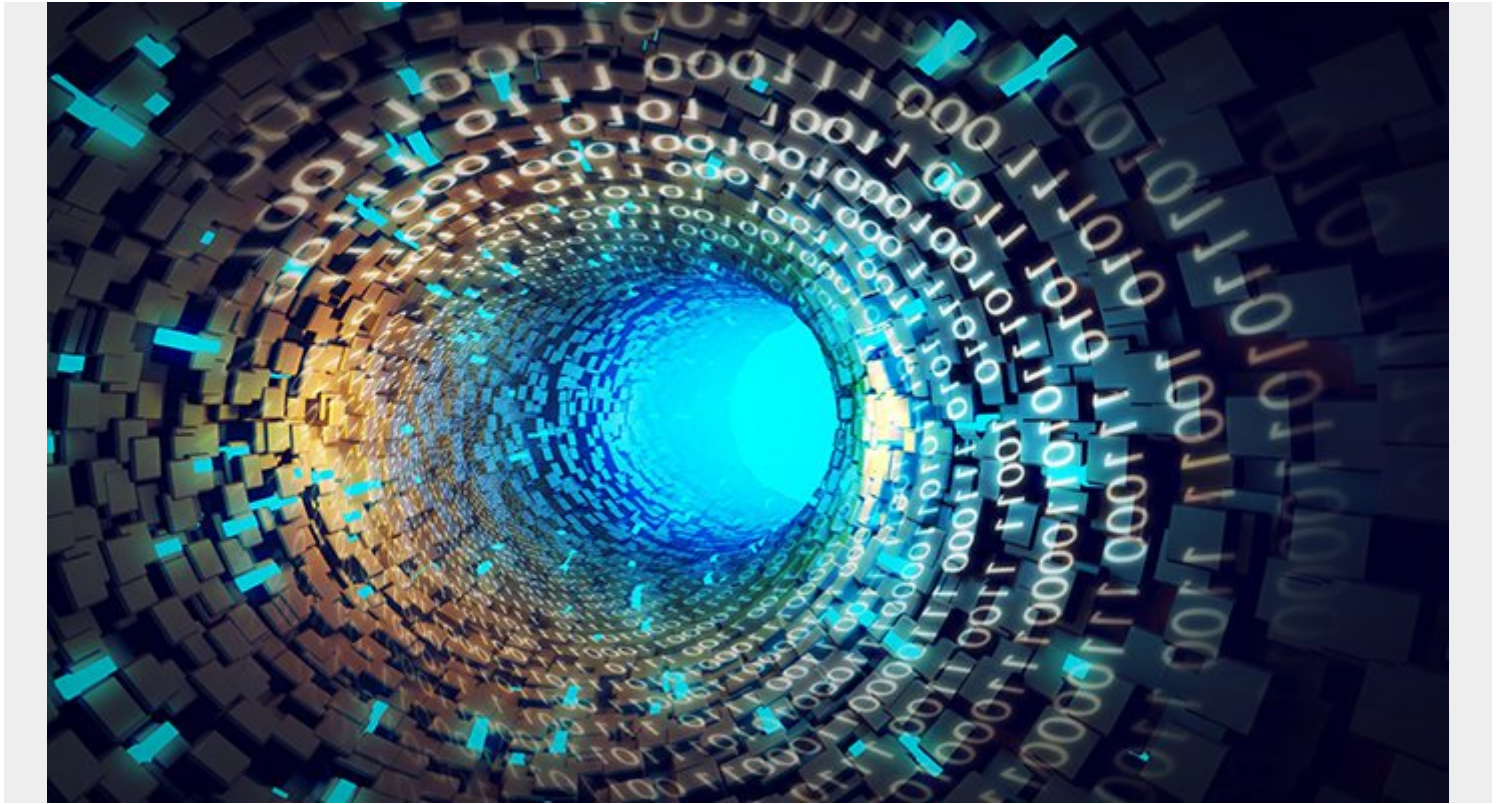


WHAT IS AN AUTOMATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE? WHY ARE ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENTING THEM?



Today, pretty much every organization accepts and understands the value that automation brings, but how many are actually successful with their automation projects?

The answer, unfortunately, is not as many as you would expect. In many cases, you will find silos of automation operating across a business. For example, a team focused in a specific area may have identified a tactical automation opportunity, gotten funding to purchase a tool and achieved some early wins, but ultimately stalled with their automation project as they failed to identify new use cases and demonstrate ongoing value.

Successful organizations think about automation strategically, bringing together the right people, processes, and tools to centrally organize, plan, and execute automation projects and then demonstrate ongoing success to the business. I've sometimes heard the term "automation center of excellence" used to describe the construct that these successful organizations have pulled together in order to develop a strategic automation function.

Automation centers of excellence (CoEs) typically consist of a team of expert automation engineers who are familiar with a broad range of automation technology. They take a programmatic approach to identifying automation opportunities, understanding their business impact, and building a backlog of automation activities that are focused on business outcomes.

Communication is key. Successful automation teams will clearly articulate the challenges of manual activities and successfully paint the "before and after" automation picture in terms the business can

understand—time savings, reduction of costs associated with manual execution of repetitive tasks, increased quality of rollouts, reduced risk, improved time to restore service, etc. Automation teams need to provide easily accessible dashboards or reports to business stakeholders and regularly check in with them to ensure they are satisfied with their automation investments. This communication and demonstration of value will ensure continued investment in the future.

As we mentioned earlier, successful organizations bring together the right people, processes, and tools to create automation CoEs. Let's dig into each of those areas in a little more detail.

People: We've already discussed the importance of the actual automation engineers, but you also need folks that can be embedded into the business to understand ongoing strategic goals/projects and look for opportunities where automation can add value. Think of these people as automation engagement leaders who will advocate for automation development in support of key business objectives and will build business cases to secure funding and then follow back up to demonstrate the successful achievement of those automation goals.

Process: Successful CoE's will become automation factories executing in a constant cycle of identifying automation opportunities, understanding the value of the automation, being able to articulate that value to the business to secure funding and then closing the loop through delivery, execution and value realization. It's through this cycle that automation teams can strategically extend the reach of automation throughout a business.

Tools: Tools play an important part too. Obviously, there is a broad range of automation tooling in the market and it is not unusual for organizations to have multiple different and sometimes potentially overlapping automation tools in place. To really enable Automation CoE's we need a way to centralize and expose all that automation tooling so everyone is aware what is available in an organization. Automation Brokers such as BMC Helix Intelligent Automation enable organizations to create automation libraries which consolidate all automation actions into one place so automation teams can easily understand what's available to them.

Another important area for the automation tooling to support is the ability to collect & track new requests and ideas for automation and to curate a prioritized backlog of opportunities. The automation team can then leverage this to develop a factory based approach to automation delivery.

Analytics can help identify automation opportunities, for example looking at the most commonly occurring event types in an event management system, or understanding which service offerings are most frequently requested. It's also good practice to easily enable end users to request/recommend new automation be built, ideally directly from the tools they are using. For example a NOC operator might understand that when they see a certain event type, there are a set number of steps they would take to triage and remediate the issue. If they can easily communicate this information to the automation team then a solid backlog can be quickly constructed.

So, in summary, many organizations are now looking to create a CoE to help drive strategic automation initiatives. If you can get together the right team of people, the tooling to support automation initiatives and the processes in place to repeatedly identify automation opportunities and deliver results, the rewards for success are high.

In my next blog I'll dig into more detail about how BMC is helping organizations to successfully develop automation centers of excellence.