Resource scarcity – A data challenge

Almost every customer that I have spoken with recently has had or is currently (and increasingly) having issues with the availability and retention of skilled resources. This experience extends from the small corner store, your local builder and plumber, right through to the organisation that delivers fresh milk to many of the world's dairy markets.

Driven by the continued lack of open borders adding to the ongoing effects of COVID infections (and isolations), the competition for employees to plan, produce and transport goods and services to markets has been and will continue to be difficult, now – and for years to come. One way that many organisations have looked to minimise the effects of these cumulative impacts is by increasing the spend on automation and digitising processes. Organisations, from small mum-and-dad businesses, through to large Government entities have had to re-envision traditional processes for the virtual realm. Even those that had to rely on physical experiences, including amusement parks, sports venues, art galleries and events spaces, have moved towards virtual experiences that provide value and or new revenue streams. A prime example of this playing out in sports was during the 2020 worldwide lockdowns when we saw E-Sports and virtualised sports being screened across multiple formats, not to mention the straight to streaming of films that movie studios had to undertake.

Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud services, and the Internet of Things (IoT) can and do provide the backbone of the digital technologies that organisations require in order to offset the impacts of resourcing shortages. The secondary result is that organisations are leveraging AI and machine learning against the data that new digital tools and services are producing and are looking to automate as much as feasibly possible.

By automating, organisations have an increased likelihood to reduce human error. Automation makes processes more efficient by removing resource needs and subsequent availability issues, interventions, and delays. Overall, automating processes as much as possible from start to finish means fewer resources are needed to successfully complete the process. Aside from the shortage of resources available this also offers opportunities to reduce operating costs while simultaneously providing newer, faster, and often more accurate services. In 2021 Gartner introduced us to the delightful term - "Internet of Behaviours" (IoB). The IoB needs accurate and timely data collection plus the IoT to make data driven decisions that can, and will, impact customer behaviours.

A classic example of IoB would be health insurers offering free Fitbits to policy holders, then determining rates according to how many times a week they move at least the minimum daily recommended amount. The goal is to adjust each customer experience to the individual level, offering a level of service that benefits both the customer and any enterprise.

So how does this help explain why more organisations are moving to increased automation? We can look to Gartner to provide us some statistics.

- By 2024, **analytics and automation** will help service staff shift 30% of time spent on support and repair to continuous engineering.
- By 2023, 40% of product and platform teams will use **AIOps for automated risk analysis**, reducing unplanned downtime by 20%.
- By 2025, **more than 20% of all products** will be manufactured, packed, shipped, and delivered without being touched.

Change is not only taking place because of the need for efficiencies and scarcity of resourcing. When we think about the impacts of COVID on essential workers - and it's spread, we can see an additional benefit to automation - the person who purchases the product (in the Gartner prediction above) will be the first person to touch it. We can almost certainly be sure that the goods/services are safe to consume.

This fully automated supply (and value) chain is a result of hyper-automation. Hyper-automation can partially be achieved through Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in critical operations, infrastructure, and some simple data processes, but will need significant business rules orchestration to achieve the end-to-end automation tasks. We see this increasingly today. The race is now on to optimise services. These outcomes will likely come from scalable data automation tools which enable advanced analytics, machine learning and AI. Investments in these areas will be needed to maintain competitive advantage, especially when access to skilled workers remains a challenge.

This is where the Fujitsu Data & AI team of specialists can help. We will identify automation points, opportunities to connect to and ingest data from many and disparate systems and create strategies aimed at automations, resource efficiency and in making service processes easier and more efficient.

To see how we can help your business, please contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now.

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