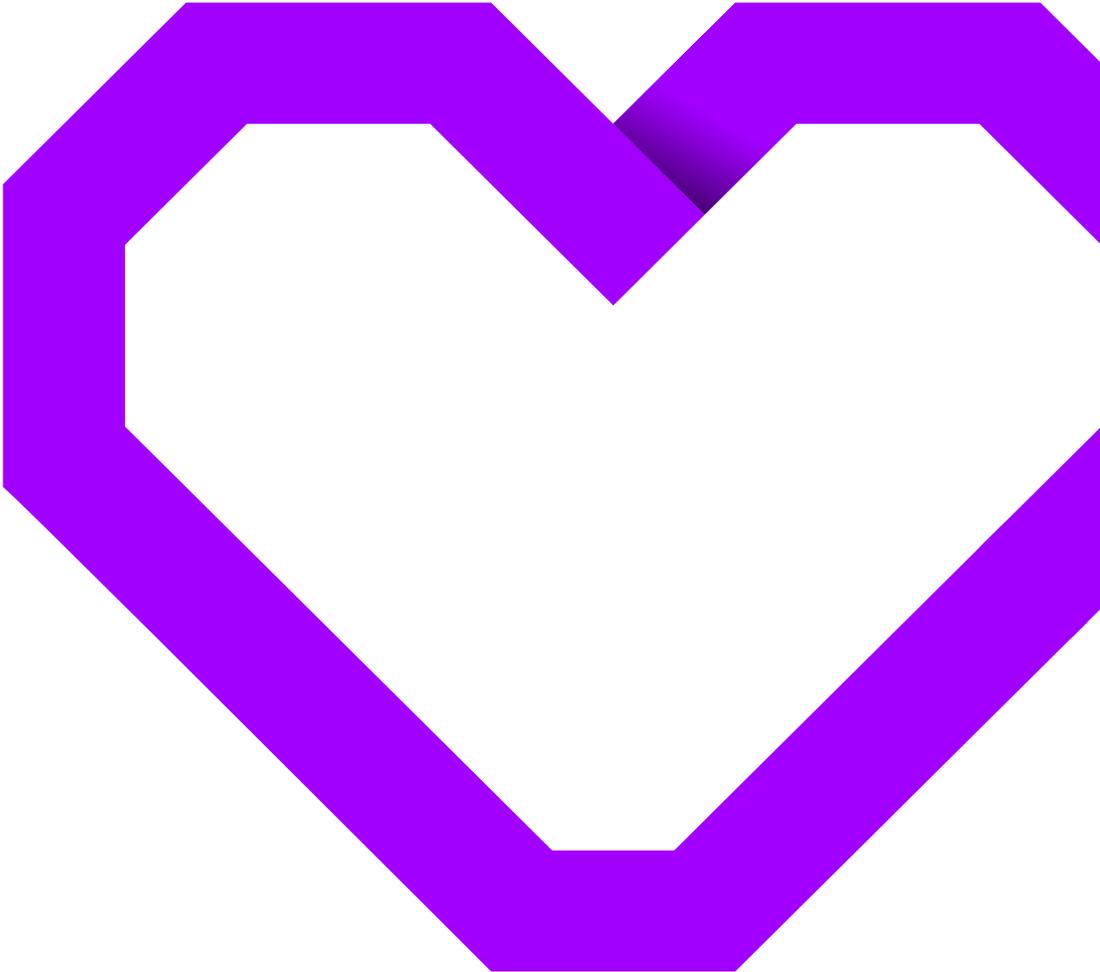


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TRULY HUMAN AUTOMATION

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



Situated at the heart of one of the UK's most popular student cities, Manchester Metropolitan University has a driving ambition to discover and disseminate knowledge—and to make higher education accessible and beneficial to all with the passion and ability to succeed.

This thriving institution has more than 33,000 students and receives about 52,000 applications a year. It has around 4,400 staff that the HR Directorate supports.

CHALLENGES

While Manchester Met's success and growth represent a great achievement, there have been areas they have wanted to continue to improve especially within the HR Directorate. As a high-volume transactional provider, the Directorate continues to shape and provide self-service capabilities for its staff but as the workload increased they looked for new and innovative ways to assist in maintaining the high quality of service that it prides itself in providing to its customers.

Significant resource was being devoted to basic process matters. So, the HR Director decided to find new ways to increase the value of work delivered by people by doing things differently. She knew that, by taking the right steps, it was possible to get more from existing resources; further improving the quality of service and freeing up people for more customer centric work. This is where Accenture was invited to help support this change.

TARGETED AUTOMATION

The Accenture team hit the ground running, launching a four-week discovery exercise to review the Directorate's systems and processes. Within a week, a series of workshops confirmed that the focus for change should not be technology applications, but rather a reduction in manual, repetitive processes that would alleviate pressure on the staff. To achieve this Robotics Process Automation (RPA) was recommended.

The first thing Accenture did was to understand that this was a people project, not a systems project. Then they worked with us on how to maximise the benefits from our existing system and use that better to support our customers. Accenture helped us work through all the people elements and came up with some practical suggestions on how to speed up our processes and give a better service.

Frances Hewison, HR Director, Manchester Metropolitan University

To target RPA at the right activities, the Accenture team conducted an elimination process to understand the key areas with the highest level of manual inputs. This identified five candidate processes for automation, which between them were resulting in a high number of areas of the Directorate performing repetitive manual tasks—diverting time from higher value activities. These in-scope processes spanned Terminations, New Starters, Sessional Contracts, Maternity and Paternity Leave Requests, and Flexible Working Requests.

Accenture led a nine-week RPA phase which included 12 design workshops focused on standardising and streamlining processes before automating. The team developed over 30,000 lines of code with over 150 hours of testing and live-proving to fully automate the five business processes. The automated solutions continue to be subjected to a fully human review—and the automation can be turned on or off in minutes if needed.

PROVIDING TRULY HUMAN-CENTRIC SERVICES

Far from making the HR Directorate less human, the introduction of RPA has enabled it to become much more people-focused than before. This is because the automation of these five key business processes has allowed the staff previously overburdened with manual inputting duties to switch to providing a truly human-centric service.

In terms of hard numbers, a process that previously took a member of staff 45 minutes, could now be completed in just three minutes. The average time saving achieved across the department has been around 87 percent, saving more than 115 days a year in total. All of this has been accompanied by increased accuracy, as well as the ability to deliver a more human service.

Universities are people places. Everything about them is around how we develop, how we form, how we manage people—so that human dimension is really important. With resources under pressure, we need people to be doing things that will add most value—I think there is a place in a university to have automation to deal with routine things and free up people to really add value.

Frances Hewison, HR Director,
Manchester Metropolitan University

PROVING THE POWER OF HUMAN+MACHINE

Manchester Met's experience with RPA is a great demonstration of the power of human+machine—augmenting people with the latest digital technologies. And—going forward—it's a combination that can be replicated across many organisations, including other higher-educational institutions. As Frances Hewison says: "Colleges and other universities will be interested to see how robots have transformed our HR department and freed up staff to add value and work much more closely with their customers. I think my colleagues in other HE institutions will be keen to follow our lead."

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ABOUT ACCENTURE

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations.

Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions—underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network—Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With 477,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.