Introduction

As today's digital economy has blossomed, it has left organizations struggling to meet modern market and industry demands for pace, agility, transparency, and trust.

Organizations too often have to rely on "human duct tape" to get things done because internal IT systems have not been able to keep up with these changing demands.

Automation technologies can build bridges between the limitations of internal systems and the demands of external market and industry expectations. They can also help employees become more effective and empowered by streamlining routine administration tasks and giving people more space to do their best work.

With such a vital tool, it's important not to pursue projects in a siloed, tactical fashion. Taking a **strategic approach** to automation requires organizations to take a step back from focusing on individual technologies. It also requires fresh thinking.

The automation imperative: from winds of change to storms of disruption

✓ **Company specific**

✓ **Not temporary**
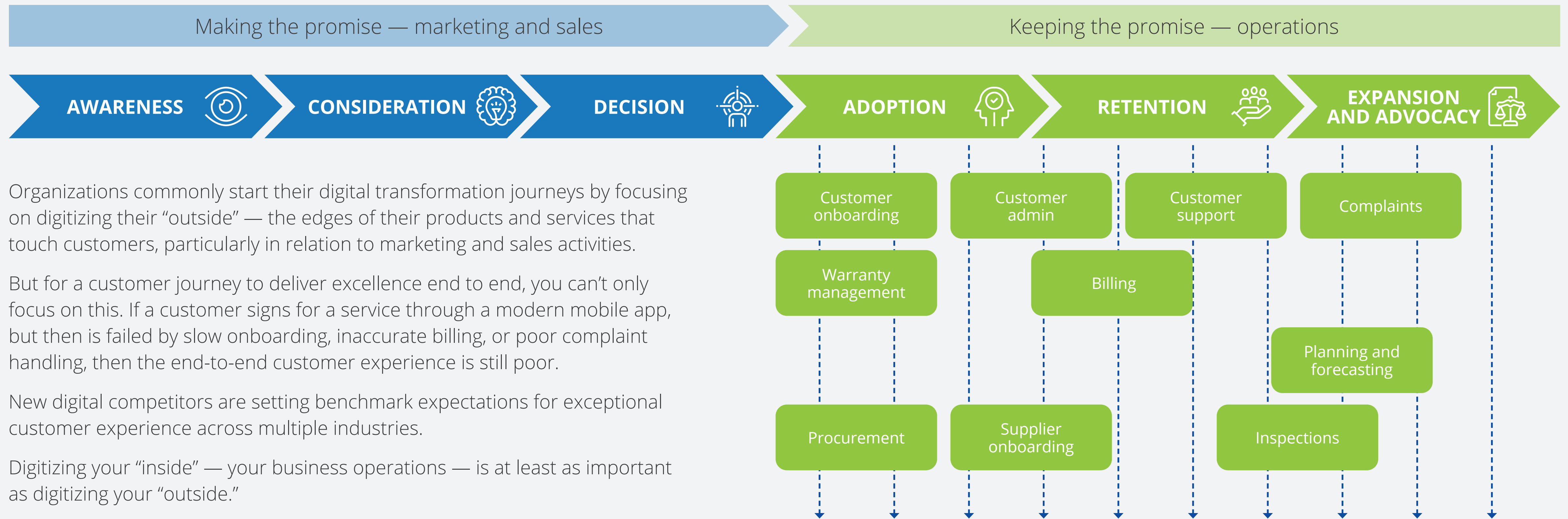
✓ **Not standalone**

✓ **All interconnected**

Even as the acute pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic wane for most organizations, the volatility and uncertainty they have become used to since 2020 are showing no signs of reducing. Organizations the world over are facing storms of disruption that are forcing them to find ways to increase agility and resilience.

Supply chain constraints

Inflationary pressure

Skill gap

Russia-Ukraine War

The automation imperative: digitizing inside is as important as digitizing outside

The path of a customer journey

Making the promise — marketing and sales	Keeping the promise — operations

AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	DECISION	ADOPTION	RETENTION	EXPANSION AND ADVOCACY

Organizations commonly start their digital transformation journeys by focusing on digitizing their "outside" — the edges of their products and services that touch customers, particularly in relation to marketing and sales activities.

But for a customer journey to deliver excellence end to end, you can't only focus on this. If a customer signs for a service through a modern mobile app, but then is failed by slow onboarding, inaccurate billing, or poor complaint handling, then the end-to-end customer experience is still poor.

New digital competitors are setting benchmark expectations for exceptional customer experience across multiple industries.

Digitizing your "inside" — your business operations — is at least as important as digitizing your "outside."

