



HFS Hot Vendor: Catalytic

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Introduction

The HFS Hot Vendors are an exclusive group of emerging players, each with a differentiated value proposition for the HFS OneOffice or HFS OneEcosystem. HFS analysts speak with numerous exciting startups and emerging players.

We designate a select group as HFS Hot Vendors based on their offerings' distinctiveness, ecosystem robustness, client impact, financial position, and the impact in our OneOffice and/or OneEcosystem Frameworks. The HFS Hot Vendors may not (at the time of writing) have the scale and size to be featured in our Top 10 reports, but they have the vision and strategy to impact and disrupt the market.

Author: John O'Brien

Catalytic is an unusual suspect among the burgeoning list of intelligent automation (IA) players because it wants to be seen as a people-friendly automation platform. In the very short time since its launch, Catalytic has managed to displace one of the big names in robotic process automation (RPA) from a key use case at a global insurer, which showed that its IA solution could be more quickly and easily deployed than RPA for certain categories of automation. There is real capability and ambition behind this plucky start-up!

Being people friendly may seem like an oxymoron when considering that RPA is all about removing people from the process. But, Catalytic is aiming to turn this notion on its head via its SaaS-based platform, which puts the power in the hands of the business user to design, build, and use automations as part of their everyday work. Overcoming the fear of adoption should be a major part of any automation provider's strategy.

Catalytic's key offering is an AI-native SaaS platform, which has pre-built integrations with a wide range of cloud systems like Salesforce, Workday, NetSuite, and Office365. Users can create automations by passing the workflow development between people involved in the different steps within the process and then incrementally expanding its use. It means automations

become incremental over time, and people can gradually stop doing the low-level labour intensive work (such as Workday onboarding) and focus on other value-added customer facing activities.

Catalytic has its roots in workflow tools, which form the bedrock of any modern business process. It then takes an operations centric approach to automation, which differs from some of the pureplay RPA pack, who seek buy-in from either operations or IT to get off the ground. Catalytic's approach is to support users to perform their daily tasks more efficiently. Another plus is the speed of deployment. Changing a workflow or process for instance can be done in minutes by a trained user, which gets Catalytic close to the point of the customers' value creation.

But there is smarter functionality, too. As data is captured by the intelligent workflow, information is then fed back into a prediction model to assist with further automation, for instance around exceptions or where there are no existing rules. For example, the prediction model uses machine learning to apply new rules to semi-structured and unstructured email workflows and helps to spot high value invoices, which need routing for intervention, while enabling many more lower value invoices to be automated.

It's difficult to pigeon-hole Catalytic. It stands out from other players in the workflow, BPM, RPA, and service management arenas because of its pragmatic approach to automation—giving operations users control over their automations, which they can experiment with, use, and deploy as they scale.

This also means that the manual workarounds can be automated at a pace that is comfortable for the business, making it more people friendly.

By blurring the lines between old operational silos and functions, the Catalytic approach fits well into our view of the OneOffice. Its use of workflow, automation, and prediction and machine learning capabilities straddle aspects of the digital underbelly, intelligent digital support, and intelligent digital process (the old back, mid, and front offices), and gives Catalytic a fascinating view on the emerging OneOffice. One of Catalytic's customers told us what distinguishes it is being a "helper to a human, to facilitate and let people shine."

HFS' take

HfS sees Catalytic's focus on the people engaged in business process automation as a key differentiator as it seeks to grow market awareness. Enterprises are still acutely troubled by the impact of automation on jobs. Indeed, our recent poll of buyers at our HfS New York Summit showed that [40% of organizations](#) still don't know what to do with the people being displaced by automation.

Catalytic's approach is to hand the power back to the end user, to determine where and at what pace automation should happen, and to augment and assist humans rather than replace them. It's an intuitively sound premise, which should resonate well with organizations facing internal political struggles to get lights-out, unattended automation approaches off the ground.

While it's still very early days for this start-up, the business is run by some very savvy minds with an acute awareness of where the market is heading. This puts Catalytic in a strong position to flexibly deliver the capabilities that customers want today. Focusing on the cloud only is another important distinction for Catalytic, since most RPAs and BPM solutions still focus heavily on the legacy automation stack, often overlooking the opportunities for automating manual workarounds using newer cloud-based systems.

There's still a long way to go, however, and Catalytic really needs to build out a strong partner channel and best of breed technology relationships in order to provide a clear direction of travel for its growing list of customers. Expanding its reach will require focus and a roadmap for execution at scale.

Vendor factsheet

- Founded in 2015, Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois
- Founders: Sean Chou, Ravi Singh and Ted Shelton (Formerly of Cognizant and Genpact)
- Backed by \$1.1 million Series A seed funding from NEA, Boldstart ventures, and Pritzker Group
- Number of Engagements: 27
- Number of Clients: 12

Solution portfolio

- Cloud-based intelligent process automation tool
- Workflow automation across prompts, from filling to reminders and system inputs
- Automation for files and systems, such as Word, Excel, PDFs, CSV, XML. JSON as well as interaction with web-based systems such as Salesforce, Dropbox and Workday
- Automate decision making via cognitive actions as sentiment analysis ORC and entity recognition as well as machine learning for prediction, classification, and constant process improvement
- 120+ automated action in production, with new ones coming on line daily
- Integration for a number of cloud base systems. A partial list includes: Google ORC, Salesforce, Workday, Amazon Mechanical Turk, Slack, DocuSign, Microsoft Office 365 and Netsuite

Industry coverage

Catalytic has growing industry presence in several vertical, including the manufacturing, CPG, retail, research and testing, and hospitals sectors. There are also early cases in horizontal like procurement, HR and marketing.

Partnerships

Catalytic has not announced the go to market and strategic tech agreement yet.



About HFS

Insight. Inspiration. Impact.

HFS is a unique analyst organization that combines deep visionary expertise with rapid demand side analysis of the Global 2000. Its outlook for the future is admired across the global technology and business operations industries.

Its analysts are respected for their no-nonsense insights based on demand side data and engagements with industry practitioners.

HFS Research introduced the world to terms such as “RPA” (Robotic Process Automation) in 2012 and more recently, the HFS OneOffice™. The HFS mission is to provide visionary insight into the major innovations impacting business operations such as Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of Things, Digital Business Models and Smart Analytics.

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