Pandemic forces companies, govts to adopt automation

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As the covid-19 driven lockdown keeps people indoors, businesses are looking at automation as a solution to continue day-to-day operations. In a post on its website, research, consulting and advisory firm Zinnov said there are more than 35 new use cases for robotic process automation (RPA) because of the pandemic.

Companies such as Automation Anywhere and UiPath, both of which work in the RPA space, say they are seeing increased business and interest from existing customers, while also getting new business.

"We are not only witnessing an increase in the adoption of automation in real time, but also seeing new use cases developed daily and more organizations and sectors turning towards automation with seriousness and intent," said Manish Bharti, president of UiPath, India and the South

Some state governments are also looking at robotic process automation to ensure smooth operation in a big way. Sectors such as finance and healthcare have already invested in RPA. HT

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Bharti gave the example of Gemini Edible Oils, a company that manufactures edible oils and fats, which has used RPA to ensure sales order management and business continuity.

On the other hand, non-profit organization Sankara Eye Foundation used automation technology to process employee salaries.

Stakeholders say that banking, financial services, and insurance, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing sectors remain important sectors in the industry.

These sectors were already using various automated processes and are now also looking at future proofing through automation now.

Some state governments are also looking at RPA to ensure smooth operation in a big way, while other players are also coming in.

"We have already worked with three state governments and are working with three four more states to help collate the state-wide data of people quarantined," said Bharti.

"A lot of bots are being used on the covid situation itself, including governments, hospitals and pharmaceuticals. That's the immediate part of this crisis," said Milan Seth, executive vice-president, IMEA, Automation Anywhere.

"The second part is the new normal, where customers are coming to us with two asks, short term and long term," he said.

Companies are asking for automation to enable working from home and manage covid data in the short term but are also talking about long-term models, Seth said. They aim to automate critical processes and are even considering the development of bots that may not be used unless an emergency arises.

A large bank, which works with Automation Anywhere, told the company to create bots for many of its critical processes.

The bank said that it wants such bots created even if they are not used for the next two years, but wants to be prepared for an emergency.

"It's almost like an emergency kit you keep in your factory, thinking that you never want to use it but if you really need it's available," said Seth.

According to Sajesh Gopinath, from IT services firm UST Global, organizations are "trying to see" if automation can help manage "longer term cash flow and cost pressure".

Automation is being considered for supply chain optimization, infrastructure cost optimization and more to help organizations deal with impending slowdowns and losses. Gopinath is general manager of UST SmartOps, which delivers intelligent process automation to large enterprises worldwide.

Companies are asking for automation to enable working from home and manage data related to covid