Customer onboarding

Customer admin

Customer support

Complaints

Warranty management

Billing

Planning and forecasting

Procurement

Supplier onboarding

Inspections

The automation imperative: building better employee experiences

32%
of employees are looking for new jobs
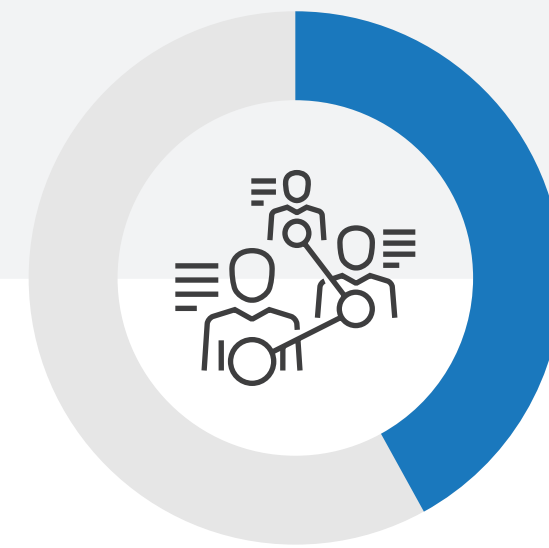
42%
are "looking for a better employee experience"

45%
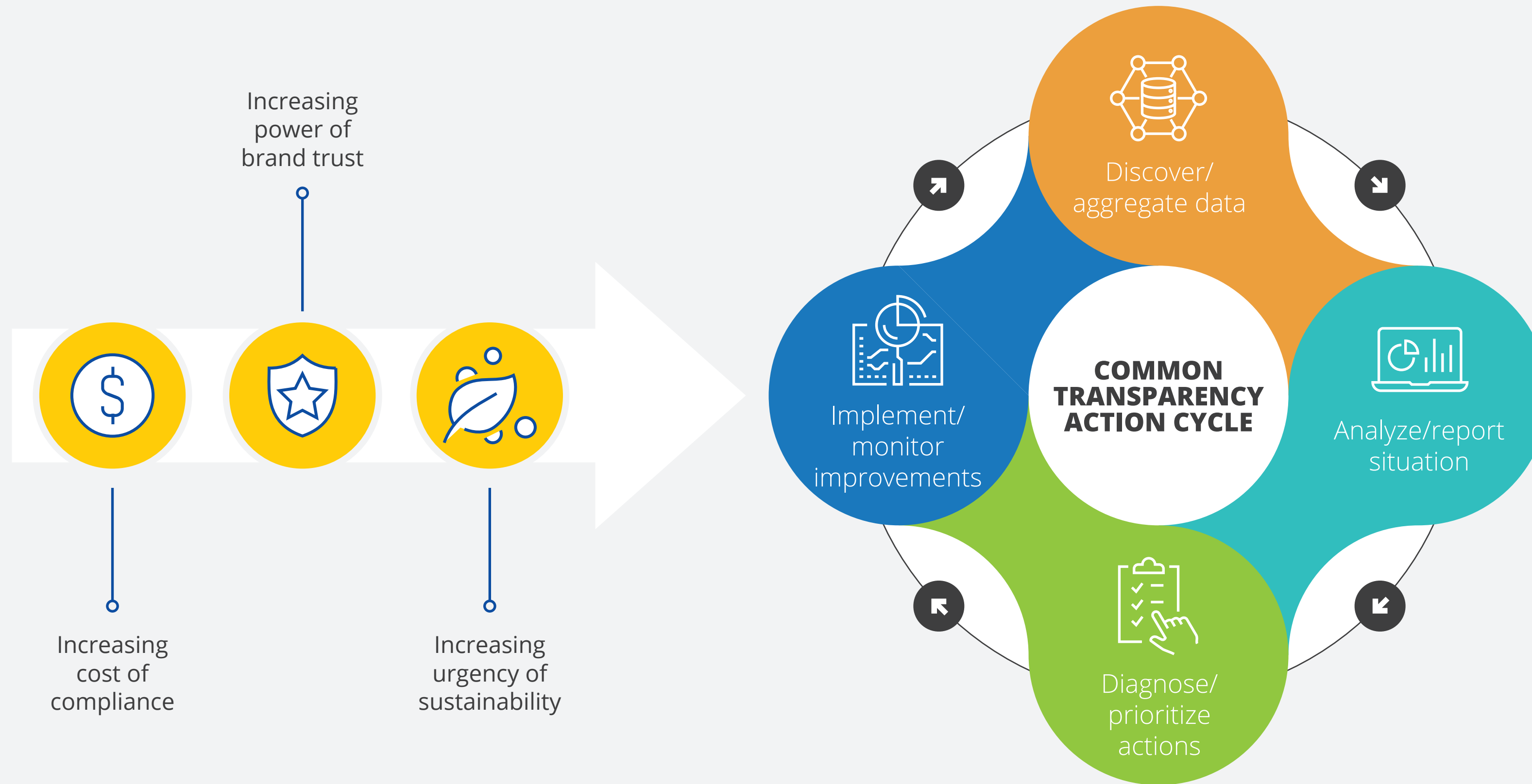of adopters are creating programs to boost wider involvement in automation

Nearly 32% of employees are actively looking at other job opportunities. 42% of this group cite "looking for a better employee experience" as a key reason.

Automation can make a positive difference in two ways:

- Automating routine, repetitive tasks is a significant way to give employees more time to focus on high-value tasks that require human traits like creativity and empathy.

- Involving employees directly in automation programs gives them new skills, drives innovation, and empowers them to improve their own environments.

45% of organizations either already have a program in place to encourage non-specialists to get directly involved in developing business automation solutions or plan to introduce one.

The automation imperative: building better employee experiences

Increasing
power of
brand trust

Increasing
cost of
compliance

Increasing
urgency of
sustainability

Discover/
aggregate data

Implement/
monitor
improvements

**COMMON
TRANSPARENCY
ACTION CYCLE**

Analyze/report
situation

Diagnose/
prioritize
actions

The cost of compliance for many organizations is becoming increasingly challenging. But compliance is only one branch of a much broader strategic imperative: to be transparent and trustable.

