

A Closer Look at One No-Code Solution

Microsoft Power Platform

In today's rapidly changing global environment, organizations need flexibility to respond more nimbly to changing circumstances and challenges. For example, chatbots have helped many financial institutions cope with overwhelming inquiries about pandemic relief programs, which represented a new service neither clients nor banks had experienced before. But, deploying a chatbot and implementing automation to make it easier for visitors to take speedy advantage of a novel service can be difficult for an IT department already tasked with a variety of planned projects.

Offerings like Microsoft's Power Platform make such tasks more accessible by emphasizing *low-code* and *no-code* development. Although each offering within the platform is different, these disciplines replace traditional text-based programming languages—which can take years to learn—with a user-friendly graphical interface that guides users to connect data sources and workflows to achieve a desired result. Some expose more traditional script languages and variable definitions to more experienced users, earning the *low-code* label.

Digital Transformation and the “Citizen Developer”

Just as Microsoft Office put the combined power of a secretarial pool, file clerk, and graphic design department at every employee's fingertips, Power Platform can help every employee create and deploy digital solutions to analyze information, re-engineer processes, drive complex transactions, and automate interactions.

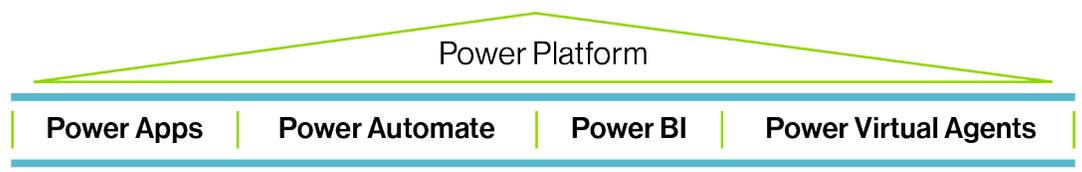
Power Platform can improve collaboration around data and digital workflow, giving non-technical users more freedom to create and improve apps and dashboards, as well as to surface vital insights from raw data. Its strengths are arguably easiest to harness for organizations already favoring Microsoft solutions for broader IT needs, and/or those with a strong bench of development talent well-versed in the Microsoft ecosystem. That said, most sizable organizations do currently have a significant investment in Microsoft technology, be it the Office productivity suite, Azure cloud, or a combination of other services and infrastructure essentials.

These accessible, intuitive development environments make it possible for frontline workers and managers to design, develop, and deploy their own technical solutions, rather than waiting for a domain specialist to step in. This shift in tech-driven business flow power to the front lines represents the rise of the *citizen developer*, a class of insiders without formal tech specialties who nonetheless make significant contributions to app development, advanced dashboard deployment, and streamlined workflow and customer service.

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Many organizations are already well-stocked with citizen developers. Countless individuals have built their own scripts and automations in basic Excel spreadsheets. Solutions like Power Platform build on those experiences, exposing a great deal more organizational logic and data in a more organized environment.

Power Platform's Four Pillars



Power Platform consists of four main components, designed both to operate independently and to easily combine for more sophisticated organizational tasks. Each component is also capable of integrating with a wide variety of non-Microsoft data sources and operational systems.

Power Apps: A low-code/no-code app development solution

Power Apps reduces the burden on IT specialists by helping business users create their own apps in an intuitive environment. Users can quickly connect business data sources, describe workflows under the hood, and publish secure portals to speed data entry. Most Power Apps can be created with no formal background in programming languages, without sacrificing the ability to link internal and third-party data sources and services or losing the ability to publish to mobile devices and tablets.

Power Automate (formerly Flow): Power Platform's approach to robotic process automation (RPA)

Power Automate streamlines repetitive, time-consuming tasks. Tailored to users without a technical background, Power Automate can create automated workflows between more than 200 popular apps and services. Both attended RPA bots (which assist an employee in real time) and unattended RPA bots (which operate without direct supervision) are available. Power Automate is suited for tasks like forms processing, object detection, prediction, and text recognition.

Power BI: Easy data visualization

Power BI helps users create compelling, coherent, immersive, and interactive dashboards and reports without a background in database design or administration. A business user can assemble, scrutinize, and visualize data from across the organization, helping themselves and peers make more informed decisions based on live enterprise data. Microsoft offers multiple tiers of Power BI to fit a user's business intelligence needs, including a free view-only mode and a premium tier with higher performance.

