

Case Study

Alexander Ross Holdings



How we used robots to save over 4,000 hours annually.

fdintelligence 
We make time.

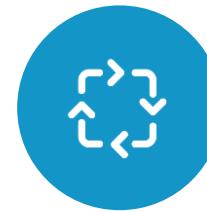
How we helped Alexander Ross Holdings.



Background.

Alexander Ross Holdings is a dynamic forward-thinking organisation which is regarded as one of the leading janitorial and soap manufacturing companies in the UK. It has three key business areas as detailed below.

- Unico is proud to be regarded as one of the UK's leading independent janitorial companies and has established links with the major brand suppliers as well as having a strong presence in the hotel and leisure market.
- The Scottish Fine Soaps Company sells luxury soap, bath and beauty collections and gifts through outlets and online, in the UK and in over 30 countries, as well as directly through its sales team to Germany and Austria. It also has expertise in contract manufacture for top brands such as Fortnum & Mason and Agent Provocateur.
- Montague Lloyd is one of the UK's leading hotel amenity suppliers, working in conjunction with The Scottish Fine Soaps Company.



What we did.

- As a forward thinking business the challenge for ARH was that the customer services team were spending a lot of hours on time-consuming, repetitive tasks such as processing PDF orders and uploading invoice data, instead of enhancing the customer experience.
- FD Intelligence identified that Robotic Process Automation (RPA) blended with Artificial Intelligence (AI) could reduce the time-consuming, repetitive tasks which the experienced customer services team were processing each day.



Impact we had.

- We implemented RPA technology which took over two key processes, and within 2 months we delivered a robot to automate these for ARH.
- We set this up so the team could validate any business exceptions using "human in the loop" technology.
- This has given over 4,000 hours back to the business to allow employees to concentrate on high value tasks that add real client value and improve the customer experience.



How we did it.

- We took a top down approach and engaged with the senior stakeholders to establish the goals and how success was going to be measured.
- A three-phased approach was adopted to assess, qualify and deliver Intelligent Automation.

"FD Intelligence have significantly impacted the efficiency of our business. Having spent the time to truly understand our business processes, they were able to identify priority areas where RPA could be utilised. They then built and deployed the robots which have made a significant impact on our overall efficiency."

Robert Ross, Managing Director, Alexander Ross Holdings.

Processes we identified. Solutions we delivered.

Order Processing:

ARH receive the majority of orders via email, meaning the customer services team process each one individually. On average there are 1,000 orders per week and a team of six currently process these manually.

The orders are sent in PDF format which the team then rekey into an order screen, allocate stock if applicable and deal with any subsequent queries. There is no or little added value to the process other than getting the volume of orders into the system.

Invoice Processing:

One of Scottish Fine Soaps major customers requires invoices to be uploaded onto an online portal for payment. This is a highly labour intensive task that has to be performed by the Finance Director, due to the value of the invoices (£Millions per annum) and is at risk to human error.

Seamless Robot:Human:Robot integration, which learns & improves over time:

Artificial Intelligence, Document Understanding and "Human in the Loop" technology used to power ARH's robot.

Solution:

- The robot now captures the PDF order from the email and intelligently reads the relevant data using best in class machine learning and document understanding technologies.
- The captured data is then populated into the ERP system, Merlin, automatically by the robot.
- If there are any exceptions or anomalies the team are alerted to review manually, before the robot again takes over.
- The team can also easily check a random sample if required.

Solution:

- A robot was deployed to perform this task. Within 2 weeks the bot was live and processing invoices.
- Saves the Finance Director 15 – 20 hours per month of his time.
- The process is quicker, runs in the background and is less error prone.

- Document Understanding (powered by Artificial Intelligence) can teach software robots to read and understand documents.
- When an automation includes decisions that a human should make - like approvals, escalations, and exceptions – the 'Action Centre' highlights these for human intervention, and once decision is made the robot picks up again and continues the process, and can be asked to 'remember' that for future application.

4,000 hrs

saved per annum.

Implemented within 2 months

200+ hrs

saved per annum.

Average handling time reduced by 95%

One of the 1st companies in UK to deploy state of the art AI driven bot technology.



We make time.

Our process to get there.

Process Discovery: Assessment.

Once we'd understood the fundamentals of the business, we worked with the senior team to identify a few potential processes for automation.

Each was then assessed against:

- how suitable it was to automate, including whether the process is stable (i.e. doesn't alter);
- how often it has to be done,
- how regularly,
- how long it takes and;
- quality of data within it.

From this we identified the top processes that had the greatest automation potential with the highest ROI.

Efficiency of building in blocks.

- Throughout the project the team built the robots out of 'blocks' of code, with in essence each block performing an individual functions that would be required across various tasks (e.g. one 'block' might be a system login, another may be a file save command).
- In doing this they soon build up a library of these 'blocks' which can be reused in other robots.
- This means quicker development on subsequent robots, because these building blocks can be reused. This also means that if anything changes in the future (e.g. login details), then this one 'block' only needs to be changed once and it works across all automated processes.

We make time.

Process Discovery: Qualification.

We then conducted 'deep dive' interviews with those who actually do these tasks (what we call Subject Matter Experts). From here we then mapped out the exact process, detailing all exceptions or anomalies which a robot may need to navigate.

A business case for each process was then written detailing all benefits, time to implement and cost for final sign off.

A detailed Solutions document was then presented as the final description of exactly what will be delivered so that everyone is clear.

Build & Design.

A robot is developed to automate each task, and fully tested code is produced ready for implementation.

The client was kept informed during every step, with us presenting working solutions every 2-weeks (because the project was run in a series of 2-week "sprints").

By following this methodology it kept everyone informed, gave the team confidence that the robots were going to be able to deliver, and allowed them to start thinking about operational restructuring when the process automations go live.

Outcome

ARH now runs Robotic Process Automation for two key customer service processes (Order Processing & Invoice Uploading).

The company is now reviewing all processes to see where other opportunities for automation exist. It has now got an automation first mindset.

"It has been great working with FD Intelligence to bring Robotic Process Automation into our business. The team approached the project from a very business perspective, truly understanding our processes by undertaking a detailed discovery process while mapping where robots could assist our team. This approach gave us confidence of the impact this would deliver and the time it would save. We've been delighted with the result and how we can better utilise our resources. We will continue to actively look at our other processes for automation."

**William McMartin, Finance Director,
Alexander Ross Holdings.**

What our client said:

“FD Intelligence have significantly impacted the efficiency of our business. Having spent the time to truly understand our business processes, they were able to identify priority areas where RPA could be utilised. They then built and deployed the robots which have made a significant impact on our overall efficiency.”

Robert Ross, Managing Director.

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William McMartin, Finance Director.

“The short development sprints worked well for us. We could quickly see how the robot was going to improve our Sales Order processing by making it more efficient, robust and auditable. The project has opened our eyes up to what is possible with this technology....we now have the robot set-up to do two very different automated tasks.”

Mark Turpie, Data Analyst.

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