Sustainability is the latest topic relating to business ethics to catch markets' attention. In 2022, 44% of European organizations include sustainability-related KPIs when measuring senior executives' performance; 35% are working to develop a comprehensive view of the environmental impact of their operations.

Using armies of administrators to gather information, collate, analyze, and report on it manually is foolhardy — whether the goal is regulatory compliance or sustainability. Modern automation platforms have critical roles to play across the whole process of operational monitoring, analysis, and reporting.

Key challenges: legacy operating models and assumptions

Who, What, When, Where, How

Legacy systems, processes, and operating models make too many assumptions about who must do what work, how, and when and where they must do it.

European organizations are clear that they can't be bound by legacy assumptions. They are intent on retaining hybrid, flexible work environments that leverage cloud-based connectivity, devices, applications and services, and digital workspaces.

Modern automation platforms provide strategic value here. Automation can create a flexible bridge between legacy systems and processes, with all their inbuilt assumptions, and the current demands of always-on, work-from-anywhere workflows, tasks, decisions, and customer needs.

Four key work practices and technology advances emerging from the pandemic are likely to endure in organizations
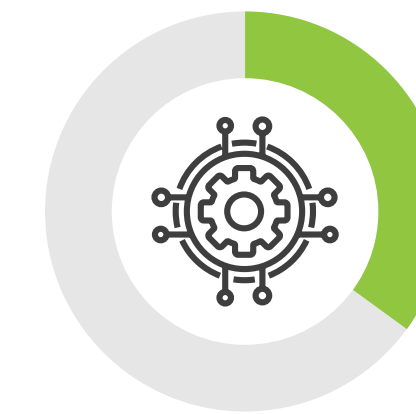
45%
Remote and hybrid work models

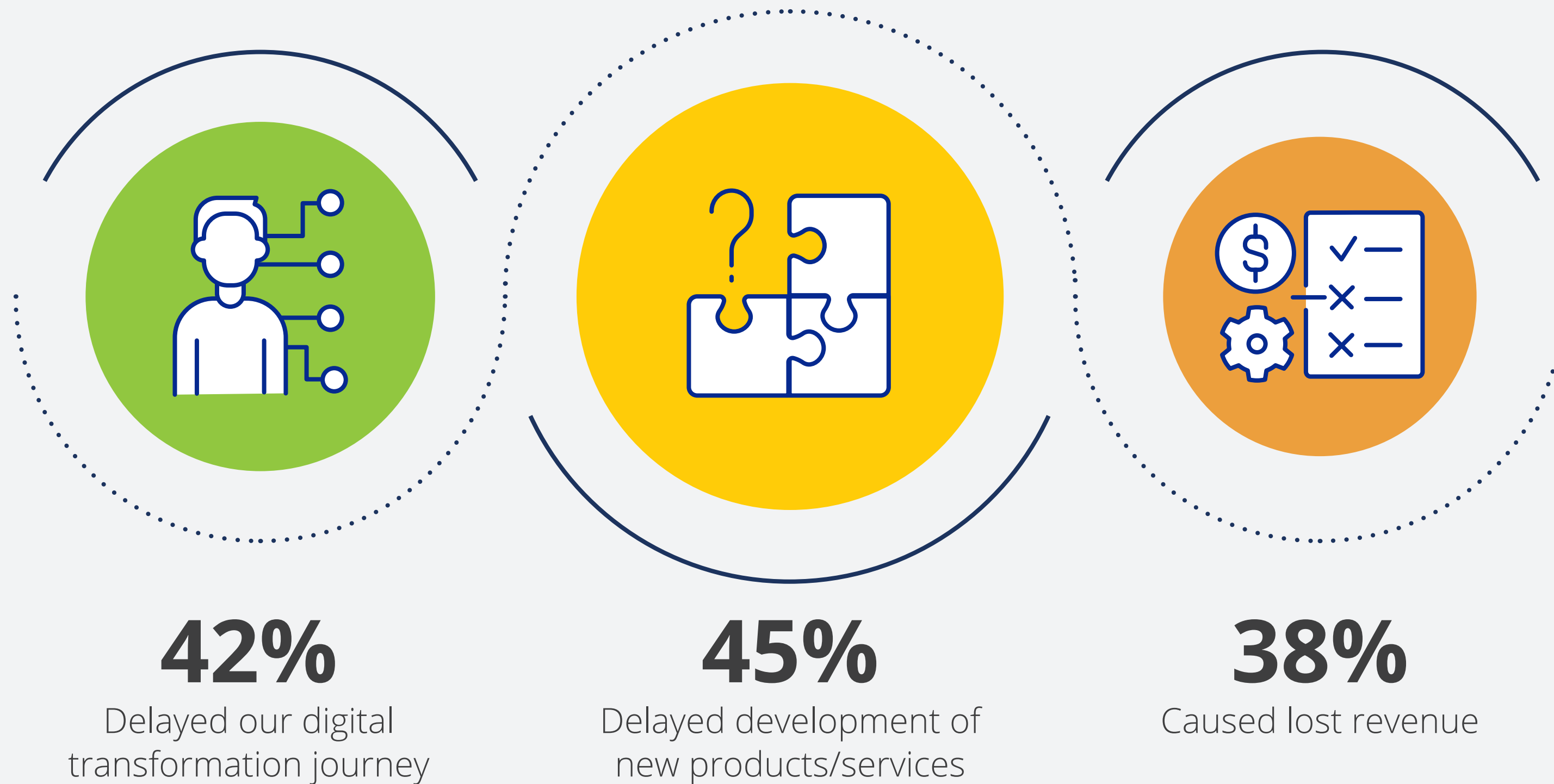**42%**
Intelligent multichannel digital workspaces

36%
Cloud-first connectivity, devices, apps, services

35%
Ubiquitous automation of repetitive tasks and workflows

Key challenges: skills gaps are everywhere

A lack of IT skills has ...

