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Shared Services & Outsourcing Week

October 20 - 22, 2025 | Bogotá, Colombia

2025

Automation in Action: How AI and Hyperautomation Are Reshaping LATAM SSCs

JUNE 2025

in Shared Services & Outsourcing Week Americas

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📅 October 20 – 22, 2025 | Bogotá, Colombia

🌐 www.ssonetwork.com/events-shared-services-week-latam

FROM TRANSACTIONAL TASKS TO AI-POWERED ENGINES

In 2023, a PepsiCo distribution center in Mexico struggled with an expensive inefficiency: perfectly good beverages were expiring in warehouses before reaching customers. The solution came not from a new manager, but from machine intelligence. By harnessing **process mining** and **AI-driven alerts**, PepsiCo's shared services team pinpointed the root causes of these spoilages and automated proactive email warnings to depot managers (celonis.comcelonis.com).

The result? Expiring stock was rerouted in time, reducing write-offs and turning a routine operational review into a case study of hyperautomation in action. Such stories are increasingly common across Latin America's **Shared Services Centers (SSCs)** and **Global Business Services (GBS)** organizations, which have rapidly evolved over the past 2–3 years from back-office transaction processors into **data-driven, AI-powered engines** of efficiency and insight.

This transformation has been nothing short of dramatic. Once known mainly for labor arbitrage and cost-centric processes, Latin American SSCs are embracing robotic process automation (RPA), machine learning, and even generative AI to reinvent their operations. A recent survey showed a stunning leap in adoption of generative AI tools – nearly 80% of regional shared services organizations were using GenAI by late 2024, up from just 10% a year earlier (auxis.com).

AUTOMATION SESSIONS THIS OCTOBER AT SHARED SERVICES & OUTSOURCING WEEK LATIN AMERICA:

"Prepare Your Business for AI Operational Readiness"
Speaker: Prakash Kewalramani, Senior Director Data Engineering & Governance, WWE

"Build a Data-Centric Culture to Power Smarter Decision-Making"
Speaker: Imran Syed, Head of People Master Data, Nokia

In parallel, the share of companies implementing RPA in Latin America rose from 11% to 17% over the last three years (helmigroup.com), reflecting a post-pandemic surge in automation projects. "Global Business Services is on the cusp of a profound transformation in Latin America," an SSON Analytics report observed, noting how **advancements in generative AI and knowledge services** are propelling SSCs beyond routine tasks toward sophisticated value creation. The region's advantages – from a highly educated workforce to time zone alignment with North America – have further catalyzed this tech evolution. In short, AI and hyperautomation have moved from buzzwords to business imperatives among LATAM shared services, fundamentally changing how these organizations operate and deliver value.

DATA-DRIVEN EFFICIENCY: AUTOMATION IN ACTION

Behind this trend is the power of data. Latin America's SSCs are leveraging AI and automation to sift through massive volumes of operational data, identify inefficiencies, and act on them instantly. **Process mining tools**, for example, are providing x-ray visibility into processes and spotting broken steps that humans overlooked. PepsiCo's story is one example: using process analytics, the company discovered why products were languishing too long in certain warehouses and introduced automated alerts to intervene (celonis.comcelonis.com).

In another case, **Bancolombia**, one of the region's largest banks, deployed intelligent automation bots to handle everything from parsing unstructured customer emails to processing loans. These bots now churn through huge datasets of customer and transaction information, a job that used to bog down human staff. The impact has been profound: Bancolombia's digital workforce has **freed up over 127,000 work hours per year**, eliminated millions in costs, and even unlocked new revenue streams (automationanywhere.com). According to the bank's leadership, this initiative achieved a 1300% return on investment in its first year – essentially paying for itself 13 times over.

> *"AI and hyperautomation have moved from buzzwords to business imperatives in LATAM shared services."*
>
> *– SSON RESEARCH & ANALYTICS*

> *127,000 Hours Saved and Counting...*
>
> *– BANCOLOMBIA'S BOTS SHOW WHAT'S POSSIBLE WHEN DATA MEETS AUTOMATION*

Such examples illustrate what **"automation in action"** can look like on the ground across Latin America. In Costa Rica, BAC Credomatic implemented more than 30 RPA bots for finance and customer service tasks, boosting digital collections by 12% and shifting 30% of customer interactions to after business hours (helmigroup.comhelmigroup.com) – a boon for both efficiency and customer convenience.

Bancolombia's automation program similarly improved service quality: by accelerating routine back-office work, the bank saw a measurable rise in customer satisfaction scores (automationanywhere.com). Even the public sector is getting in on the act. Uruguay's government deployed software robots across various ministries, slashing administrative task times by up to 75% and freeing civil servants to focus on higher-value analysis and decision-making (helmigroup.com). Whether in finance, consumer goods, or government, the pattern is the same – **AI and hyperautomation are enabling organizations to do more with their data**, streamline formerly clunky processes, and respond faster to business needs.

