Albert Chou:

This is IT Visionaries, your number one source for actionable insights and exclusive interviews with CIOs, CTOs, and CISOs, and many more. I'm your host, Albert Chou, a former CIO, former sales VP, and now podcast host.

John Kucera:

In the current economic environment, so many of the customers I'm talking to have a hyper focus on cost, repeatability, and compliance, and so this term automation has been a super hot buzzword.

Albert Chou:

If your company, like many, is still depending in antiquated legacy systems to operate, now is the time for you to join the automation revolution. Today we're kicking off our automation series with special guest, John Kucera, SVP of product management at Salesforce, and Matt McLarty, global field CTO and VP of the digital transformation office at Salesforce's integration platform, MuleSoft. Tune in to hear how they've helped boost efficiency at various companies with their automation integration services, and learn which domains outside of the tech world they believe could benefit the most from an automation overhaul. Our automation series is brought to you by Salesforce platform and Dreamforce 2022. We don't want you to miss out on the world's largest software conference with a healthy dose of magic. So, log in to Salesforce+ for more automation-focused sessions. That's salesforce.com/plus.

       Welcome, everyone, to another episode of IT Visionaries, and today we have special guests. We're going to kick off our automation series. For those of you who are wondering or have heard the buzzwords about automation, I think a lot of us use it every single day in our everyday lives. I know I've built little automations where I have, for example, a little zap your application connecting meeting invites from one calendar to another so I don't have to copy and paste. Anyone who has children like I do and you have sports schedules, you will know one consolidated calendar is a massive help, and every one of these companies has different apps, and it's annoying.

       So, automation helps me, but at the enterprise level, that's where I need to learn a little bit more, and to do that today, I got two special guests. We have John Kucera. He is the SVP of product management at Salesforce, and he oversees the Salesforce family of automation products known as Salesforce Flow, and I have Matt McLarty. He is a global field CTO and VP of the digital transformation office at MuleSoft. Gentlemen, welcome to IT Visionaries.

John Kucera:

Thank you. Thrilled to be here.

Matt McLarty:

Thanks, Albert.

Albert Chou:

Listen, let's kick it off. I gave a little bit of an intro, but I'd love for you to explain to our audience what it is because you guys do because like I said, I know a little bit about automation, but I certainly don't know it at the business enterprise level. John, let's start with you. Tell us a little bit about your role and what you're up to.

John Kucera:

Yeah. Fundamentally, I lead a group of product leaders that are in the job of helping solve these automation problems for so many of customers like yourselves, and so that's trying to figure out how can you do things in more efficient ways, in more consistent ways so that you're compliant, so that you can grow, so that you can save money in cost? Fundamentally, that's the North Star of what we're looking to do, and it's really fun and exciting.

Albert Chou:

Matt, why don't you tell our audience a little bit about MuleSoft and what it's up to, because I know what it is because I've seen it used and implemented at different companies, but for those who don't know, tell us what you're up to at MuleSoft.

Matt McLarty:

Yeah. No, it's a very exciting time for MuleSoft. As you mentioned, I lead the digital transformation office here, so we're working with customers around the globe, helping them digitally transform, but in a very what I would describe very deep way. For our entire existence, we've been getting into the core of what organizations are doing around digital business, helping them expose their digital business capabilities in a way that allows them to innovation, deliver new products, new experiences for customers, and automation is really the next phase of this whole mission for MuleSoft where now that we have so many organizations with those digital building blocks in place, they have the opportunity to automate, to provide even next-level intelligent automated experiences, to get rid of more manual work, to really drive their whole digital business agenda. So, it's really exciting times.

Albert Chou:

From my perspective, and please correct me if I'm inaccurate, the way I was described what MuleSoft does by my friends who work at MuleSoft is that it's as if they connect the unconnectable. When you have data here and you have [inaudible 00:04:23] serve as your application here that don't have APIs, or maybe, whatever, they've never engineered a solution, MuleSoft says, "No, I can connect these things."

Matt McLarty:

Yeah. It's connecting the unconnectable, and then making it more discoverable so that you can build it into everything that you do, and I think our next wave of automation provides even more unconnectable things to be connected, as we'll see.

Albert Chou:

Salesforce, of course, is our lead sponsor, titan company. I feel like it's in every company. I don't know. There's probably some that they're not part of. MuleSoft is connecting the unconnectable. But one of the things that I want to kick off this conversation, try to understand a little bit, is where's the market going for automation, and why is AI involved? I gave my simple little example, which is connecting calendars. Easy to do. Of course, enterprises are connecting things that are hard to connect. John, give us an idea of where you see the market. What's the appetite? What are people trying to bring to the table in regards to challenges that they want solved?