42%
Delayed our digital
transformation journey

45%
Delayed development of
new products/services

38%
Caused lost revenue

It is abundantly clear that there are not enough professional software developers to enable organizations to digitize their operations with traditional tools and approaches.

The demand is just too great.

Organizations must find automation partners, platforms, and approaches that enable scarce technical resources to be used as effectively as possible.
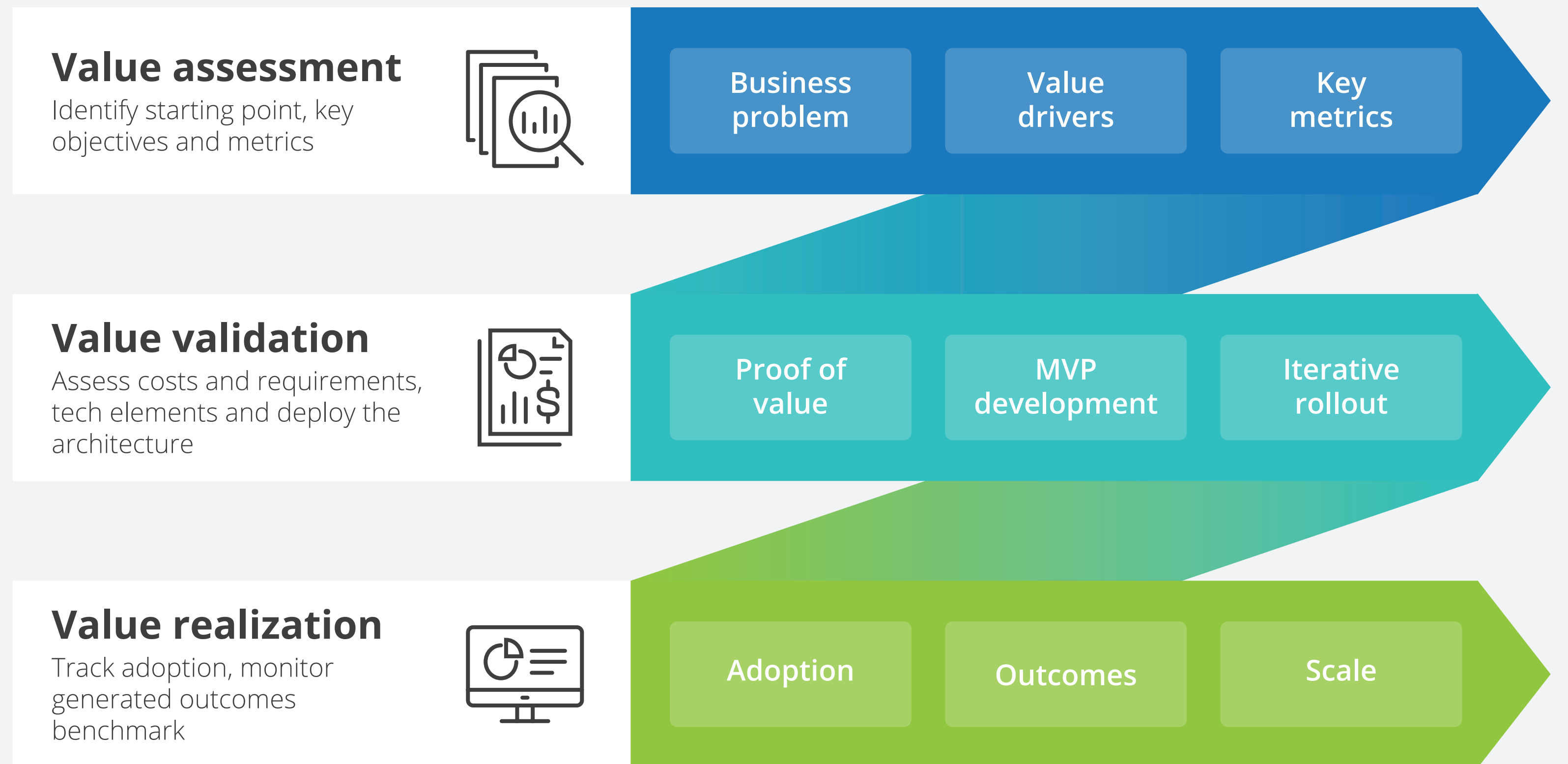
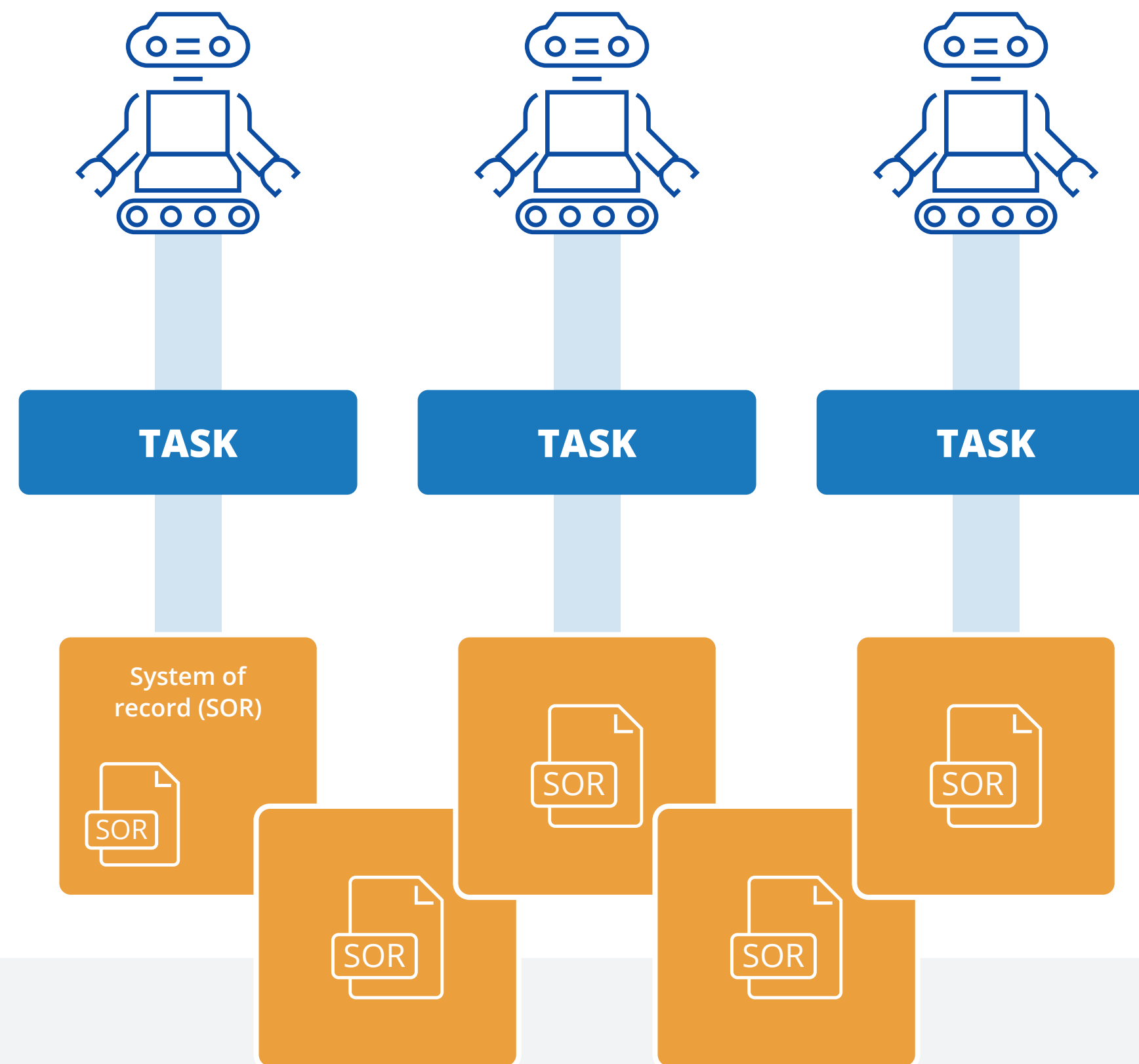# Key challenges: traditional transformation approaches are out of bounds

