Future of Work Trends: Hyperautomation Growth Initiatives Delivered by High-Performance Fusion Teams

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Initiatives: Applications and Software Engineering Leaders

Organizations are prioritizing growth, digitalization (for cycle time) and operational excellence, driving volumes of process automation in the form of hyperautomation initiatives. Successful IT leaders will be those leveraging high-performing fusion teams, the foundation for the future of work.

More on This Topic
This is part of an in-depth collection of research. See the collection:

- Future of Work Trends: A Gartner Trend Insight Report

Overview

Opportunities

- In 2021, Gartner surveys found that more than 50% of CEOs and 69% of boards of directors demand accelerated growth and operational excellence. Hyperautomation provides a critical path toward achieving both of these goals and establishing the foundation for the future of work.

- Gartner 2021 research finds that 56% of organizations are currently engaging in anywhere between four and 10 concurrent hyperautomation initiatives. The opportunities for synergies, process orchestration, hybrid work enablement and new business models abound, all of which will have a significant impact on how work evolves through decade-end.

- Diffuse or siloed spending on automation initiatives leads to difficulties in process orchestration across functions and higher total cost of ownership. A focus on a disciplined approach to rapidly identify, vet and automate business and IT processes creates the best opportunities for hybrid work.
Recommendations

IT leaders in applications and software engineering should:

- Focus on targeted hyperautomation initiatives to drive growth and create scalable, resilient business models that work as a force multiplier for accelerating digital business. The use of high-performance fusion teams is a proven approach IT leaders should promote and enable.

- Increase the likelihood of successful hyperautomation initiatives by focusing on the three areas of fusion team success: cooperating, co-owning and co-creating.

- Define shared ownership and metrics of the hyperautomation initiatives on one or more of the following business outcomes: quality, employee and customer centricity, speed and intelligent (data-driven) decision making at scale.

What You Need to Know

This document is part of the Future of Work series, and is a companion document to Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2022: Hyperautomation as well as to the webinar The Executive Guide to Hyperautomation.

Download the Executive Guide to Hyperautomation

The biggest changes underlying hyperautomation initiatives are the shifts in business value (see Figure 1). The drivers and level of value have shifted as has the source — from IT-driven to business units and now to fusion teams.
Profile: Hyperautomation

Analysis by Frances Karamouzis

Description:
Business-driven hyperautomation is a disciplined approach that organizations use to rapidly identify, vet and automate as many business and IT processes as possible. Hyperautomation involves the orchestrated use of multiple technologies, tools or platforms. Examples include artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), event-driven architecture (EDA), RPA, intelligent BPM suites (iBPMSs), integration platform as a service (iPaaS), low-code tools, and other types of decision, process and task automation tools.

Why Trending:
The primary reason that hyperautomation is critical to the future of work is the unrelenting demand for accelerated growth through business model innovation or disruption, coupled with the underlying foundation of operational excellence across processes and functions. 2021 Gartner research shows that CEOs (over 50%) and boards of directors (69%) demand a path to accelerated growth and operational excellence. Hyperautomation initiatives are a critical path toward achieving desired business outcomes.
Hyperautomation initiatives focus on digitizing documents and artifacts to ensure that their business and IT process workflows have the least amount of friction. This task-level digitization is the foundation for process-level and cross-functional enablement of decision making for business agility and resiliency. Well-architected hyperautomation initiatives demand standardization of processes, which enables improved quality and cycle time. Additionally, digitalization enables accessibility and transparency, which catalyze workers (both human and digital).

Over the past 15 years, the biggest changes underlying hyperautomation initiatives are the business value drivers (see Figure 2). The graphic depicts three eras along with the primary business value and constituency (IT teams, business units or fusion teams):

- **The labor arbitrage era** is characterized by an IT-led approach. It predominantly focuses on cheaper as the primary business driver: Do more with less to deliver cost savings. Gartner estimates that 90% of all global enterprises include some type of labor arbitrage approach in their current strategies (volumes and locations vary).

- **The automation arbitrage era** is characterized by a business-unit-led approach. It primarily focuses on faster cycle time. A quintessential example includes using a virtual worker ("bot") to shift something from six hours to 60 minutes.

- **The business model disruption era** is upon us, and is characterized by fusion-team-led approaches. It focuses on better, higher quality business processes. The previous eras were focused on changing “levers of effort” (i.e., cost of labor) while this new era is focused on results (outcomes rather than inputs).