Power Virtual Agents: *Chatbots on demand*

Chatbots answer questions from, and initiate transactions with, website or service visitors in natural language. Power Virtual Agents eliminates the gap between subject matter experts and development teams charged with building chatbots by making it simpler to simulate a live interaction without writing complex code. These chatbots can automate common inquiries and improve customer satisfaction by reducing the response time of an organization's customer service operation.

Insights and Advantages Surpass Cost Savings

Benefits to automation through a solution like Power Platform include labor-saving and other cost reductions associated with taking delays, friction, and error out of routine processes. A Power Virtual Agent can resolve many types of customer inquiry at lower cost than a live phone operator, for example.

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But cost savings are only the beginning. Particularly when Power Platform modules are combined to accelerate processes or take automated action based on previously opaque data, the benefits can expand to create new revenue streams, enhance client loyalty, and generate intelligence-driven competitive advantages.

For example, a citizen developer can use Power BI to investigate a hunch about a correlation between sales of two products and gather the necessary data to firm up that intuition into a set of business rules. With those rules, the non-coder employee can create a Power Virtual Agent capable of explaining the advantages of buying both products together. Alternatively, a Power Automate bot can be spun up to ensure that supply levels of both products stay high so that cross-selling opportunities are not missed to out-of-stock moments.

How Guidehouse Can Help

Power Platform gives a wide variety of employees the tools and freedom they need to explore these myriad possibilities. For circumstances where connecting the dots isn't as easy, a trusted partner like Guidehouse can help identify and implement those opportunities. Our services teams have hands-on experience with all four Power Platform modules and the problem-solving skills to tie insights, RPA, and data-driven decision-making together to drive results.

Because Guidehouse is platform-agnostic, our professionals are comfortable recommending the solution that best meets a client's needs and ongoing IT infrastructure realities. And because Guidehouse is so extensively familiar with Power Platform, we can confidently identify when that solution is the strongest fit.



Real-World Results

Working with a wide range of enterprise and public sector clients, Guidehouse has firsthand experience with tangible Power Platform results. Some of our notable successes include:

Improved innovation:

We worked with a client interested in better harnessing innovative ideas across the organization. A Power Platform-based app collected and tracked potential breakthroughs and presented leadership with a consolidated and actionable view of innovation trends and opportunities.

Expanded project visibility:

A client wanted top leadership to better understand the progress on major projects without creating an additional administrative burden on project staff. We developed a Power Platform application which facilitated an 800% increase in the total project updates, including automated email reminders and high-level visual reporting, received by executive stakeholders.

Encouraging excellence:

A government agency wanted to boost awareness of and competency with its information management tools, and launched an employee challenge campaign. We developed a Power App to gather information from data entered by users as they navigated the stages of the information management challenges, and automated publishing of the results to the Microsoft SharePoint back end.

Accelerated contract review:

A government body recognized that its contract review process was extremely slow and almost entirely manual. We built a Power Automate app to collect data entered in forms, then parsed that data into insights useful to contract review professionals in Power BI.

Take the Next Step

Every organization is increasingly reliant on data in this digital age. The amount of information generated internally, by clients, and by partners will continue to grow. Power Platform's four modules offer every contributor the opportunity to dive into that data with clear business objectives in mind and the intuitive tools necessary to turn their discoveries into repeatable, efficient processes. And giving the power to investigate and automate business processes to frontline employees means they may find daily opportunities to improve execution that a dedicated consultant might have missed—and then immediately take the necessary steps to fix the problem.

Many potential insights are hidden away in Microsoft applications such as Dynamics 365, SharePoint, and Excel. Power Platform is extremely effective when paired with those operational solutions. Those who use non-Microsoft technologies can benefit from a wide range of third-party connectors which help citizen developers—as well as IT specialists—extend, customize, and integrate new automated services every day.

For a deeper dive into leading automation platforms, please read our RPA platform comparison to see how Power Automate stacks up against the alternatives. To learn more about the full line of Power Platform services we offer, including guided development and change management, get in touch.

About Guidehouse

Guidehouse is a leading global provider of consulting services to the public sector and commercial markets, with broad capabilities in management, technology, and risk consulting. By combining our public and private sector expertise, we help clients address their most complex challenges and navigate significant regulatory pressures focusing on transformational change, business resiliency, and technology-driven innovation. Across a range of advisory, consulting, outsourcing, and digital services, we create scalable, innovative solutions that help our clients outwit complexity and position them for future growth and success. The company has more than 12,000 professionals in over 50 locations globally. Guidehouse is a Veritas Capital portfolio company, led by seasoned professionals with proven and diverse expertise in traditional and emerging technologies, markets, and agenda-setting issues driving national and global economies. For more information, please visit www.guidehouse.com

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