

# AI HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL

## HOW SWISS POST SOLUTIONS ACCELERATES THE BUSINESS PROCESSES OF ITS CUSTOMERS

**Swiss Post Solutions, an arm of the Swiss Post Group, is investing in intelligent automation. Technology expert Lukas Hebeisen explains what it's all about.**

**Interview: Beni Meier**



My wish shall be your command: artificial intelligence translates customer wishes into processes

### **What do artificial intelligence and robotics bring to customer service?**

These two new technologies allow us to digitize recurring business processes and automate routine tasks. This speeds up the handling of customer inquiries through all channels. The customer service advisers can then concentrate on more complex tasks. Customers benefit directly from intelligent automation in getting rapid and accurate answers to their inquiries.

### **What is behind the term?**

First of all, we have to distinguish between the two technologies. Artificial intelligence, or AI for short, can understand unstructured content in letters, emails or social media posts. So AI takes what the customer has written and makes it into structured data with which the software robot can work. AI can do tasks which previously required the input of human intelligence. It works by recognizing patterns instead of keywords, therefore meaning and intention can be deduced in context. The system "learns" the process through continuous experience and improves all the time.

### **And then the robot follows the instructions given by AI?**

The process is not quite so futuristic in practice. The software robot works on the basis of defined rules and with the structured data received from AI. Robotic process automation replaces the manual task of processing these data. Data might be recorded on a spreadsheet, for example, follow-up steps activated, payments instructed, and customers informed about the status of their inquiries through the communication channel of their choice.

### **And this requires the interaction of both technologies?**

Not always – it is more a case of analyzing the process carefully and then making the right and most cost-effective decision. The combination of intelligent automation with AI and robotics does have a certain appeal because it is then possible to process unstructured content. The end customers don't need to fill in structured online forms to present their inquiries and, moreover, the staff in companies are no longer required to spend time extracting information out of emails in order to initiate the next step in the process.

### **So do consumers want to communicate with machines?**

The consumer doesn't communicate with the machine. The machine processes the information which the consumer sends to the company. There is a steady increase in the use of digital channels, such as email, apps and chat. Companies need efficient processes in order to identify customer concerns and to deal with customer inquiries rapidly. The top priority for customers is to have their problems solved – rapidly and through their preferred channels.

### **How do companies benefit? AI sounds like major investment, wouldn't you say?**

This is exactly where Swiss Post Solutions comes in. As one of the world's largest suppliers of business process outsourcing solutions (BPO), we manage the processes of our customers and make them efficient. Our brief includes choosing the technology and conducting regular reviews. Our applied intelligent automation allows us to achieve considerable increases in efficiency. We have managed to cut the process costs by more than 70 percent in some projects.

### **So how does intelligent automation actually work in practice?**

Our approach is divided into four steps. We start with an automation assessment which involves checking which processes lend themselves to automation and what exceptions need to be taken into consideration. We ask lots of questions and prepare a detailed write-up.

### **Is there a rule which dictates which processes are most suitable?**

Volume and processing time are key factors. High volumes and processing times of average length or longer are best suited to automation.

### **So what happens next?**

Our process engineers then run a detailed analysis of each specific business case. This solution concept is then taken as the basic framework for the implementation process. The software solutions are then configured and finally we are ready to go live with the project. This, in turn, is then the start of a long-term iterative improvement process.



a Swiss Post company

### **But Swiss Post Solutions is not a technology provider?**

No, our know-how lies in the optimization of processes in digital and physical document management together with the relevant paperwork and administration. In addition to the automation, we also take full responsibility for the process in every case, including dealing with the exceptions and referring them to staff for administration or clarification.

### **How far advanced is intelligent automation in practice already?**

We have already run pilots in several banks and insurance companies. We see the greatest potential by far in the processing of unstructured data.



Lukas Hebeisen heads up the Technology & Digital Transformation division at Swiss Post Solutions.