There are several reasons for this evolution. First, IT functions are unable to fulfill all demands for speed, efficacy and digital business. Second, business units have also struggled to enable personnel with the right data and analytics at the right time in the right format to make data-driven decisions. Gartner survey data shows that 65% of decisions made are more complex than just two years ago. Third, the rise of complex hyperautomation initiatives has more prominently exposed the need for process- or industry-level knowledge to be as close to its creation and ownership as possible. All of this has resulted in a shift from the once negative connotation of “shadow IT” to the concept of “fusion teams.”
Fusion teams are a diverse set of multidisciplinary team members blending technology or analytics and business domain expertise (see Note 1). High-performing fusion teams are characterized by shared ownership of the business outcome, a focus on co-creation, and persistent and dedicated work efforts. The April 2021 Gartner Hyperautomation Survey revealed specific statistical correlation on these three elements — namely, co-operating, co-owning and co-creating (see Boost the Value and Success of Business-Driven Hyperautomation Initiatives). ³

**Figure 2: Business Value of Hyperautomation**

Implications:
The most significant implication of successful hyperautomation initiatives at scale is to accelerate growth through digitization of all paper or artifacts in the workflow as well as to create digital business processes. More specifically, growth includes top-line revenue and/or bottom-line profitability. Gartner research shows that enterprises can increase the likelihood of successful hyperautomation initiatives by focusing on and promoting the three areas of fusion team success: co-operating, co-owning and co-creating. The primary business outcomes that often come from high-performing fusion teams working on hyperautomation initiatives include:

- Better (higher quality, more resilient) processes
- Higher usage due to employee- and customer-centric experiences
Any hyperautomation initiative (even the fully automated, unattended efforts) involves humans. At the heart of all these processes are people, teams and relationships that are all exploring the meaning and impact of hybrid work. Thus, it's important to take a closer look at some of the fusion team members, specifically the non-IT personnel referred to as business technologists (see Note 2). Business technologists now account for a large percentage (41%) of all employees with the skill, interest, motivation and job scope to conceptualize, design, develop, test and produce technology as well as data and analytics solutions. High-performing organizations are strategically organizing combinations of select business technologists, IT personnel, security and enterprise architects into elite fusion teams that focus on digital products rather than projects.

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of why high-performing fusion teams working on hyperautomation initiatives are able to deliver specific business outcomes.

- Speed (time to market, cycle time reduction and quicker adoption)
- Intelligent (data-driven) decision making at scale
Table 1: Hyperautomation Initiatives Delivered by High-Performing Fusion Teams
(Enlarged table in Appendix)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Outcomes</th>
<th>Why of High-Performing Fusion Teams</th>
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<td>Better (higher quality, more resilient) processes</td>
<td>One of primary reasons high-performing fusion teams deliver higher quality and resiliency is their proximity to the “know how” of the work effort, the process and/or the customer. Business technologists are much closer to the point of value delivery. This value delivery is inextricably linked to functional processes or industry-specific knowledge.</td>
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<td>Higher usage due to employee and customer-centric experiences</td>
<td>High-performing fusion teams often include subject matter experts and business technologists. These personas are much closer to the point of value delivery, which is inextricably linked to functional processes or industry-specific knowledge. Hence, the deliverables often have a strong dose of employee and customer-centric experiences that drive higher usage.</td>
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<td>Speed (time to market, cycle time reduction and quicker adoption)</td>
<td>The pride of ownership, hard work and accountability of the results (of fusion teams and business technologists, in particular) drives high initial adoption (rather than resistance) of the hyperautomation initiative deliverables. This variable, combined with employee and customer centricity, also drives speed to market and cycle time reduction.</td>
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<td>Intelligent (data-driven) decision making at scale</td>
<td>High-performing fusion teams have strong incentives (via metrics) to embrace and enable success. The business technologist also has the most vested interest and mitigating risk in the target business processes. Thus, use of data-driven decision making and scaling is a common goal for these personas.</td>
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Source: Gartner (October 2021)

Actions:

- Focus on targeted hyperautomation initiatives to drive growth and create scalable, resilient business models that work as force multipliers for accelerating digital business. Growth at the enterprise level demands different approaches to people, teams, decision making and risk. The use of high-performance fusion teams is a proven approach that executive leaders should promote and enable.

- Increase the likelihood of successful hyperautomation initiatives by focusing on the three areas of fusion team success: co-operating, co-owning and co-creating.

