



HFS Hot Vendor: Machina Automation

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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.

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Machina Automation is a US-based robotic process automation (RPA) services pure-play firm that wants to bring the benefits of automation to the energy sector. Founded in 2017 by former Big Four consultants with substantial cumulative experience in the energy sector, Machina's founders were keenly aware that many enterprises up and down the energy value chain were both ripe for business process optimization and decidedly unaware of emerging change agents like RPA. Excited by the potential of a largely untapped opportunity in a sector where they had deep processes expertise, Machina Automation was born.

The firm worked with various RPA tools initially but quickly moved to specialize in a growing upstart called UiPath. Machina was essentially in the right place at the right time, establishing itself as a regional training partner and implementation partner with UiPath when it was still a sub-100 employee company. Machina's focus on the energy sector and its base in Texas helped differentiate it as a UiPath partner, cultivating a reputation as the go-to resource for energy clients.

Machina's capabilities run the gamut from advisory, implementation, operations, and optimization to training. It states it sits somewhere between an advisor and an integrator, offering projects rather than

major transformation programs, typically for a fixed price. This project focus was very intentional initially to enable a reasonable and practical starting point with its energy clients, which in many cases were unfamiliar with RPA. The firm's 200% growth year-over-year underscores how the firm has been able to both expand its number of clients as well as its scope within clients.

In interviews with Machina's customers, HFS noted a consistent theme of partner selection based on industry focus, skills, and local presence. Given the fact that so many RPA implementations are horizontal in nature, HFS asked reference customers point-blank exactly how much industry specialization meant. The unanimous response was that it was critical for selection and not required for most initial projects, which typically focused on finance and accounting. However, as the relationships grow, clients are increasingly addressing industry-specific automation needs such as gas pipeline quality and measurement.

In 2019, Machina added an India location to complement its onshore resources with lower-cost offshore development resources. Clients appreciate this option as a means to address lower payback, high-value automation initiatives.

HFS' take

HFS has designated Machina Automation as a Hot Vendor based on its mission to bring the benefits of RPA to the energy sector. Machina is the only industry-specific RPA services firm HFS is aware of. In a recent [HFS report on RPA adoption by industry](#), the energy sector is clearly lagging behind most sectors with the exception of government, with the majority of its adoption (49%) at the pilot stage. Machina has chosen to specialize in a sector with a solid runway as well as lack of competition. Most of its competitors have taken an industry-agnostic approach to RPA, with concentrations in banking, insurance, manufacturing, and life sciences. As energy firms begin to embrace RPA and broader digital transformation, Machina's competition will increase, but it has already done the hard work of establishing itself as an energy specialist.

Going forward, Machina needs to ensure it owns and builds on its energy focus, actively working to cultivate industry-specific use cases. As RPA adoption continues to grow and expand, it needs to justify and substantiate its energy focus, thus showcasing specialized knowledge here is essential. Practically speaking, the firm is also small and very regional. It needs to decide how it wants to scale—adding resources locally or to selective regions outside the US, or both. It seems to be getting decent traction as a UiPath specialist, and there may not be much for it to gain by layering in capabilities in other RPA tools. Instead, the firm should ensure it embraces tools that extend the functionality of RPA. Its partnerships with ABBYY and [Enate](#) are current examples of this extension, and it should build on them.

Vendor factsheet

- Machina Automation was founded in 2017 and is a private, self-funded partnership
- Its key executives include former Big Four consultants Doug Wendler (CEO), Jerry Beaver (Principal), Clinton Coker (Principal), and Cathy Hughes (Principal)—all with direct expertise supporting energy clients; the team states it has over 150 years of energy technology experience
- The company is headquartered in Houston, Texas with offices in Dallas and Hyderabad, India
- It has 20 implementation and support clients, plus numerous training clients
- Notable clients include various Fortune 500 companies spanning the energy value chain from oil field equipment manufacturers to midstream and pipeline companies, through to energy retail providers

Solution portfolio

Machina Automation provides a full lifecycle of advisory, implementation, training, and support services to help its clients take advantage of the latest advances in process automation technologies. Its offerings include its Mach series, a fixed price offering for proof of concepts or pilots, inclusive of UiPath license costs and associated services.

Industry coverage

Machina Automation primarily supports the energy industry. It will, at times, work in other industries, including financial services, healthcare, and manufacturing as opportunities arise.

Partnerships

- ABBYY
- Agilify
- Enate
- UiPath—regional gold partner and training partner



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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