As markets continue to be characterized by volatility and uncertainty, and as organizations emphasize agility and resilience, CEOs and CFOs have no appetite for "big bang" technology transformation initiatives that take multiple years to deliver measurable returns.

Organizations must have a clear transformation destination in mind, but at the same time be prepared to work toward that destination iteratively, delivering measurable value at every step.

IDC sees increasing numbers of organizations leveraging iterative value realization models like the one summarized here.

Value assessment
Identify starting point, key objectives and metrics

| Business problem | Value drivers | Key metrics |

Value validation
Assess costs and requirements, tech elements and deploy the architecture

| Proof of value | MVP development | Iterative rollout |

Value realization
Track adoption, monitor generated outcomes benchmark

| Adoption | Outcomes | Scale |

Key challenges: RPA is not enough

TASK

TASK

TASK

System of record (SOR)

SOR

SOR

SOR

SOR

SOR

Organizations are starting their journeys to digitize their business operations with the automation of routine request processing using tools such as robotic process automation (RPA). IDC research shows that over 40% of organizations currently investing in or deploying automation technologies are using RPA.

RPA has a role to play in addressing the automation imperative we have discussed in this document because it enables organizations to digitize behind-the-scenes tasks that typically remain stubbornly "analog" even as new digital projects create customer-focused innovations. But RPA can only make an impact at the level of individual work tasks; its "sweet spot" is in mimicking the interactions that human workers have with systems of record as they go about conducting day-to-day administrative tasks.

