

# Using RPA To Optimize Healthcare Revenue Cycle Operations

By James Hillenmeyer, Skip Lemon, Isaac Sieling and Mark Schloegel

Many industries are applying robotic processing automation (RPA) to repetitive, transactional and rule-based processes to help streamline operations, reduce the time to complete tasks, improve the customer experience and lower labor costs. RPA automates processes that are transactional and repetitive, essentially mimicking human behavior for rule-based tasks. With its transactional and repetitive processes, healthcare's revenue cycle can also benefit.

## What is RPA

RPA executes routine tasks in a fraction of the time it takes a human, around-the-clock, and without the risk for human errors. This is accomplished through the use of scripted processes that have access to applications and data sources, including end-user health information system (HIS), data input screens, online application programming interfaces (APIs), and structured and unstructured data repositories.

Virtualization technologies and cloud computing power allow for scalable deployment of RPA software across departments and geographic locations of an organization. Unlike artificial intelligence, RPA

### Benefits of RPA Implementation in Revenue Cycle

- Redeploy staff to perform more complex tasks, increasing employee engagement
- Eliminate human error and increase standardization
- Expedite and enhance communication with patients
- Reduce cost and increase speed of completing repetitive, transactional processes
- Create a 24/7 virtual workforce

technologies cannot modify processes without human intervention. However, RPA may serve as a stepping stone for incorporating more sophisticated cognitive technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence.

## Learnings From Other Industries

The successes and failures of RPA applications in other industries offer healthcare organizations a roadmap for effectively implementing the technology and identifying cases where it can deliver results. Financial institutions use automation to

accelerate account reconciliations. Logistics providers are using RPA to facilitate shipment scheduling and tracking. RPA has improved retail and service-sector customer experiences using chatbots to provide real-time response to questions asked online.

The insurance industry is using RPA in combination with more sophisticated decision-making models across a range of business processes. For example, with access to a robust data repository, RPA can be used to quickly evaluate and issue low-risk insurance policies. Prospective customers benefit from timely service and underwriters are freed up to focus on more complex analytic and service work. The technology has also helped reduce claims payments administration from days to hours while eliminating human error during the process. Using RPA in similar scenarios in healthcare can deliver significant results.

## RPA For Your Revenue Cycle

RPA is not a solution for automating every revenue cycle process, nor will it eliminate all labor costs. But when implemented correctly, it's an effective and efficient tool that generates cost savings and streamlines processes.

Apply RPA to revenue cycle processes to:

- **Expedite cost estimate generation:** Automate the benefits retrieval process and generate cost estimates.
- **Assist pre-authorizations:** Gather information from websites and other disparate systems and integrate the information directly into the HIS. In some cases, even submitting for pre-authorizations.
- **Enhance patient communication opportunities:** After a phone call to discuss the cost of a service or other customer service questions, automatically generate an email that recaps the information discussed.
- **Reduce manual data entry:** When information is stored across multiple systems, aggregate the data and enter it into a central patient accounting system.

- **Increase efficiency by integrating third-party tools:** Serve as the middleman between third-party tools that don't "talk" to each other. This allows for data sharing and processing between the tools without human intervention.

### Ask These Questions to Determine if RPA Implementation is Appropriate

There's no one-size-fits-all approach for RPA. Each organization should consider their unique needs, existing technologies, data, processes and ability to drive and adopt change. As you consider RPA implementation, ask the following questions to identify opportunities that are a good fit for integrating this technology:

1. Can the process be broken down to a set of if/then decisions and business rules?
2. Does the process require human intervention, like critical thinking, to complete?
3. Is the data accurate and accessible to RPA bots?
4. How much total labor time is required in the current process that could be eliminated or redeployed through automation?
5. What is the impact to patients? Could it increase or decrease patient satisfaction?
6. Can the automated process incorporate a built-in monitoring system to help mitigate risk if a step is delayed or fails? What is the risk to the business if a step fails?
7. If RPA is a viable option, does it provide a complete solution or are complementary tools required as part of the automation tool kit?
8. How can the application be scaled and implemented across the organization to deliver greater value?

- **Automate simple claim denials:** Takeover denial resolutions that follow a step-by-step process, allowing staff to focus on more complex denials.
- **Improve the consumer experience:** Provide instant answers to simple questions using a website chatbot automated by RPA.

As you seek to build a strong organizational foundation, driving out inefficiencies and streamlining processes is critical. Implementing RPA for certain revenue cycle activities is an effective way to do just that.



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## Key Takeaways

As you look to optimize your healthcare organization's business model by implementing RPA for your revenue cycle, you must:

### Think differently.

Prioritize automatable high-volume, simple tasks that can drive operational efficiency and enhance customer experience while also providing employees with more engaging, higher value-add roles.

### Plan differently.

Anticipate implications of automation on your organization's future plan, investments in digital data assets, workforce competencies and skills, and workspace planning.

### Act differently.

Challenge and reward employees to drive tangible benefits from RPA and enhanced intelligent automation. Monitor results and prioritize future RPA initiatives based on learnings.