United States, United Kingdom, and India.

Participants had to work 35 or more hours per week in a non-manual labor job. KS&R, Inc., a global market research firm, was contracted to administer and manage the research.

In the United States, a total of **529 interviews** were conducted:

- ▶ **55% of interviews** were conducted with female employees and 45% with male employees
- ▶ **20% of interviews** were conducted with employees under the age of 40, while 60% were conducted with employees over the age of 50
- ▶ **Employees surveyed** worked in a variety of different fields including Business Operations (15%), Customer Service (14%), Sales (12%), Finance (11%), Product Management (8%) and IT (7%)
- ▶ **Roughly one-fourth of employees** surveyed worked in companies with 5,000-9,999 employees, one-fourth worked in companies with 10,000-19,000 employees and half worked in companies with more than 20,000 employees
- ▶ **57%** of employees surveyed worked with external customers “often” or “sometimes”
- ▶ **3%** of employees surveyed identified as C- or VP level executives, 35% were Directors or Managers and 63% were non-Managers.

**Interviews** in each of 3 countries – US, United Kingdom, and India.

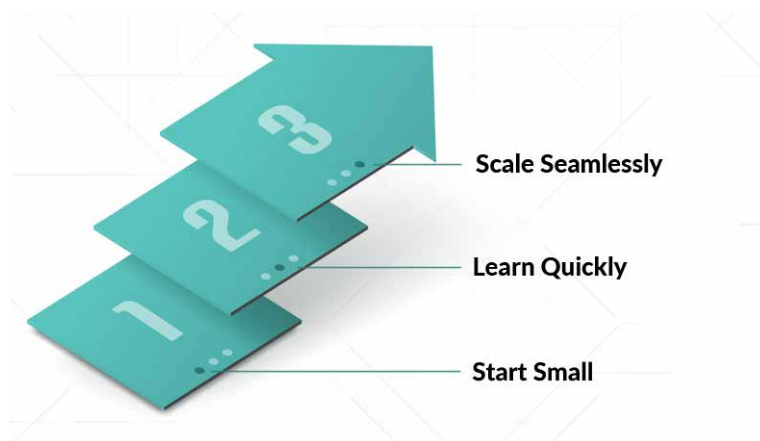
During the research, Softomotive was NOT identified as the sponsor ("blind study").



## ABOUT SOFTMOTIVE

**Softomotive is the longest standing RPA vendor to offer both a desktop version, WinAutomation, as well as a server-based unattended and attended automation solution, ProcessRobot. Both are quick to deploy and are priced to scale.**

These two leading RPA solutions working together are uniquely qualified to support a People<sup>1st</sup> Approach to RPA because the desktop version is easily installed on everyone's computer to accelerate innovation in process automation, from the bottom up. Once the best automations have been filtered, tested and prepared by the CoE, they can be scaled as business as usual using the enterprise RPA platform. The transition from one to the other is made easy since both solutions share the same RPA engine.



Softomotive recognises that when it comes to automation, one size does not fit all. We are the only provider of process automation technology to offer a portfolio of solutions designed to meet the diverse needs of individuals, small teams, growth companies, and large enterprises.

Softomotive provides the smoothest RPA journey by allowing enterprises to start small, learn quickly and scale seamlessly. This helps to reduce overall project risk and avoids high up-front costs which can make achieving a positive ROI that much harder.

For more information about People<sup>1st</sup> Approach visit: <https://www.softomotive.com/People-1st-Approach>

For any questions regarding this study, please don't hesitate to contact us directly at [marketing@softomotive.com](mailto:marketing@softomotive.com)