QUANTIFYING THE BENEFITS: COSTS, QUALITY, TALENT, AND DECISIONS

Latin American SSCs adopting AI and hyperautomation are not just reporting isolated wins, but broad, quantifiable improvements. According to industry surveys, nearly half of organizations in the region have realized **productivity gains exceeding 20%** from automation initiatives (auxis.com). Below are some of the key impact areas and outcomes being reported:

The Strategic Evolution of Shared Services through Automation

Cost Reduction

Hyperautomation—blending RPA, AI, and process redesign—can cut operating costs by up to 30%. When paired with LATAM's already lower labor costs, this can translate into 20–40% additional savings versus U.S. benchmarks. Bancolombia alone saved $19 million through automated provisioning and related efficiencies

Service Quality & Customer Experience

Automation enhances accuracy and speed. RPA bots now handle routine inquiries across several banks, freeing up human agents for complex tasks—leading to higher customer satisfaction. Bancolombia improved branch service efficiency by 50%, while British American Tobacco's LATAM hub uses RPA to deliver more consistent, error-free financial operations.

Talent Optimization

Rather than replacing jobs, automation is elevating them. Over 80% of leaders report improved employee experience as bots take over repetitive work. LATAM GBS centers are increasingly focused on advanced roles like data science and IT, turning automation into a catalyst for upskilling and higher-value contributions.

Strategic Decision-Making

AI-powered SSCs are generating real-time insights that support better decisions. Automation consolidates data, spots trends faster, and frees teams to focus on interpretation rather than data gathering. As one GBS finance leader in Mexico put it: "We moved from compiling reports to advising leadership." SSCs are now seen not just as cost centers—but as strategic partners.

CONFRONTING CHALLENGES: TALENT, REMOTE WORK, TECH COMPLEXITY, AND COMPLIANCE

For all the gains, the road to a hyperautomated operation in LATAM is not without obstacles. **Talent scarcity** is a foremost concern. Ironically, even as automation reduces the need for some entry-level roles, it creates demand for new skills – data analysts, AI specialists, RPA developers – that are in short supply. In a recent Latin America GBS survey, 78% of organizations considering a move to the region cited **availability of skilled talent** as a top concern (auxis.com)

Those already operating SSCs in LATAM report that the talent gap, while real, can be managed through targeted hiring and upskilling, but competition for experienced automation experts is fierce. "When discussing 'scarce talent,' GBS professionals in Latin America are primarily concerned about the lack of personnel needed to implement their strategies effectively," SSON analysts noted. Successful centers are responding by partnering with local universities, establishing in-house **Centers of Excellence** to train staff on RPA/AI, and in some cases, leveraging outsourcing providers to fill skill gaps. **The upcoming generation of Latin American professionals is highly educated and tech-savvy, providing a strong pipeline – but bridging the current gap remains a challenge.**

> *"The talent is there—what's missing is the experience to execute automation at scale."*
>
> *– SSON RESEARCH & ANALYTICS*

Another test has been adapting to **remote and hybrid work** dynamics. The pandemic proved that shared services can operate virtually, but maintaining culture, collaboration and control in a dispersed setting requires new approaches. Two-thirds of LATAM GBS leaders say evolving **workforce expectations around remote work** could disrupt operations if not addressed.

Many employees now expect flexible work options, forcing SSCs to invest in digital collaboration tools and rethink processes that were designed for on-site teams. Companies that find the right balance – for example, a hybrid model where critical teams periodically meet in person, while leveraging remote talent from secondary cities or neighboring countries – report higher retention and access to a broader talent pool. **Cultural alignment and communication** are key in remote setups: leading SSCs have instituted daily virtual huddles, robust knowledge-sharing platforms, and even virtual "coffee chats" to keep teams cohesive across geographies.

"You can't plug bots into chaos—governance is non-negotiable."

– CARLA CARVALHO, KYNDRYL

Then there is the **fragmented technology ecosystem** issue. Many organizations still run a patchwork of legacy IT systems and disparate platforms across different countries or business units. Integrating new AI and automation solutions into these **complex, multi-vendor environments** can be daunting. "The complexity of IT environments, which often involve legacy systems, hybrid architectures and multiple vendors, is a challenge," notes Carla Carvalho, a Latin America tech leader at Kyndryl (kyndryl.com). Ensuring that an RPA bot or AI tool can securely interface with an old ERP system – and a cloud app, and a regional database – requires careful planning and robust IT governance. Companies are addressing this by modernizing critical applications (for example, moving to cloud-based ERPs where possible) and using middleware or API layers to connect siloed systems.

Some have also adopted **low-code integration** platforms to bridge gaps between old and new technologies. Importantly, the concept of hyperautomation itself encourages a holistic view: rather than ad-hoc automation of one task, it's about redesigning processes end-to-end. This often means standardizing and simplifying the tech stack as a first step, so that automation can be applied at scale without breaking things.

