



**Dynamics Matters**  
**Podcast**

The benefits of automation

***With Dan Snowdon - Solutions Director, HSO***

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*“It’s not a faith in technology. It’s a faith in people.” – Steve Jobs*

Technology automation reduces the number of time-intensive manual tasks workers must perform. It brings with it process efficiencies that mean you’re able to direct skilled staff to projects and tasks that need a greater level of expertise. And that’s really what automation is about. It’s not a focus on technology, it’s a focus on people. It’s a recognition that the time of experienced and skilled workers is better spent on more complex business critical tasks. Tasks that will solve key challenges that move the business forward.

And it would seem most businesses have cottoned on to the need to automate at least part of their operation. A 2020 global survey of business leaders from a range of industries conducted by McKinsey & Co. found that 66% were piloting solutions to automate at least one business process. And that 31% of those businesses have already automated at least one function.

So what’s fuelling the drive to automation?



## The customer expectation is changing

HSO Field Service Director, Dan Snowdon, believes automation is being driven by changes in expectation. “everyone’s lives are changing to one of getting everything as quickly as possible. And if a business is going to get the efficiencies it needs to achieve this, then automation is the only answer.” All roads lead to customer expectation.

Consider your most recent online buy. If it was a product of reasonable value, you likely shopped around to find the best price. If prices were comparable, you may have looked at other differentiators. Delivery dates would have been one. For the product arriving in your

hands tomorrow you may have happily paid a little more than for the product not arriving until next week. And the impact of this on a business’s supply chain is quite profound.

In fact, research conducted by Allied Market Research found that the supply chain management (SCM) market will grow from \$15.85 billion in 2019 to \$37.41 billion by 2027. And in this process automation plays a key role.

## Automating supply chain processes

The key to effective supply chain management (SCM) is demand planning. The process of predicting which goods customers will order, and at what volume. Overestimating demand results in excess inventory. Underestimating demand leads to lost sales and dissatisfied customers.

Factors that can influence demand forecasts include weather, economic climate, tariffs, currency fluctuations and other disruptions. Good product portfolio management and forecasting allows you to factor some in, but manual estimates are laborious.

Modern ERP systems such as [Microsoft Dynamics 365](#), include SCM automation capabilities that deliver automated real-time decision-making for demand planning. Advances in AI, machine learning and predictive analytics and the use of sensors also provide better visibility by feeding live data back into demand planning. And where else are the benefits of automation keenly felt?





## Automating field processes

Advancements in – and often simplification of – technology is enabling automation of otherwise manual tasks. Having skilled (and expensive) resources out in the field performing menial tasks is not ideal. And again, automation technology has a positive role to play here. For example, automated scheduling in Dynamics 365 ensures the right person goes to the right job at the right time. This also has the effect of increasing first time fix rates and reducing the amount of times you need to send someone out. Freeing up resources in this way allows you to scale the business profitably, whilst continuing to serve and meet customer demands.

There's also the benefit of having less paperwork to process or excel sheets to fill in because Dynamics 365 stores all the data in an easy to access, indexable archive.

These benefits have led to a growth in demand of field service management (FSM) software. Currently worth \$3.5b, it will likely reach \$5.9b by 2024. So how to get started?



## The first steps of automation

Relying on manual processes to support business function is inefficient. And as demand from customers is focused on getting things now, automation technology can help meet demand. The good news is that automation technology is now more accessible in terms of use and cost. The skill level required to master Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, augmented reality, Robotic Process Automation (RPA), supply chain management technology, and so on, has become lower. Which is good news for many as McKinsey's 2019 Global AI survey found that 63% of those that have implemented AI say that it contributed to increased revenues.

In a recent article from US TV host Sean Plott, he suggested accessibility drives traffic and growth in technology. It's hard to argue with this. And is a point Microsoft has taken on board as they continue making technology such as Dynamics 365 more accessible to more people in more ways.

But this comes with a note of caution from Microsoft founder Bill Gates. *"The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency."*

# Contact HSO



**Contact Michael Lonnon**

[mlonnon@hso.com](mailto:mlonnon@hso.com)

07849087668



the results company

1st Floor, Enterprise Point, Altrincham Road, Sharston, Manchester. M22 9AF | T +44 (0)161 300 6060 | [info-uk@hso.com](mailto:info-uk@hso.com)

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