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The KIT – Knowledge & Information Technology

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→ **A Discussion of Robotic Process Automation (RPA)**

Fancy phrases, especially if they can generate a new three-letter abbreviation, are launched from time to time by consulting firms to create new revenue streams for reports and conferences (yes, you correctly guessed which firm we're thinking about). Whether robotic process automation (RPA) is old wine in new bottles or a genuinely new concept was recently illustrated by this Twitter exchange.

Andy Mann: *My understanding -- and I am happy to be corrected -- is that ITPA/BPA* (i.e., workflow) automate actions programmatically from within a system (e.g., via API); RPA automates by simulating a human acting from outside the system (e.g. bot, screen-scraping).*

* ITPA = IT process automation; BPA = business process automation.

Bernard Golden: *So, it's a fancy term for screen scraping?*

Andy Mann: *Not only, but apparently yes.*

Matt Slotnick: *The underlying basis for a lot of the current RPA vendors is screen scraping for process discovery, yes. You then layer automation on top, to remove (or lessen) human interaction in the loop."*

Conclusion? As usual, caveat emptor! Companies that sell you "workflow automation" products may be just as good as people who sell "RPA," and they typically have a longer track record of doing it.

→ **KM and Jumping Frogs**

Our colleague Vince Polley recently found this gem of a case study by Nick Milton on knowledge management: [KM and Incentives: the Example of the Frog-Jump Olympics](#).

We don't want to spoil your pleasure, so we will let you discover yourselves what this is really about.

→ **More Startups**

We continued our exploration of the startup world since the last issue. Here is the latest list:

- [Dashbot's](#) slogan is "actionable bot analytics." They aim to improve the performance of customer service chatbots by analyzing the traffic to detect misunderstood requests and improve the natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to get better results as well as to detect when a human agent needs to be involved.
- [Inkling](#) is a platform to create and distribute learning content to dispersed or mobile workforces. Taco Bell, McDonald's and Verizon use it to onboard and train employees.
- [Peerlyst](#), founded by Israeli researcher Limor Elbaz, is a professional community of cybersecurity experts. It allows peers to connect, discuss security topics, and present their brand to others.

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- reSpeaker is a system that transforms someone's voice to sound like someone else's. The main clients are in the movie industry -- to recreate the voice of an actor who is dead, or perhaps just unavailable when a scene needs to be re-recorded. We asked Grant Reader, Chief Research Officer, about the potential for misuse by criminals (to help them with their social engineering efforts, for instance) and he brushed aside the concern. We think they're not being careful enough. Misuse could kill them.
- Aldabada, whose motto is "the only privacy policy that counts is yours," uses NLP to analyze the privacy policies on companies' websites and alert customers to potential issues.

→ Next time...

Claude Baudoin just took part in the 3rd biennial Knowledge Communities Observatory (KCO) held on June 11-12 at the Kedge Business School's campus in Toulon, France. The next issue of the KIT will include an extensive summary of the ideas and practices discussed during the event.

→ Seen Recently...

"You know you're taking yourself too seriously when you look at statistics and say aloud, 'These numbers do not reflect the nuances of the correlation-causation ratio'."

-- Aurobindo Sundaram