



# The Advance Of Automation In The Payer World

Plans must adapt and adopt it to stay relevant in the market

Technology has invaded every aspect of our lives, in ways we are so accustomed to that we don't even notice them. The advent of automated vending machines, self-checkout, home security systems, auto-sensors and other products has made our lives seamless in many respects. The idea of automating processes is nothing new but it's grown exponentially in recent decades. To be precise, automation is defined as, "the use of control systems and information technologies to reduce the need for human work in the production of goods and services."

One of the first forms of automation was on the assembly line at Ford Motor Company in 1913, in which Ford reduced the time it took to build a car from 12 hours to just 1.5 hours!<sup>1</sup> Since then, industries like banking and retail have embraced automation. Healthcare's time has arrived and many say it is overdue. As the saying goes, "resistance is futile." In the words of author Stewart Brand: "Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road."

## Industry Opportunities To Deploy RPA

Payers and providers have launched digital transformation initiatives to leverage technologies like cloud analytics, AI, machine learning and RPA, seemingly everywhere. RPA is emerging as a shining star across the healthcare value chain, where it improves performance across numerous processes. It's not just for the sake of convenience. Huge competitive pressures in the United States and the shift from volume to value-based delivery and payment have

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## What is RPA?

**Robotic Process Automation (RPA)** is the automation of repetitive, rules-based tasks, mimicking human behaviors in a mechanized fashion. It's debatable, but many argue that RPA is different from the nuances of artificial intelligence (AI). In RPA, the robot doesn't "learn" as it does in AI. An advantage of RPA is that it doesn't require an enterprise-level solution; it can be implemented and deployed more quickly and at a fraction of the cost, targeting specific tasks and processes.

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created significant incentives and urgencies for healthcare entities to adopt RPA. That includes payers.

The industry is focused on improving health, lowering costs and providing better access to care for patients. To support this, innovators are creating a highly secured, scalable and reliable “digital workforce” of robots to access, process and retrieve data.

RPA is a one-stop solution for payer operations, which are riddled with repetitive administrative activities, functions and manual procedures. These can be streamlined and automated to redeploy labor and boost productivity.<sup>2</sup> RPA can help healthcare gather and convert patient and transactional knowledge into meaningful, actionable formats; streamline compliance-related processes; and reduce repetitive, error-prone manual tasks. Following are opportunities for RPA that make it a “must-have” rather than a “nice-to-have.”<sup>3</sup>



**Data Management in EHRs.** Automation supports fast and accurate data generation and extraction from electronic health records. This makes data available at the right time and in the right setting to support appropriate clinical decision-making.



**Cost Savings /Increased Revenue.** Time and money can be saved by reducing labor costs using automated processes for data entry and paperwork, as well as streamlining patient appointments. Apps that automate these activities free up workers to focus on patient care. Apps are available to plan, book and cancel appointments, as well as to deliver appointment updates via email or SMS. They incorporate a feedback system and offer complete reporting.



**Regulatory Compliance.** Manual data entry often leads to data errors and security breaches. Automation safely eases data entry, processing, analyzing, monitoring and transfer. Data becomes traceable and transparent, and all steps in processing are predetermined, documented, systematically organized and made audit-ready. This helps health plans remain compliant with regulatory guidelines.



**Data Integration.** Data can be swiftly transferred across multiple systems, spanning clinical applications, lab information systems, third-party portals, payer portals or EHRs.



**Quality Outcomes.** Automation prevents redundancy in tasks, so employees who are skilled and clinically competent are promoted to higher organizational roles with greater accountability. This improves productivity and the quality of work.



**Stakeholder Satisfaction.** Health plan members and care managers should be more satisfied when they rely on automated schedulers, appointment reminders and alerts to keep track of their health activities.



**Scalability.** Automation software can smoothly address shrinking and expanding patient volumes for and within patient populations.



**Predictable Outcomes.** When patients follow a standardized and automated care path, predicting results is easier, as is capturing data about patient non-adherence to a recommended path.

Over time, automation will play an even greater role in care management. It will support health plans in stratifying populations by their demographics, healthcare needs, diagnoses and treatments; and will direct evidence-based clinical pathways for cost-effectiveness and member quality of life.

## **6 Benefits of Automation In Payer Operations**

- Faster processing of claims, invoices, reporting and other functions
- Product and service innovation (improving and inventing offerings)
- A higher degree of client data protection than manual processes allow
- Rebalancing workflow and staff
- Easier report generation, using AI-enabled solutions for such tasks as auditing reports and customer call logs<sup>4,6</sup>

## Areas of Opportunity for Payers

Payers who want to gain the benefits of RPA should consider these areas for automation in their operations:

**Member Enrollment.** Using data integration, plans can enroll members based on member demographic data, diagnostic profiles and services needed.

**Provider Network Maintenance.** Provider networks can comprise hundreds and thousands of professional profiles, requiring a plan to maintain and monitor a database for extraction of data like phone numbers, addresses and services provided. The cost of managing provider data can be minimized by RPA and the credibility of health plans strengthened by offering accurate directories.

**Medical Record Review.** Automating record reviews saves time and effort. Today, less than 10 percent of medical record reviews are automated, but that rate may rise as high as 50 percent in the next few years.

**Member Service Activities.** Member medical records can drive appointment scheduling by generating alerts and reminders. Plans can automate health intervention tracking. Some member queries can be managed with interactive voice response using RPA.

**Provider Credentialing.** As new providers are onboarded into a plan network, their information can be validated with enrollment forms and related items that improve accuracy, speed and compliance.

**Claims Processing.** The chain of repetitive tasks involved in processing claims can be accurately performed by RPA. Tasks could include posting transactions, providing general ledger information and paying claimants. Automation can enhance the claims process by generating automated phone calls for verification of data, as well as accurate reports.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

## Challenges and Recommendations

It's critical to anticipate the challenges an organization may face in automating processes, including technical difficulties and disruption of workflows. A commitment to the new process from employees (or lack of it) can determine program success. Choosing the right solutions and partners to work with is essential. Altruista's GuidingCare® platform supports technologies like FHIR APIs (Application

## Automation Opportunities In Care Management

Automation can support payers and providers working collaboratively to meet population needs without compromising quality. The shortened timelines for executing on tasks lead to more satisfied members. But which processes can be automated to achieve this? Identifying the best focus areas and use cases is key to success. The following considerations do not replace the knowledge and expertise in healthcare required to successfully introduce automation, but are thinking tools for identifying operational use cases. Payers should:

Identify and select potential areas with repetitive, systematic and numerous tasks

Revisit organizational policies, procedures and processes for their potential to be automated and develop a structured plan and implementation strategy

Evaluate variables like the volume of data, the characteristics of data (structured vs. unstructured, complete vs. incomplete), whether tasks are dependent on human beings, and the average task-processing time

Predict outcomes

Segregate healthcare actions performed by payers and providers, identify areas ripe for improvement and develop an alternate method for handling outliers and exceptions

Program Interfaces), to accelerate technical consolidation and data integration efforts, while automating elements of care coordination, utilization management and appeals and grievances. The GuidingCare suite of APIs supports and eases integrations while automating the platform's workflows. [^](#)



## References

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## About Altruista Health

Altruista Health is a HealthEdge company that delivers care management and population health management solutions that support value-based and person-centered care models. Our GuidingCare® technology platform integrates care management, care coordination and quality improvement programs through a suite of sophisticated yet easy-to-use web applications. GuidingCare is the largest and most widely adopted platform of its kind in the United States. Health plans and healthcare providers use GuidingCare to transform their processes, reduce avoidable expenses and improve patient health outcomes.