Finally, **regulatory complexity** cannot be overlooked in Latin America's diverse landscape. SSCs in the region often serve multiple countries, each with its own compliance requirements – whether it's Brazil's strict data protection law (LGPD), Mexico's electronic invoicing mandates, or Argentina's labor regulations. Navigating these rules is particularly crucial when automating processes that touch **financial reporting, personal data, or employment**. Automation initiatives must be vetted against these legal frameworks: a bot processing invoices needs to handle each country's tax codes correctly; an AI handling personal customer data must adhere to privacy laws.

💡 DID YOU KNOW?

Shared services' centralized structure makes compliance easier—once automated systems are aligned with regional laws.

✅ KEY STATS

20%+ productivity gains reported by nearly half of regional SSCs

Leading shared services have tackled this by involving compliance officers early in **automation projects and leveraging technology** that has compliance features built-in (such as audit trails and data encryption). Regulatory hurdles can slow down the pace of change, but they are a known quantity – and firms are increasingly adept at building **compliance by design** into their automated workflows. The very nature of shared services, with centralized processes, can actually make compliance easier in the long run, once the initial patchwork of rules is codified into the systems.

THE NEXT FRONTIER: COGNITIVE AUTOMATION AND SELF-SERVICE

As Latin American SSCs master the basics of RPA and analytics, they are setting their sights on **cognitive automation** – the infusion of AI that can understand, learn and make judgments – and on empowering users through self-service platforms. The concept of **hyperautomation** encapsulates this future: it's not just about automating a single task, but automating automation itself, layering intelligent algorithms on top of digital workflows. In Latin America, forward-looking GBS centers are already experimenting with using **machine learning models** to predict cash flow or maintenance needs, then automatically scheduling bots to execute preemptive actions based on those predictions.

Others are integrating **natural language processing (NLP)** to handle inquiries in both Spanish and Portuguese, allowing internal customers (e.g. employees needing HR or IT support) to interact with chatbots that understand and resolve many issues instantly.

In tandem with AI, the push for self-service platforms is transforming the service delivery model. Today's internal clients — whether a marketing manager needing a report or an employee onboarding to payroll — increasingly expect on-demand, app-like experiences from their shared services teams. In response, SSCs are rolling out portals and AI assistants that let users get what they need without submitting a ticket or sending an email. For example, a global consumer goods company in Brazil recently launched a self-service procurement portal powered by automation: managers can log in, request a purchase order or vendor setup, and the system automatically routes, approves, and generates the output with minimal human intervention. Similarly, several multinationals with hubs in Costa Rica and Mexico have deployed cognitive chatbots for IT support; employees chat in plain language and the bot (backed by an AI knowledge base) provides solutions or escalates complex issues to a human, as appropriate.

The expectation now is that online banking should be as easy as routine services. In fact, **nearly 80% of LATAM SSOs are already evaluating or piloting generative AI applications in their processes** (auxis.com)– from chatGPT-powered assistants that draft responses to vendor queries, to AI tools that auto-generate financial forecasts. We can expect the next few years to bring a convergence of these technologies: imagine an AI that not only flags an out-of-budget expense in a report but also converses with the budget owner via a chatbot to resolve it. That level of cognitive, autonomous service delivery is on the horizon.

AI in the Driver's Seat...

- **Costa Rica & Mexico SSCs now use chatbots for IT/HR support**
- **Bots handle routine queries in Spanish and Portuguese**
- **Complex issues escalate automatically to humans**

💡 DID YOU KNOW?

80% of LATAM SSOs are exploring generative AI tools—from ChatGPT-style vendor support to AI-generated financial forecasts

Crucially, Latin America's shared services community is embracing a culture of innovation to sustain this momentum. Companies are fostering sandboxes for experimenting with new tech, and we see a rise in regional automation forums and hackathons. Collaboration is also a theme – SSC leaders in the region often share best practices through networks like SSON or industry councils, ensuring that successes in one country can be replicated in another.

This openness accelerates learning and keeps the region at the cutting edge. As one automation director put it, "By learning from each other's experiences and best practices, companies can overcome implementation challenges more effectively and unlock the full potential of RPA and AI" (helmigroup.com). The future of automation in LATAM SSCs will be as much about **people and mindset as about technology** – those organizations that cultivate agile, innovative teams are likely to leap ahead, using cognitive automation and self-service as levers to transform not just their departments, but their entire enterprises.

CONCLUSION:

As Global Business Services (GBS) in Latin America rapidly evolves, the region is shifting from transactional support to strategic value creation. Driven by **technology, workforce shifts,** and **economic pressures, shared services** are being redefined across industries. Yet with opportunity comes complexity—talent gaps, digital acceleration, and volatile operating conditions. To succeed, GBS leaders must prioritize automation, strengthen expertise, and deepen strategic partnerships.

For firms exploring nearshoring in hubs like Mexico, success hinges on market insight, compliance, workforce planning, and risk awareness. With agility and foresight, LATAM's GBS ecosystem is poised not just to adapt—but to lead.

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