



## **INTERVIEW WITH MR. JITESH AGARWAL, Head COE Robotics & Data Science Clariant**

**What do you believe are the critical success factors to maximize returns from RPA for any organization?**

Like with all transformative technologies, multiple factors influence the success or failure

of RPA initiatives, and every organization will have its own challenges. However, I believe there are 3 fundamentals that are common and form the pillars of success – vision, governance, and culture. It is important to have an overarching vision so that all initiatives build towards that one common goal. All the different activities should complement each other and not be siloed automation. Secondly, there must be a strong governance framework; transformation initiatives tend to get out of control especially in large organizations, creating situations where different domains adopt their own standards, tools, etc. A company may have a central or hybrid operating model; however, it is important to have unified governance with uniform principles. Last, and one of the most challenging, is embedding RPA and digitization into an enterprise's DNA and culture. It cannot be 'as usual' but needs to be at the core of the company's strategy. Clear, transparent, and regular communication, and a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches is crucial.

**What does the future of RPA hold with respect to technologies like AI, ML, NLP, Process Analytics, etc? How will these technologies align to meet the needs of business users?**

I believe the way forward involves smarter bots. RPA is a disruptive technology, and the rapid evolution of cognitive technologies will help RPA to achieve its true potential. Most organizations have now adopted it in some forms; however, end-to-end automation and scaling are something that organizations are struggling with. Hyper automation and creating an eco-system where RPA works with other advanced technologies such as ML, NLP, Data Science, etc, can be a game-changer. I imagine the hyper automation



ecosystem as a human body, where RPA acts as the central piece integrating the other various technologies towards intelligent performance. In short, the future holds a lot of promise.

**How do you handle challenges like change management and ensure effective change management and what are the good practices around that?**

Clariant has always been a people centric company and its employees are at the core of the company's strategy. This culture and being focused on our workforce are something that has been instrumental in managing the various transformation initiatives. Automation often leads to organizational resistance, but our bottom-up approach where we empowered our first-line employees to drive the change has led to a lot of enthusiasm and motivation in our organization towards transformation. Communication is another key aspect where I believe management has done well and those efforts helped us to generate a lot of trust and goodwill. Some other important areas where we continue to focus are continuous improvement programs, idea generation forums and automation ambassadors, just to name a few.

**What's the best way to manage security risks with respect to RPA and manage bots or any kinds of cyber-attacks?**

I do not see bots as something far different from any other IT solution. At least in my experience, I have not come across a case which suggests they are more prone to cyber security attacks than any other regular technologies. So, if the architecture and implementation are in line with overall company IT security and compliance guidelines, I don't think there is a concern. At Clariant, all the solutions that we develop are in line with our IT security rules, the overall infrastructure and architecture are governed by IT security. In my opinion, that's the ideal model.

**Can you share some of the experiences that you had at Clariant Group with respect to your own RPA journey? What kind of business benefits various automation projects have you noticed?**

At Clariant, digitization is one of the key focus areas and is well-embedded into our corporate strategy. Hence, transformation gets a lot of attention and encouragement from the management. I think, we were one of the early adopters of robotics in the specialty chemicals industry. We have been very methodical and diligent with our approach. Back



in 2016-17 when we initiated our journey, our priority was to get a solid operating model in place, and we invested lots of efforts in building up the governance framework, roles, responsibilities, and delivery methodology right. I see around many companies which look for the immediate return on investment, however, for us the priority was to set the proper structure and simply speaking to put all in well-functioning order. This approach was crucial in ensuring we have sustainable returns. Of course, we had our share of challenges when we started especially with change management, however, we have been able to do some meaningful transformations and generate significant benefits and looking forward to organization wide transformations now.