

Critical questions when choosing **Automation Engine**

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Automating your prepress workflows may look like a steep hurdle that is difficult to take. This document answers a lot of frequently asked questions.

Each year, Esko successfully implements hundreds of automation projects. We understand the challenges and the technical pitfalls, we know how to help you and your operators become familiar with the system, how to integrate with your particular business systems.

If you have any other questions, please contact your Esko sales representative or talk to us at info.eur@esko.com.

Getting up to speed

“ How do I know Automation Engine will cover **my needs**?

In order to tackle a project of that size, it is always broken down in a number of sub-projects. This allows you to have perfect understanding of what you need, and of what Esko will deliver. Three major factors in software implementations of this size are: **expectations, budget and timings**.

Esko helps you understand upfront what you can expect (what is covered, what is outside the scope of the project). You will also receive a **clear overview of the cost**. This way you get the absolute maximum out of your investment while reducing unnecessary headaches and doubts during the implementation.

“ **How long** does it take to get **Automation Engine** up and running?

The implementation of Automation Engine depends of the size of the project: some projects are production-ready within 3 weeks, others take longer.

An **Automation Engine implementation** can be guided by Esko's expert team of solution architects; or you can choose to implement it yourself (after an in-depth training). These choices impact the time it takes to go live.

“ What do I automate **first**?

The **complete implementation of Automation Engine** is broken down in sub projects. This list is then prioritized: those projects that will yield the highest efficiency at lower cost will be implemented first. All optimizations that reduce human errors are also good candidates to implement quickly.

“ How will my **operators** handle the **change**?

Operators are used to a certain way of working that is efficient for their current processes, so change is not always easy. To establish trust, it's beneficial to have **an open communication about the new solution**. You can take away doubt, show the benefits for the team and turn skepticism into enthusiasm.

During the implementation Esko often uses the **“train-the-trainer”** concept. When the system is new and still in a testing phase only the most advanced operators are involved. As the system becomes more mature, other operators start to work with it too, learning the ropes from more experienced staff.

“ Should I **communicate** this new way of working to my **customers**?

Process automation is not a bad thing, So there is no reason to keep it a secret. You can use your automated prepress workflow as a marketing tool: it's a sign that your company is forward thinking, and that you work in **standardized and consistent way**, ensuring quality results, time and time again.

The Automation Engine allows you to **work faster without jeopardizing quality**, and that's all in the customer's best interest.

About infrastructure

“ What kind of **IT infrastructure** do I need?

Most of our customers work with an external IT partner when it comes to **building and maintaining an internal network** with the right security levels.

You can check the server specifications on Esko's website: www.esko.com/en/SystemRequirements.

“ How **performant** does my system need to be?

Choosing your server's performance level depends mostly on the complexity of your workflows, the type of tasks that will be performed and the workload.

As a rule of thumb Esko advises that more than 30 jobs a day warrant a server with 4 or 8 CPU. If you do less, 2 CPU may suffice.

Because **Automation Engine is a scalable solution**, you can always increase the performance level later when necessary.

“ What happens to my **existing data structure**?

A data structure that was built manually over many years is often very inconsistent. When moving to an automated system, the **file structure will be built automatically**. A consistent structure is necessary to find data.

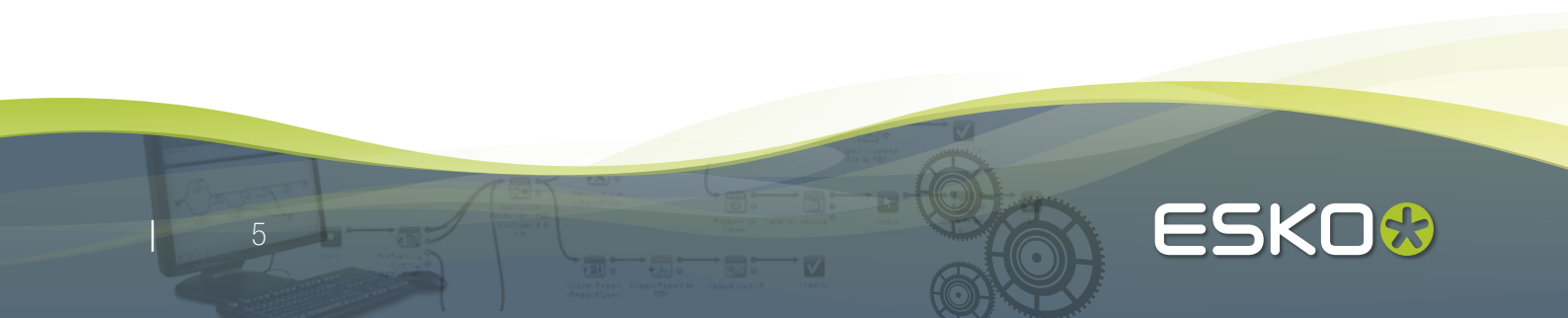
Esko suggests a step-by-step data migration: when a file is needed for a re-order, this file will be migrated to the new structure, and from there it will be processed by Automation Engine.

