

# Bot workers - an opportunity, not a setback for SA employees

 By [Filum Ho](#)

24 Apr 2023

Artificial intelligence is the world's hottest technology trend right now, with tools like ChatGPT and Google's Bard grabbing global headlines.



Filum Ho, CEO of Apollo Studios

However, there is another technology that is set to automate more mundane, tedious, and time-consuming tasks in just a fraction of the time and cost compared to traditional methods — and it's called Robotic Process Automation (RPAs).

This form of technology employs “bots”, or software programs, which are trained to mimic repetitive human actions to perform various assignments. These can range from data entries in CRM systems, to automated invoicing, text recognition, and more.

An RPA bot is essentially a coded script that follows a predetermined set of rules to emulate user interactions. It can operate 24/7 and can be used for different industries, from finance, insurance, automotive, healthcare and more.

RPA technology can do its job with accuracy, speed, and without any human errors. It is easier to scale, and the rote tasks that can be automated are virtually limitless.

RPA and artificial intelligence (AI) aren't the same though. While a typical RPA bot is a workhorse that carries out linear tasks by mimicking human actions, AI is used to develop an intelligent system that "thinks" for itself.

## Bots in the South African environment

According to Gartner Research, the worldwide RPA software market is projected to continue to experience double-digit growth in 2023, growing 17.5% year over year, to top \$3.3bn.

But the advent of this technology comes with huge responsibilities, especially in a country like South Africa where unemployment is at record levels.



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Businesses in South Africa need to be sensitive to the fact that RPAs can reduce headcount, but where this happens, it is imperative that the staff in those roles are upskilled for more meaningful work.

In this regard, RPAs are a disruptive force, but they can also be a force for good by placing an emphasis on companies to upskill and further develop their staff.

There are many options in this regard, with programmes in South Africa ranging from adult matric to other accredited certifications in aspects such as accounting and HR, among many more.

Furthermore, companies in South Africa can receive tax rebates and additional B-BBEE points for upskilling their staff. In fact, the skills development pillar of the B-BBEE Act can contribute up to 20 points of a company's BEE rating.

Our early education system, for children between Grade R and Grade 12, will also need to be adapted and made future-fit for a world in which technology takes over more day-to-day tasks.

The power lies in our hands to use technology to become better and more efficient at what we do. Crucially, the power also lies in our hands to make this transition as smooth as possible for our society so that it's a win-win situation for all.

## ABOUT FILUM HO

FilumHo is the CEO of Apollo Studios. He was previously CEO of South African auto parts and glass specialists Autoboyz. Born in Taiwan but now living in South Africa, Filum transitioned from a top career in investment banking at the likes of Deutsche Bank and Merrill Lynch to shaking up SA's auto parts and glass markets.

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