John Kucera:

Yeah. So, in the current economic environment, so many of the customers I'm talking to have a hyper focus on cost, repeatability, and compliance. So, this term automation has been a super hot buzzword. I

like to break it down to a few different areas. So, on one side you have things like customer service where it's customer-facing. How can I make sure that customers can help themselves, that they can solve this inquiry without necessarily having to go to a person, and how can you route those really rich needs to a person? Then with those employees within the company, how can you help them do their job efficiently, and either take away the tedious and drudgerous work, or help people do what we do best, make good decisions.

So, there are so many different capabilities within automation to solve those problems all the way through, and it's been really fun to see how the different tools within Salesforce and MuleSoft can really solve this, everything from those digital forms to help customers with self-service, those AI-powered chatbots, the multi-person workflows to streamline and route the work to the right people, things like MuleSoft RPA, which is just getting launched, which is fantastic, to help you automate the green screens. You've got any point for all those rich API connectivity for anything that you need to connect with. So, putting this all together in a cohesive way is really what we've been hearing for our buyers both in departments as well as CIOs.

Matt McLarty:

What I'm really excited about around automation is 100% in terms of the market dynamics where companies are... Now we've got through this, or at least I wouldn't say we're post-pandemic, but we've certainly gone through the impacts of a global pandemic and seen how much that's accelerated digital transformation and really surfaced what did companies really need to do. They needed to provide those employee experiences, customer experiences, digital channels, but I think there's a bigger thing at play here, and it's really what I'm so excited about, is this is where Salesforce and MuleSoft come together so much, MuleSoft really being fully a part of Salesforce now. It is around automation because so much of our business agenda is around digital technologies. How do you make that happen?

Well, you have to empower all of the people in your organization to be part of building those solutions, building the digital products and digital solutions that are at the core of your business agenda. In its history, Salesforce has always been about empowering, providing tools for everybody to be part of the IT experience. People who are not necessarily hardcore coders are still working on information technology. Salesforce has always been inclusive in that way, and MuleSoft's heritage is, it's right there in the name, is to automate away the donkey work when it came to integration. Well, now we're taking it to the next level, and I think taking that shared DNA around empowerment of people in the organization, I think that's what automation brings us. We can give the right tools to everybody in the organization to not just be users of technology, but to be builders of technology solutions, to be really a part of a much greater fabric of IT.

Albert Chou:

That's pretty funny, what you just said. I always thought it was called MuleSoft just because mules can carry a lot.

Matt McLarty:

No, that's literally... Yeah. There's a whole history of MuleSoft in there. It's all about the donkey work.

John Kucera:

I've got to read that. It's like, today I learned MuleSoft-

Albert Chou:

Yeah. That's awesome. That's awesome. But Matt, John, one of the things I want to extrapolate more for our audience and think about is you talked about what's happening right now where it seems like every industry is being hit with a surge of demand. I mean, we see it the most in travel and leisure, because restaurants can't keep up. Hotels can't keep up. Travel and logistics, they can't keep up. So, there's been almost like a pent up demand where the demand has been displaced, where it's like it didn't scale in a linear fashion like it first did, and companies are getting crushed under the weight of what customers need, want, and arguably, customers are getting a little less patient as well.

So, we see these things happening. Give us an idea and frameworks of... One of the things I think about is for people that worked in enterprise, I think they might recognize this, but for those who haven't, maybe you started in cloud-native software engineering from the very moment you got out of schools, what I learned the hard way was so many companies have legacy systems that pretty much, they just don't talk to each other. So, that's why when you would call in for support you got routed to seven different people, because they literally only had a system that could see what they could see.

Matt McLarty:

Yep.

Albert Chou:

Give us a framework to understand how fast that's collapsing, because you're working with companies probably doing implementations where it's like, hey, it used to be eight systems, we're now connecting eight systems over the course of so many months so that it's a seamless system so that people can get supported really quick, because for someone who's cloud-native or not worked in the industry, I don't think they can conceptualize how jacked up or how complicated an enterprise can be.

Matt McLarty:

Yeah.

Albert Chou:

John, let's start off with you, man. What are some of the things you're seeing?

