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## Advanced Automation gets prime-time BBC billing

Following on the theme of 'advanced automation' I discussed at the *TMV Evening 2015* on 9th September (and which is now available to download at [TMV Evening 2015 Sliddeck](#)), the BBC's Panorama covered [Could A Robot Do My Day Job?](#), on a prime-time Monday night slot, which provided a fascinating insight into the workforce implications of automation.



Coincidentally, we both highlighted research from **Deloitte** in partnership with Oxford University (see [here](#)), which controversially predicts that a third of UK jobs could be at risk of replacement via automation over the next 20 years. The research pointed to the biggest impact being on lower-paid jobs (sub £30k) - aka lower skilled - which are over five times more likely to be replaced than higher-paid - aka higher skilled.

Experts from **MIT** were also interviewed, pointing out that in terms of the technology, artificial intelligence is about to accelerate faster than anyone thought possible. This is due to exponential advances, which will allow systems to learn and adapt more quickly, and give machines greater ability to mimic human thought processes (cognitive computing).

### Transportation early target for automation

Transportation was picked up as an early target area for automation. The UK Government is investing £100m in 'intelligent mobility' (see [here](#)), of which £40m is being directed into driverless cars. Coventry-based **RDM Group** was shown developing the first 'autonomous pods' for use on Milton Keynes' roads (actually pavements) in 2016.

The technology applications are huge for service providers in areas like development, testing, training and of course deployment. It's an as yet untapped market, and many of the established industry software and services players are now clamouring to develop their own offerings for the connected car (see [Holway Speech at WCIT Business Lunch](#)).

The actual end user business benefits of driverless cars will be felt where it can impact the operational cost base or wider supply chain. This isn't being overlooked. Technology is now being developed by automaker **Daimler** and others, for driverless lorries, which in future could impact an industry employing just short of 1m people in the UK today.

### Huge benefits automating underlying operations and processes

There are huge efficiency and productivity gains automating underlying business processes and service operations.

But I believe automating these services with technology isn't the big scare story that much of the press want to portray. I believe with the right leadership from Government and industry and the right education and incentives, automation will have a much more positive impact to play on the workforce of the future.

Automation will naturally drive out low level, low-skilled repetitive, rules-based tasks, like clerical administration, order management, certain secretarial tasks and even sales support activities. The key for businesses will be using these benefits for competitive advantage – re-investing in the workforce to fuel growth opportunities in higher value areas (like customer services, product development, research), and supporting initiatives that improve the overall customer experience (see [Why is Digital Customer Experience key to future BPS delivery?](#)).

Robotics, AI/cognitive computing and advanced analytics technologies will be embedded into existing IT systems to remove duplication, improve productivity, reduce errors and provide actionable insights to drive new business opportunities.

These technologies should also drive new employment, training and redeployment opportunities for displaced workers in many as yet to be defined new roles. It could/should even spur new industries to emerge. This will be a good thing for the economy as well as employees, so long as the businesses and executives investing in automation understand that the gains stretch far beyond mere cost reduction into considerations like future competitiveness, agility and opportunity.

That in itself will be a learning curve for many. However those that fail to see the far greater upsides will become less competitive as a result.

### UK becoming hot bed of automation innovation

What we see is the UK becoming a hotbed of innovation in the area of robotics, AI and analytics. We continue to meet many small, but highly ambitious players as part of our Little British Battler (LBB) programme (see [Little British Battlers – the Sixth Sense](#) and work back), such as **OSMO**, **Contact Engine**, **Celaton**, **Thoughtonomy**, **Genfour**, **OmPrompt**, **Rimilia** and **Logical Glue** – which operate across a wide range of industries and markets sectors.

These are some of the early next wave players that are going to help shape the emergence of advanced automation in the enterprise, alongside the large established players like **Accenture**, **HP**, **IBM**, **TCS** and **Wipro** who are making significant investments in this area through partnership, organic growth and acquisition (see [Wipro betting on artificial intelligence with HOLMES](#)).

Celaton's contract with Virgin Trains was also referenced in the Panorama documentary (see [Celaton steams ahead with Virgin Trains](#)). Since going live in May, it has apparently cut the time taken to open and sort emails by 85%. VT appears to understand the broader gains of automation – with the focus not on removing jobs, but redeploying staff to improve the overall customer service. So long as training, and long-term career planning for those employees affected are part of the picture, automation should drive new benefits for VT and the staff involved.

There will be much more to come on the technology and implications of advanced automation in our forthcoming *UK Business Process Services Market Trends and Forecasts 2015* report. We will also be updating our existing report [Business Process Automation – a brave new world for suppliers](#) in Q415.

Posted by John O'Brien at '15:19' - Tagged: [automation](#) [robotics](#) [artificialintelligence](#)



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