

Using Microsoft excel for business process automation

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What is Microsoft Excel? Microsoft Excel is the most commonly used and arguably the most versatile spreadsheet software program. It allows users to record, track and report data as well as perform important analyses and create powerful visualizations.

Why automate business processes?

The obvious answer given the current climate of the world is that automation is necessary to ensure the continuity of operations in the absence of physical meetings on site. It puts the business information in a shareable format and allows people to work remotely with ease.

Additionally, automation creates the ideal environment to standardize processes in a trackable manner. Standardizing business processes is important for two main reasons amongst others:

- It means in the absence of the usual employee who performs tasks the processes can still be performed by following the prescribed steps.
- It creates consistency of operations thus ensuring completion, conformity and compliance.

Automation also allows employees to streamline tedious calculations. Once the formula is determined and preset, the specified program will perform the calculations in a fraction of the time they would be performed manually. This frees time up and allows for the move from the majority of time being spent on implementation to it being spent on planning, analyzing and service provision; putting the business in a good position to perform supremely and improve the customer experience.

In a study held by Mica R, Endsley and David B. Kaber in 1999 on the effects of automation on performance, situation awareness and workload, it was found that automation of the implementation processes improved the performance levels of the subjects.

Therefore, automation increases productivity and efficiency levels. It cuts down on time spent performing unvarying tasks. These tasks have a high risk of error and having these tasks performed by programs significantly reduces this risk, which makes the data more reliable for further processes and analyses.

In the case of Zimbabwean businesses, since business process automation is not a widely implemented strategy, it will create a competitive advantage for takers and ensure long-term sustainability. Digitalizing records will allow for careful comparison and analyses and allow for growth as the strengths and weaknesses of the business are adequately assessed and dealt with accordingly.

Why use Microsoft Excel?

Using Microsoft Excel for automation is a good idea because it is readily available and compatible with a wide range of devices. Other programs may be more useful for certain processes but in most cases, they would only be supported adequately by a smaller range of devices.

Microsoft Excel already has a wide range of functions preinstalled making it simple to use. The only hurdle becomes learning how to use them as opposed to building the functions from scratch. This in itself saves time for users. In comparison to other programs, Excel is one of the simplest ones to understand making it suitable for organisations to train employees at large beyond the information technology (IT) department.

Furthermore, it is affordable to attain the full package, making it ideal for small to medium-sized entities looking to automate without creating large cost burdens.

Microsoft Excel also integrates well with other business software, data can be moved from one program to Excel in CSV (comma-separated values) format with minimal issues, making it a flexible program. It thus can be used in conjunction with other programs in the business as a central tool for decision making.

The transformation brought about by implementing the use of Microsoft Excel

Microsoft Excel allows you to create customizable, reusable reports. Once you have determined the format of your reports, you are able to apply new data to the same templates to produce similar reports without having to create the reports from scratch.

Therefore, it allows for the comparison of datasets across periods and as a result, it is also very useful for goal tracking and risk mitigation processes.

The Benefits of having a Microsoft Excel proficient workforce

Excel proficiency is not only useful for performing business activities, but it also builds on problem-solving skills. As individuals learn to make use of Excel functions to perform their tasks, they gain a better understanding of the inputs and gain useful skills for analyses and decision-making.

Automating repetitive work improves employee experience in the workplace since more time is spent doing dynamic work. Furthermore, it allows people to maximize their productivity and efficiency and in turn perform better.

Training employees on automated systems is also cost-effective as it reduces workload per employee and reduces the headcount requirements significantly. This cuts down on recruitment costs while simultaneously upskilling employees thus forming a well-equipped workforce.

Conclusion

Regardless of the level of automation, you are considering in your business, or how “tech-savvy” your

workforce is, proficiency in Excel is advantageous and within your reach. It will help the business processes run smoothly and set the business up for improved performance and reporting levels.

If you are not convinced, here is the Oxford dictionary definition of Excel:

“Be exceptionally good at or proficient in an activity or subject.”

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