John Kucera:

Yeah. So, I think the stat that I've seen is there's something like 900 systems that a typical big company has, and so it's like, well, what do you do? So, for you math nerds out there like myself, it's like, all right, if you do point-to-point connections and integrate all these things, it's obscene numbers. You have basically tens of thousands of connections between these. So, there's a huge need to, how do you make an integration strategy that can be unlocked for so many of these companies and so many of these things? So, what I'm really excited about with the MuleSoft RPA launch is that I think the tagline I heard internally, I think David [inaudible 00:10:47] came up with it, it was like, we can now automate and integrate from the API to the green screen and everything in between.

So, MuleSoft has this really strong heritage of, hey, if you're got an Arcane protocol and a legacy system, and it's connected to the internet, great. You can make a reusable API to unlock that and make integration so much easier, and then with RPA, how do you handle those green screens where you can't make an API, those Java apps, those .net things where you need to be able to go in and point and click and have that piece work, and how do you do this in a way that IT feels very comfortable giving these

reusable building blocks to business analysts in a way that's trusted and verified? So, I think that there's so much power, and I'm really excited about where we're at in the market to make these visions, empowering these broader sets of personas to do these really powerful things with these capabilities.

Matt McLarty:

Yeah, and I think what we have as a unique advantage here for our customers is not just that we can connect these things. It's really a journey. Every company's on a journey. So, how do we get to a point where the average company has 900 applications, or an average enterprise has 900 applications? Well, we keep layering on and layering on layering on. So, what I'm extremely excited with our automation solutions here is that really aiming to do the old have your cake and eat it too, as much as people never understand that phrase at first glance, but we want to be able to help them solve their immediate challenges right now, so like you said, a lot of companies still have that issue of siloed pockets of data and fragmented customer experiences.

We want to solve that problem, but we do it in a way that doesn't just paper over the top. What we're doing, combining Salesforce and customer engagement and MuleSoft in the digital foundation layer, is to be able to solve that problem, but also unlock things for the future. So, the next channel that you add on or the next customer experience or journey you have to support comes easier as opposed to harder, that you're actually retiring technical debt rather than just layering on more technical debt. I think actually, the cloud-native companies are not immune to this. What they're doing that I think is something that the enterprises are doing less, but will be doing more of, is third-party integration, and actually coming up with best-of-breed solutions.

I've had experiences with food delivery or grocery delivery type situations where it's a real ecosystem. For me, the customer, there's a whole bunch of ecosystem players delivering that experience, and it's great when it works, but when it doesn't, you can run into the same fragmented solution of calling up that cloud-native food delivery app, and they don't know where the delivery is because they're not the provider. So, it's not just a solution for the enterprise. This approach of recognizing how these integrated experiences need to be seamless for customers is something that every company's challenged with, and I think that what we have going on that others don't is the ability to deal with an extreme level of complexity, provide a very seamless experience, but also help to deal with that complexity in an advantageous way over time.

Albert Chou:

One of the things that you hit on when you just explained that, as I was thinking about how it's rising in TikTok, basically, where they're demonstrating how the restaurant industry is really being crushed by food delivery, restaurants, and customers. That triangle of three parties is not communicating that well. You're talking about canceled ordered, non-pickups. Who's at fault? It's very difficult. You got drivers saying, "The tippers are at fault." You got customers saying, "Both of you are at fault." You got the restaurant saying, "Hey, I made the order. Pay me. I don't care if it gets picked up or not." So, there's a big, challenging riff, plus the integration of all these systems you talked about. But that's where we can see the pain.

Like you just said, cloud-native companies still are going to get the pain because every time they add in a provider, their systems, they're not going to talk. That's just how it goes. So, that's a challenge. I was hoping you guys could also share some of the things that you guys have solved for because one of the things I always think about is... You guys mentioned green screen. I'm thinking my kids probably don't know what that is. [inaudible 00:14:59]. I remember those dot matrix screens. The fact that you

both are saying that, it's like, dude, I didn't realize enterprises are still using those things, but okay. It sounds like they are. Right?

Matt McLarty:

Yeah.

Albert Chou:

I'd love to hear some of the stories you have of, hey, this is what it looked like, and this is what it looks like today, because I think it's difficult to understand why it's hard to do something, but then when you hear the technical debt behind it you're like, "Wow. No wonder it was so hard to get something done." Matt, it sounds like you got a story. Hit it.

