

Automation and Data, the Best Thing Since Sliced Bread



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For most of the history of bread, it was eaten by either tearing off chunks or, eventually, slicing each piece one at a time. As store bought bread became more popular, manufacturers made it softer and softer to entice the buyer with its “fresh” appearance – rendering it extremely difficult to cut. Along came an intrepid inventor named Otto Frederick Rohwedder who invented the machine that could cut a full loaf of bread into consistently sized slices and enable it to be packaged for sale, out on the market in 1928. Not only did this make producing, selling, and eating bread much easier, but it also generated an increase in sales for toasters and delicious spreads. ([When Was Sliced Bread Invented? | History of Sliced Bread \(goldmedalbakery.com\)](#))

Can you imagine the pushback poor Otto must have received when he first started trying to sell his idea? “Who needs a bread slicer? We’ve always done it this way! The loaf will be stale! No one will buy it! So, you waste a few pieces trying to cut the bread, that just means we sell more!” Yet, for the average consumer today sliced bread is such a standard that it would be hard to imagine our food life without it.

I often wonder how many of those same changes – world changing or even just life improving – are passed up every day? Do we continue with the same repetitive tasks, manual processes, and unorganized useless data in spreadsheets just because we haven’t thought of trying something new? What if you were open to exploring new ideas and ways of working that might significantly change the way you do business?

Perhaps, starting down this path would be easier if you thought about it in simpler terms. After all, Otto probably didn’t set out to become the recognized standard for “The Greatest Thing” of modern times. Make a list of all the repetitive and/or manual tasks you (or your team) perform every week and the amount of time required to complete them. Further identifying if they occur on a daily or weekly basis might help. It is quite possible that you will be shocked at the length of the list, particularly if you add up the amount of time chained to these items. Even the smallest of tasks can add up across time and repetition.

After reviewing the list, the next step is to begin the process of envisioning how the underlying business needs for these tasks could be accomplished via other, more efficient, means. As an example, you might consider putting in place an approach that provides any of these options – and crosses key items off your list!

- Automating routine processes
- Capturing data once, and pushing it to the right locations
- Identifying and resolving discrepancies in information
- Validating contract terms for compliance
- Managing approval processes

As our team continues to work with customers to automate and improve their business processes, along with increasing [data visualization and analytics](#), we’ve focused heavily on using Microsoft’s Power Platform. The toolset

within this platform provides an extensive amount of functionality to easily accomplish all the items on the list above – plus so much more!

In fact, we've put together an approach to process transformation that organizations to work at a speed and budget that fits their internal needs – and we are right there with them on the journey every step of the way. Each quarter we walk through the list of items that are keeping team members from focusing on the accomplishing the work they need to be doing and identify the top priorities to retool and transform. This ongoing process allows the impact of the changes to be felt quickly – and measurably – so that the real work of the organization can flow through.

How much time would you like to regain in your work week? Perhaps enough to squeeze in a lunch with some really good bread? Let's talk soon.