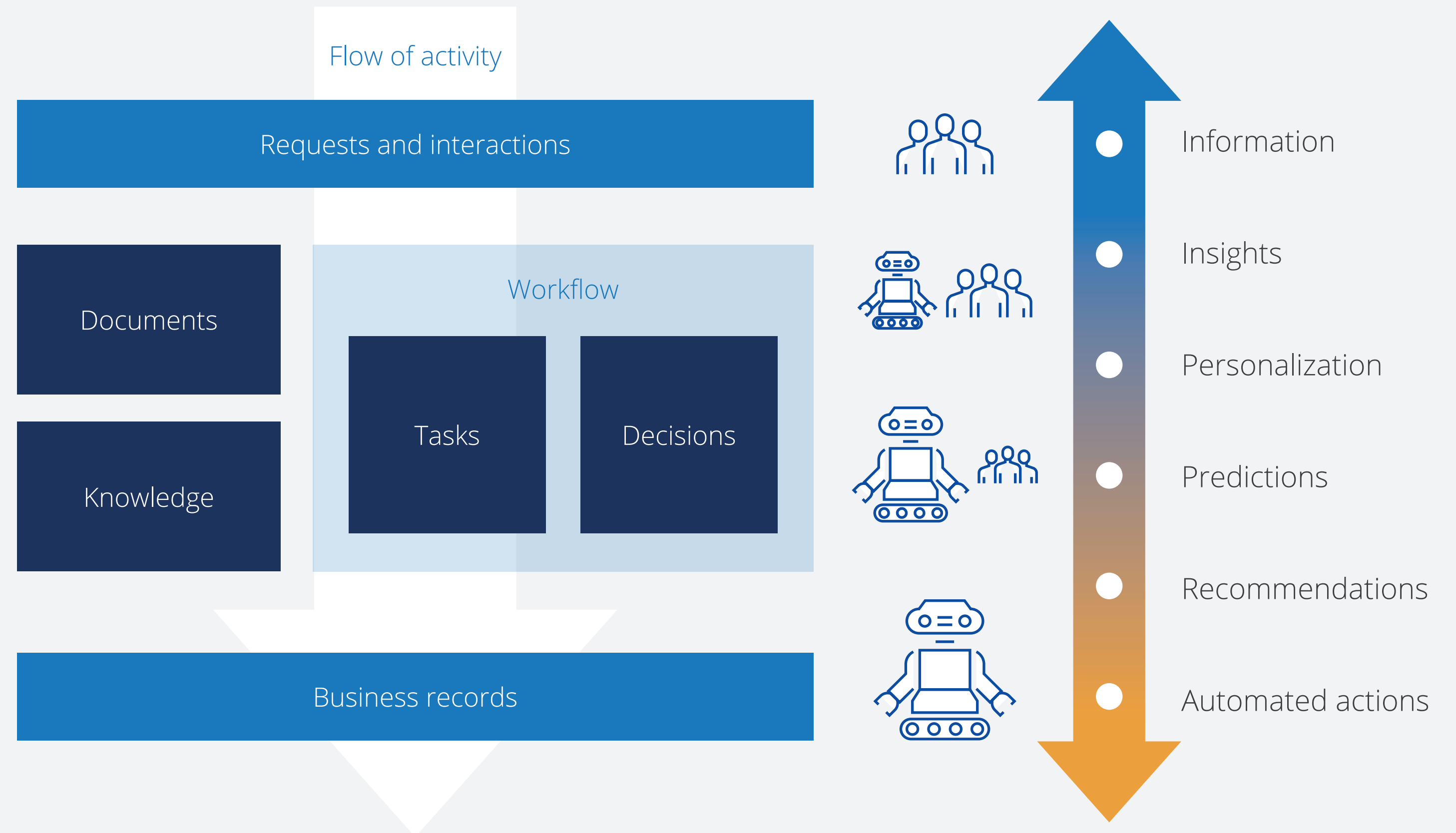Where organizations want to automate more than individual administrative tasks, they must look beyond RPA.

A strategic approach to automation: working across a business operations blueprint

A strategic approach to automation must explore how automation can add value across all aspects of work in business operations — not just individual tasks.

Taking a broader view, automation can add value:

- When work is initiated via a request received from an internal or an external customer
- When making sense of documents that provide further information or context for the work
- In making knowledge (about things like procedures, policies, and best practices) easy to consume and act on
- In accelerating the tasks that must be done and the decisions that must be made
- In the orchestration of work via a workflow, which determines the order and assignment of work and defines how reviews or signoffs must be carried out
- In interactions with systems of record as the work is carried out and completed

Modern automation platforms provide options that work across the whole of this blueprint.

Flow of activity

Requests and interactions

Documents

Workflow

Knowledge

Tasks

Decisions

Business records

- Information
- Insights
- Personalization
- Predictions
- Recommendations
- Automated actions

A strategic approach to automation: orchestrate systems, people, bots, and data

RPA and application integration tools can automate tasks and actions.