Matt McLarty:

There's just a long tail of IT deprecation. I was asked... I'm on this Forbes Technology Council, and then one of the questions recently we were asked was around what are some good things to measure. Well, measuring what you actually retire is a pretty important metric for a lot of these enterprises because what happens is you'll get some big migration initiative. I work for a big bank. They took on this ambitious project years ago to retire their green screens. So, what are green screens? Those are the terminals that connect into mainframe applications. In banking, we're literally talking about applications that were written in the 1960s. They have taken on a life of their own, and interestingly enough, the actual software that does the terminal emulation has changed over time, but it's still that same sort of blocky green screen. But this is a reality for big banks, insurance companies, government, where it just costs a lot of money to retire stuff.

If you don't have a compelling business need to do it, then it's problem. But even besides that, sometimes they take on that migration initiative, and they still can't get rid of the stuff. Usually, they don't fully get rid of it. One of the things I've experienced is if you're trying to get rid of something, you can't really get rid of it until you've cut it off from the rest of the organization. I went through this experience in migrating a large customer information system, which was based in a big mainframe, and it had so many integration points, the actual only way we could finally get rid of it was to hide it from the customer, and then behind the scenes, get rid of it. So, when we talk about green screens, these are still in operation.

You might not see them as the customer on the website, but when you call up that customer service representative, they literally might be looking at a green screen, and until you can plug into those old systems and get them into the flows, you're never going to really get rid of them. So, that's why it sounds like, okay, well, why are you investing in that type of connectivity? Well, we want to move customers forward to help them finally put the final nail in the coffin of some of these old systems.

John Kucera:

Yeah, and I hear that all the time too. One of the insurance customers that we talked with, they were like, "All right. We want to replace 5,600 different processes on this one system with Salesforce. How do we do it?"

Albert Chou:

Wait, wait, wait. 5,600, 5,600 processes on one legacy system?

John Kucera:

It's an insurance customer, and basically, the old system was moving digital pieces of paper around. So, we're like, "All right. Let's just start with change address." It's a pretty good one, high volume. So, I want to change my address. Well, first, they have 10 different ways to let you request to do it. You can call up. You can literally scribble a piece of paper saying, "I want to change my address." They support fax. So, there's all these inbound channels just to take the request, and to do digital self-service, they can use Salesforce for the digital form. So, they need one tool for one set of personas for that. That's consumer grade. Then you need to be able to do a bunch of the routing work. How do you route the work to the right people at the right time and handle exceptions? There's another BPM tool, Orchestration, that we do for that.

Then they have 12 different lines of business for change address, which use a MuleSoft API that's connected. So, for those 12, you're then making an API call to go and actually do that API request. Four other ones aren't. They're not connected. They're too expensive to connect, and so they're using RPA for that. So, just with this humble change address, you need to have low-code forms that are consumer grade. You need multi-person processes. You need API integration. You need to have RPA for that last mile so you don't need a person literally copy and pasting between systems, and then to have this all in a reportable, consumable way that can be governed. So, this is what I feel so excited about with the suite that we offer. We had the right tool for the right use case for the right persona to help solve for, whether it's simple or complex, things like change address.

Matt McLarty:

We just assume it's a simple thing. A lot of the on form fill, boom, we're done like that, but when you have, as you just described, this many systems in between that process, that's where things get extremely complicated, and if you're saying, "Hey, this giant financial legacy company," they're probably, I don't know how many customers, what their value they're dealing with every single day, they just can't afford for it to not work, so that makes the transformation even that much more critical, because it's really hard to train customers to do the new thing. It's like, it's got to be a transition.

Albert Chou:

When you see these things, what are some of the CIOs, CTOs, CEOs, what are they afraid of? Why not embrace these transformations faster? Now that there's more automation, I think it's one of those things where if I hear it, I think that's a good idea. I would assume most people think that's a good idea, but there's obvious cost and time and labor, whatever the case may be, in front of that. What do you think is stopping, slowing, preventing, however you want to describe it, just barriers to just widely, just let's automate as much as we can? Is it mostly budgets? Is it not understanding the process? Is it possibly overthinking how big the project could be? John, I didn't know if you had any ideas about what those barriers are, and if they're still there or they started... It sounded like they might've started being chipped away nowadays, people are like, "Okay, we got to change."