Depending on the consistency of the existing file structure, however, we can also partially automate the migration of the old data. This will generate some extra work at first, but it will soon save a lot of time.

“ Do I need an in-house expert to **maintain the system**?

During the implementation and training, **the operators and the prepress manager will be trained**. You do not need Automation Engine experts in your company before the implementation process starts.

As the automated workflows grow, they will need to be maintained and for that you'll need process oriented and software minded staff.



“ Will I need a new system when my **business grows**?

Automation Engine is completely scalable; **it grows together with your business**.

One of Automation Engine's strong points is that it will always balance the workload optimally, and start tasks automatically in the optimal sequence, 24/7. The server does not depend on operator availability, production peaks, etc.

The level of process automation can also grow over time. **Automation Engine is modular** and you can add additional functionality according to your business needs.

About integration, customization & upgrades

“ Does Automation Engine **integrate** with my business system?

Automation Engine talks to all business systems, and what's more, you don't even need to hire expensive consultants: Esko developed an easy to use module for Automation Engine called '**Connect**'. Connect allows you to link Automation Engine to almost any database.

Keep in mind that an automated workflow needs production information to run smoothly. If your MIS system doesn't offer that information yet, integration might be less effective. Before the project is rolled out, there will be an investigation into what information needs to be present in the MIS. That way, unpleasant surprises are avoided during the actual integration.

“ Will I be able to **customize the software?**

Automation Engine offers **a set of standard tools** that can be customized to your own needs. The default tickets contain parameters that can be set to fit your specific workflow demands.

Automation Engine also offers the possibility for scripting.

“ Will I be able to **upgrade my system?**

The easiest way to make sure that your Automation Engine is kept up to date is to opt for **a Maintenance Contract**: updates and upgrades are included.

Without a Maintenance Contract, you can always upgrade your system on a “Time and Material” basis.

About cost, financing & support

“ Are there hidden **costs or fees**?

The **appropriate IT infrastructure** may be an important cost if that's not in place yet. A lot of companies turn to an IT partner to install and maintain that infrastructure. For other system requirements, please refer to <https://www.esko.com/en/SystemRequirements/Automation%20Engine>

When implementing an automated workflow there are also **less visible costs**: operator training, data migration, the learning curve... in the beginning this may take extra resources; but very soon you will see the profit of your investment.

“ Should I **buy or rent** Automation Engine?

Esko offers both buying and renting. If you are planning to use it more than 3 years, it makes more sense to buy the software. On the other hand, the **monthly rental** only appears as an operation costs on your income statement. You can choose what is most beneficial for your company.

“ Should I opt for a **Maintenance Contract**?

A **Care Plan** allows you to budget the cost of operation and spread it over time. It will assure that your configuration is kept in optimum shape, often at a lower price then working on a “Time and Material” basis.

About Esko & other solutions

“ How do I know Esko is a **solid partner?**”

Esko has more than 1500 employees and 300+ distribution partners in more than 50 countries around the world. That means that our service organization encompasses the globe and is able to help you out quickly.

Esko offers (Enterprise) support and services tailored to your needs and a constantly evolving portfolio that reflects the market needs. Partnering with Esko is a long-term protection of your investment.

“ Why shouldn't I **invest** in in-house developed software?”

Down the line, a standardized, scalable, modular solution will always be more effective than an in-house developed solution. Not only does Automation Engine look at your needs today, it also **anticipated future market trends**.

Updates, upgrades, integrations... run much smoother with a vendor that offers a solid, highly specialized support network. And if you do feel the need to customize, Automation Engine has you covered as well: you can build the workflows that fit your company and your way of working.

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