

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

By João on September 19, 2016 at 11:50 pm

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Robots applied to services? Robots applied to accounting and management accounting? It seems an odd idea. But it's becoming true.

Robotisation applied to services is still only an emerging technology. It is not conducted by physical robots, but by software programmed to execute human tasks. [Enterprise Resource Planning](#) systems (ERPs) have long eliminated many manual tasks in accounting, when they integrated, in one single system, operations until then carried out by different standalone systems, and which required a lot of manual work regarding data processing.

However, there are still repetitive, relatively low value added tasks requiring manual intervention across

business applications. This is where Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is being introduced. What is RPA actually about? It's about programming software robots to mimic human actions, and use the existing user interfaces to automate those repetitive tasks. Instead of having humans typing and clicking in different applications, and even analysing documents to gather data, a software robot does it.

[This video by Deloitte](#) shows an automated process in accounting. Another video from E&Y I saw depicts a software robot automatically analysing a scanned travel expense document, identifying and extracting the relevant data and introducing it in the appropriate fields of an expense claims software, and finally emailing a manager to request his approval, using and interfacing between different solutions like a human actor would.

I confess: it looked science fiction. And a little bit creepy. It was as if "someone" was doing it – just incredibly fast.

What impacts may this have on the accounting profession? Try to imagine what areas may be involved in accounting – and how professionals may be positively and negatively affected. In the next post, I'll share some ideas regarding an expression we will hear a lot in the future: RPA – Robotic Process Automation.

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