John Kucera:

Yeah, I think there's a big evolution. So, I think about this in terms of the categories of personas. So, traditionally you'd have a lot of developers or people in IT that they would be the bottleneck. You'd say, "Hey, Miss IT Leader, we need to have this process automated, pretty please," and you get on the backlog, and IT gets frustrated because the backlog goes like this. The business people get frustrated because it goes like this. So, there's always been this demand of having people in the business, like t business analyst, the Excel ninjas, to be able to do some amount of either creating or editing of

automation in workflows, but the IT folks, rightly so, are saying, "Hey, what's going to happen when this breaks? Hey, what if you're duplicating work? What if you break the law inadvertently? How can I make sure that giving you this power is okay?"

So, what I've been so excited about that's been changing and evolving is due to these partnerships with these suites like Salesforce, you can have these pro code and specialist tools that then can be given to business analysts with visibility, with governance, with monitoring, with clarity of who handles that call if something goes down, and how can you make sure that there's minimal time, so that you've got these fusion teams rising to basically tackle the teams together and have the people with the best business expertise of what do you need to do, the business analyst, participate in that process with the people that are very good at understanding the technology and tools and compliance needs.

Matt McLarty:

Yeah, and I totally agree on the evolution side of this, and companies are at different stages. So, to John's point, it really is about IT and business people coming together, because I think historically, the obstacles have been that the budget are dictated by the business, and so when IT wants to do something transformational, they have to try and wedge it into whatever business initiatives are there, or come up with a big swing for the fences transformation initiative, which can end up in the situation I mentioned before where you only end up doing 10% of the migration and you're left with 90% of the problem.

So, I think fusion teams, as John said, I think recognizing that we're all in this business of IT and have different roles, I think that in organizations I see doing this really well, they do have fusion teams, like John mentioned. They've got a recognition that everybody's in this business of IT. Some are more focused on the overall system, macro level, which is more aligned with historical IT, and some are more focused on building new products and experiences, which may be more correlated with these product groups and business teams. So, it's really about evolving. I think it does go back as well to that idea I said before, that when we deliver, we always need to think about what are we solving right now, and what are we unlocking for the future?

I spent some good time with Esat Sezer, who used to be the CIO of Coca-Cola, and he was describing some of the best practices he's used to bring in automation as an enabler for the business, and he talked about how some of the things they did, they would build stuff like image recognition as new capabilities within IT, within their budget, and then focus on enabling the business to use that new capability so that they could then innovate with it, and I think there are some really good lessons coming out of that as well.

Albert Chou:

It feels like it's no longer really a tech problem. It's like, now it's a people problem, meaning do I as a leadership, do I as finance, or whoever these roles are, can we agree? Because if we can agree, sounds like the tooling is here to make this happen quickly and effectively, and if we don't agree and I insist on my process, but I don't want to let a good subject matter expert be part of the automation flow design, then maybe we don't get what we're actually looking for, but that's not a tooling problem. That's a human problem, we as people not aligning on the problem, or the potential solution to the problem. Is that kind of what you're seeing?

John Kucera:

Yeah. I would say what I'm excited about is now tools have unlocked this next level of conversation where candidly, if we look two years ago, three years ago, it didn't really exist. So, I'm really excited that the tools are there to allow you to trust, but verify, and give that confidence all around, and open up these conversations.

Matt McLarty:

The tooling, though, I think historically is part of the people problem because there were tools in the past that maybe didn't hit the mark. So, I think we're really excited about the tooling, and I think that's one of the big messages we bring out there, is that we're aware of where things fell short in the industry in the past around low-code tooling and automation tooling, and very excited that we've factored that in to what we've built to overcome those fundamental challenges, like John said, around trust but verify, and having oversight of what's being built by the business.

Albert Chou:

You kind of hit on the idea that as the tooling is improved, people are becoming more receptive. It's an education curve, but along the way there's probably other evolutions in business that are going to further accelerate this. I'm curious, when you look on the horizons, we talked about it earlier where just out of, I don't know, lockdown, there's been just a surge in all services. It's just been crazy, surge everywhere, surge in housing, surge in restaurant, surges everywhere. It really does feel like no one's quite prepared. What do you see in the future that is going to make these, let's say, demand changes more palatable? What other things? Because automation is going to happen.

The tooling has gotten better. Do you see a place where AI's going to help recognize and help build my flow, or suggest something for me, or is there something else out there on the horizon that you see being evolved that you're like, "Wow. This is going to even make this even more accessible, faster to implement, more effective for the customers"? Give us an idea. I'd love to hear, Matt, your perspective of what's coming down the future that's probably going to really impact how companies choose to automate today, or, I guess, tomorrow.