Intelligent document processing automates the interpretation of documents, providing actionable information quickly.
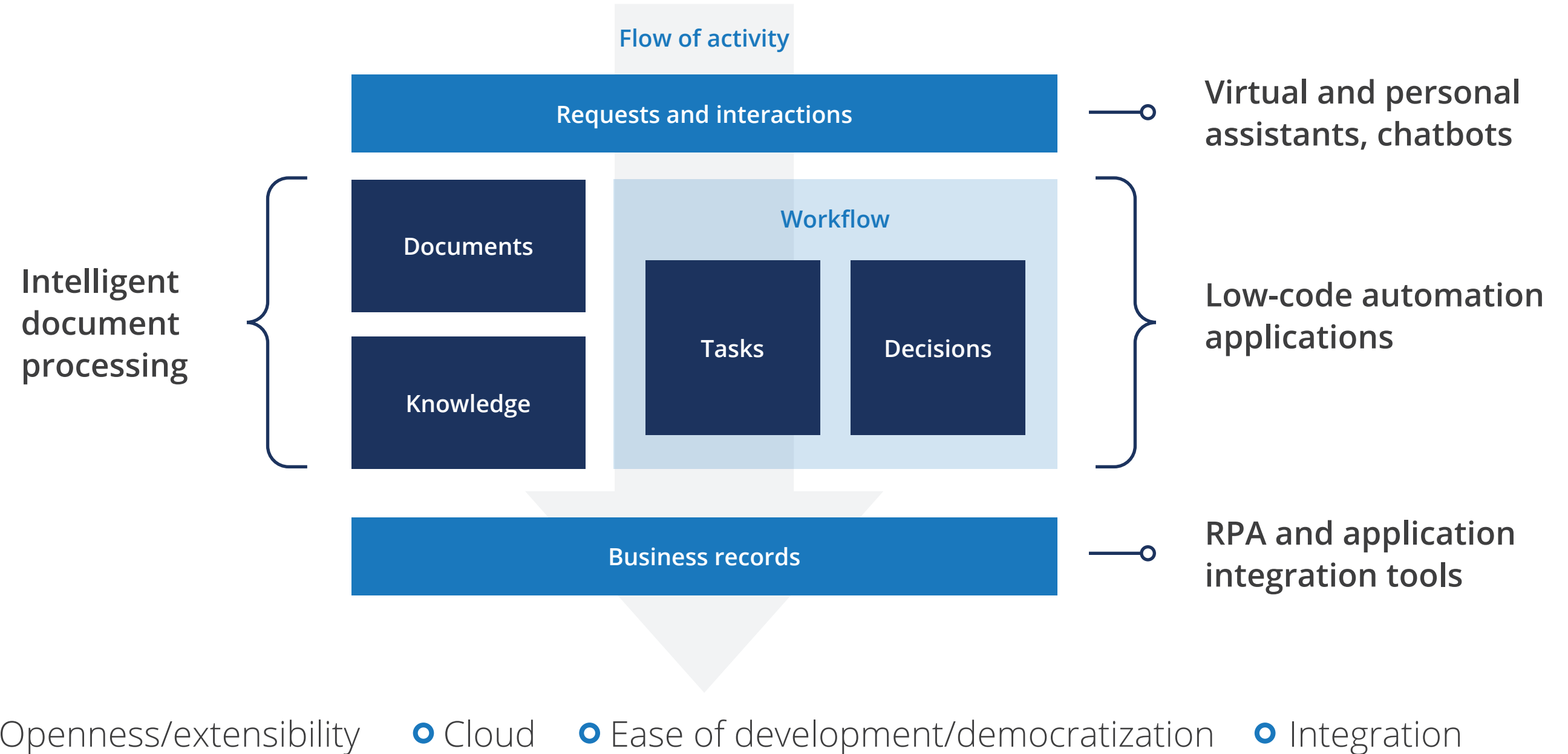
Virtual and personal assistants and chatbots help to automate and streamline aspects of request and interaction management, and collaboration.

Automation application development tools help to automate workflows without necessarily automating individual tasks — and **provide a common orchestration capability for orchestrating interplay between systems, people, bots, and data**.

Modern automation platforms bring all these capabilities together and also provide low-code design and development environments, which mean that solutions can be built without the need for low-level programming.

PREDICTION:

By 2024, **70%** of G2000 investments in business automation will be for multimodal codeless automation platforms that support digital enablement by both professional developers and business users.