- Define shared ownership and metrics of the hyperautomation initiatives on the following business outcomes:
- Better (higher quality, more resilient) processes
- Higher usage due to employee and customer-centric experiences
- Speed (time to market, cycle time reduction and quicker adoption)
- Intelligent (data-driven) decision making at scale

About Gartner's Future of Work Trends

This Hyperautomation trend is one of our Top Future of Work Trends where only the digitally dexterous thrive. This trend does not exist in isolation; it's part of a group of trends organized across three themes: Faster, Smarter and More Informed (see Figure 3). You should explore each of these trends for their applicability to your organization.

**Figure 3: Future of Work Trends: Hyperautomation Fuels Growth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faster</th>
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<td>• Work is distributed</td>
<td>• AI joins the team</td>
<td>• Information finds you</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Everything goes hybrid</td>
<td>• Computers get conversational</td>
<td>• Tinkerers become mechanics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teams become agile</td>
<td>• Simple things become smarter</td>
<td>• Everything gets measured and tracked</td>
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...only the digitally dexterous thrive...

Source: Gartner

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Evidence

1 2021 Gartner CEO Survey: The Year of Rebuilding — Gartner conducted this research from July 2020 through December 2020, with questions about the period 2020 to 2023. One-quarter of the sample was collected in July and August, and three-quarters from October through December. In total, 465 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. The research was collected via 390 online surveys and 75 telephone interviews. The survey was developed collaboratively by a team of Gartner analysts that examines technology-related strategic business change, and was reviewed, tested and administered by Gartner’s Research Data and Analytics (RDA) team.

2 2021 Gartner View From the Board of Directors Survey — The survey was conducted to find out how board of directors view digital-business-driven business model evolution and the impacts of that on their enterprises. It also helps understand the BoDs’ expectations of executive leaders and how BoDs translate their board focus to actual executive actions and overall corporate performance. The survey was conducted online from May through June 2020 among 265 respondents from the U.S., EMEA and Asia/Pacific, out of which 38 respondents participated from Asia/Pacific. Companies were screened to be midsize, large or global enterprises. Respondents were required to be a board director or a member of a corporate board of directors. If respondents serve on multiple boards, they answered for the largest company, defined by its annual revenue, for which they are a board member. The survey was developed collaboratively by Gartner analysts and the RDA team. (Question asked: What kind of impact do disruptions caused by COVID-19 have on your organization’s digital business initiatives? n = 260, all respondents, excluding don’t know, multiple responses allowed.)

3 Gartner delivered two Gartner hyperautomation webinars delivered on 1 December 2020 and 8 June 2021. More than 56% of those surveyed had four or more concurrent hyperautomation initiatives. Additionally, the 2021 Gartner Hyperautomation Survey showcased that 55% of business technologists were engaged on an average of four automation initiatives in the past 12 months. The study was conducted online during March 2021 among 558 business technologists from North America (n = 226), Europe (n = 146), LATAM (n = 78) and APAC (n = 108).

Results of these studies do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect sentiment of the respondents and companies surveyed.
Note 1. Gartner Definition of Fusion Team

A fusion team is a multidisciplinary team that blends technology or analytics and business domain expertise and shares accountability for business and technology outcomes. Instead of organizing work by functions or technologies, fusion teams are typically organized by the cross-cutting business capabilities, business outcomes or customer outcomes they support.

Context: Fusion teams do not have a prescribed reporting structure. Team leaders or members may report to either dedicated IT departments or business areas outside of IT. Fusion teams often start as agile project or scrum teams and gradually adopt product-management discipline to oversee a capability end to end, from strategy to delivery and continuous enhancements.

Note 2: Gartner Definition of Business Technologist

Business technologists are employees who report outside of IT departments (centralized or business unit IT) and create technology or analytics capabilities for internal or external business use.

Context: Business technologists can be individuals whose primary job entails technology work (such as Python developers hired in marketing, data scientists hired in finance and accounting teams, software engineers hired in R&D). Or, they can be citizen technologists whose primary job is done through technology work (such as pricing managers building algorithms, customer service reps building chatbots, doctors writing pandemic apps).

Recommended by the Authors

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

Infographic: Boost the Value and Success of Business-Driven Hyperautomation Initiatives

Fusion Teams: A New Model for Digital Delivery

Democratize and Distribute Technology Work Across the Entire Enterprise to Accelerate Digital Business

Tool: Banking and Insurance Use Cases to Drive Hyperautomation

Infographic: Hyperautomation Use-Case Prism for Banking and Investments

2021 Gartner CEO Survey: The Year of Rebuilding

Case Study: Data-Driven RPA Life Cycle Management (Johnson & Johnson)
Case Study: Business-Led RPA for Reduced User Effort (Washington State Employees Credit Union)
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