Flow of activity

Requests and interactions — Virtual and personal assistants, chatbots

Intelligent document processing
- Documents
- Knowledge

Workflow
- Tasks
- Decisions

Low-code automation applications

Business records — RPA and application integration tools

○ Openness/extensibility   ○ Cloud   ○ Ease of development/democratization   ○ Integration
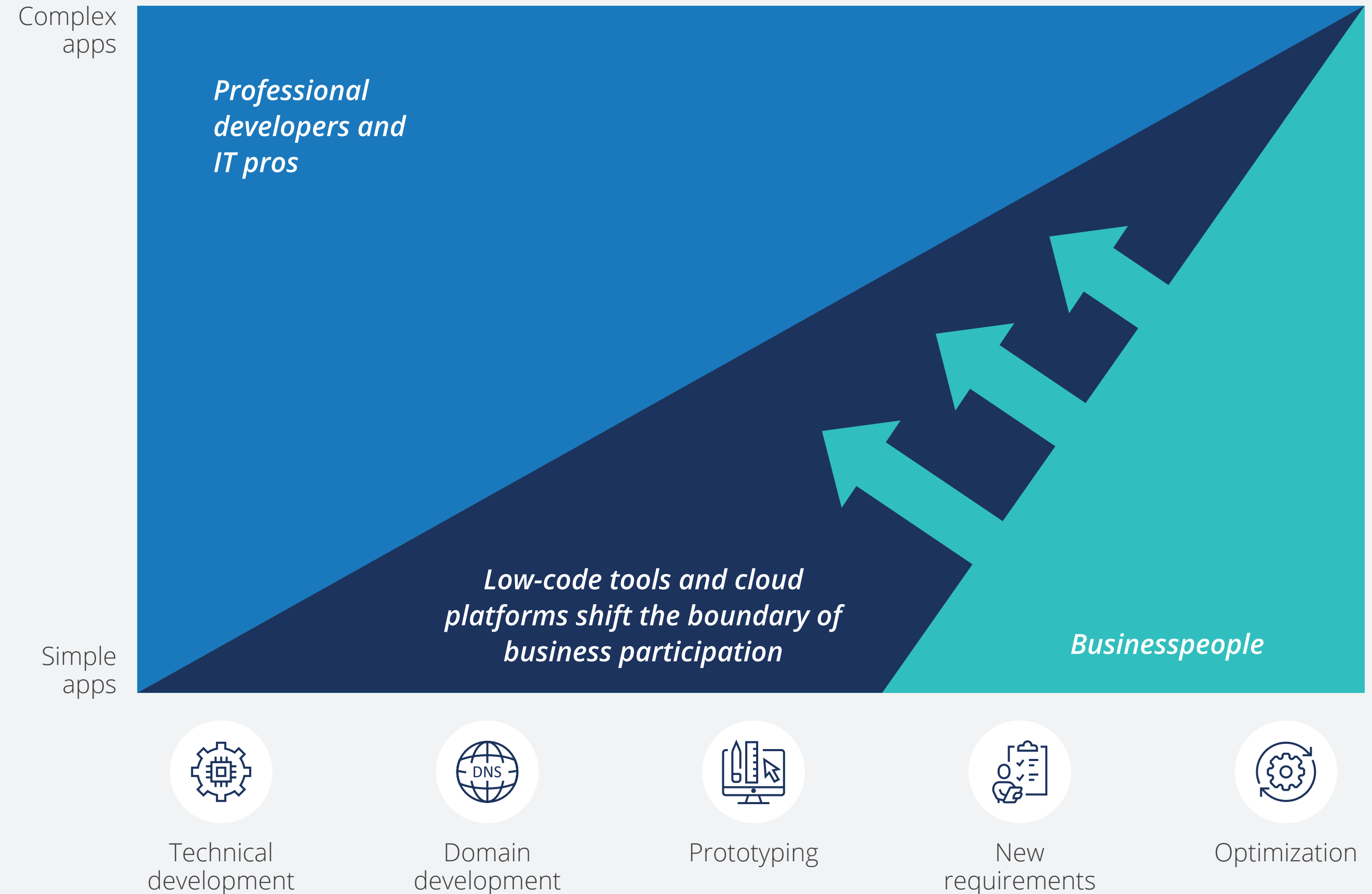
A strategic approach to automation: break through demand backlogs; enable fusion teams

Although organizations are increasingly creating programs to enable non-technical staff to get more directly involved in creating and delivering automation applications, few organizations are delivering strategic value by simply asking "citizen developers" to build those applications by themselves.

Most of the value of low-code development tools instead comes from enabling multidisciplinary "fusion teams" with mixes of skills and abilities to work together to create applications.

Rather than relegating businesspeople's involvement in projects to the start (when new requirements are discussed) and the end (when applications need to be accepted by the business) low-code tools can shift the boundary of participation, enabling more people to be more involved in more aspects of development and delivery.

Complex apps

Professional developers and IT pros

Low-code tools and cloud platforms shift the boundary of business participation

Businesspeople

Simple apps

Technical development

Domain development

Prototyping

New requirements

Optimization

A strategic approach to automation: minimize limits and dependencies

There is no "perfect" licensing model for strategic automation

PER USER LICENSING

Works well if a group of users need access to multiple applications; does not work well with large populations of users or external users

PER APPLICATION LICENSING

Works well if a use case demands one or few applications with many users; does not work well to incentivize new use case development

PER DEVELOPER LICENSING

Works well if development work is done by a small group of developers; does not incentivize broadening out of development activity

CONSUMPTION-BASED PRICING

Works well where processes and work volumes are already known; creates billing uncertainty if new use cases are being explored

The strategic embrace of automation will create many different use cases for automation platforms, with different use cases having different usage and scaling profiles.

Work to find automation platforms that don't limit your ambition, and work with vendors that can license in ways that align to your own needs in scaling development, applications, and users.

Conclusion

Understand the big picture

Automation is strategic. But to deliver strategic value you must understand all the ways automation can impact work, and plan accordingly.

New value needs new thinking

Avoid automating processes in ways that simply reinforce legacy operating assumptions. Be prepared to look beyond IT and embrace wider audiences to truly transform at scale.

Don't limit your ambition

Find and work with vendors that help you orchestrate systems, bots, people, and data — and that support you in scaling your use cases flexibly.

Message from the sponsor

Bizagi's industry-leading platform for low-code process automation connects people, applications, robots, and information. As one of the most business-friendly and flexible solutions on the market, Bizagi's cloud-native platform enables true collaboration between business and IT, delivering faster adoption and success. Fueled by a community of millions of users, Bizagi powers over 400 enterprises worldwide, including Adidas, Unilever, DHL, and Bancolombia.

For more information, visit https://www.bizagi.com.

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