Matt McLarty:

There's a lot of talk about this term hyperautomation, which has... I've seen a few different definitions for it. But I think a lot of it is just because there's so much focus and innovation around automation technologies, that there's different categories of automation evolution. But I think in general, a lot of the power that we're going to see, differentiating power and where we're going to see the innovation, is around AI and data-driven, contextual-driven automation. I think we're already doing that. A lot of the innovation that we're already doing is related to the automation of automation, sort of meta automation, but companies are just really unlocking a lot of the data that they have.

I finally flew for the first time in a couple of years recently, and I was flying from Vancouver to New York through Toronto, and I was waiting for my connecting flight. I had this alarming experience where I saw that my flight that I was supposed to be on was taxing for takeoff. I freaked out, and luckily I'd overheard that the actual pilot for my flight was sitting in waiting lounge with me, and I ran up to him and I'm like, "That's not our flight, right?" He's like, "No, no, no. This flight's not leaving without me." He told me apparently what happened is when you release the brake on a plane, it actually sends a triggered event to say, "This plane is now taxing," and I guess it was misinterpreted that this plane was taxing for takeoff. It was actually moving from one gate to the other gate.

I thought, that's a good example of great automation, not very good contextual automation. They just misinterpreted the context. So, that's a panic example you can all relate to, but I think that what we're going to get now is the more that we can actually have contextual awareness around the automation scenarios we have, that's a part of AI, and a lot of machine learning, AI really is driven by data and context. So, there's a lot of exciting developments that I see are going to come from that that are going to really power some innovations around the automation space.

John Kucera:

Yeah. So, some of the things we talk about as a North Star for, say, engagement for marketing is 10 years from now, if you're serving, say, millions of people, you want to have a different personalized, relevant journey for each person. You don't want to have to create a million different rules and a million different capabilities to understand, hey, what did you buy? What's most important to you, and how can we make sure that this really hits the mark for you? So, for that, that's a job that's very well suited to AI, and that's something that we're actively looking at and investing in. Then I think of the creator experience. I would love to empower people that don't necessarily understand the tools deeply to be able to talk to a voice assistant. "Hey, what do you want to do?" "Oh, well, every time a deal is made that's over $500,000, can you alert me?" "Oh, sure. Do you want to alert just you, or you and your manager?" "Oh, yeah. Can you do both of those?" "Okay, great. What would you like it to say?"

If you could have AI basically help you in the automation creation, I think that that would be great, to have your automation assistant bot. I always talk to my AI friends internally every year or so and I'm like, "Hey, are we close enough to that?" and they're like, "Yeah. No, not yet. Maybe next year, let's talk." So, I would love for both of those to come together, and then, of course, there's always the caveat, especially in highly regulated industries. You want to make sure that you are cautious in how you turn over the power to AI because AI learned by making mistakes. Mistakes can break the law. You want to make sure that you at least have the rules to make sure that your AI is not breaking the law as you help it learn, whether it's in an Einstein bot or something else. So, I think that this rules plus AI is a really powerful combination that we already serve in a lot of the automation capabilities that we have.

Albert Chou:

John, in your example I was thinking about people making big withdrawals and then saying, "Oh, do you need to declare your taxes on this?" "No." [inaudible 00:30:04] the money, or Matt, in your example I was thinking about how that's a great example of how systems don't talk. So, there's a system on the airplane. It's sending a signal to the app, but it's not getting the data from the gate agent or whoever told them to move the plane. You know what I mean? That simple three-way connect is broken, so the data only knew one part of the chain, not the other part. Had it known it was requested to go move gates, it should've known to not send an alert, but there you go.

More the reason why all these tools need to be interconnected in order to optimize for the experience. That automation of the automation thing, though, that sounds really dang exciting because you guys both hit on it in different ways where, how can it learn? I guess I'll start with you, John. How can it learn without the mistakes? Because I agree, it's tough, and if you're in FINRA and you're moving millions of... Highly regulated industries, they ain't trying to make any mistakes. So, how do you see it playing out?

John Kucera:

Yeah. There's a couple ways to do it. So, we have something, Einstein Next Best Action, and its whole job is to help people make decisions. So, we people are good at making decisions. This automation can give

you ideas and insights to help you make the good call. Should I give somebody a discount? Should I offer a refund? Things like that. So, within this, it's the merging. It's the hybrid. You have rules for, hey, you are not licensed as a Hawaii insurance provide, so if this person's in Hawaii, never, ever, ever try to upsell insurance because that product isn't there.

What we do is we have the system watch what people do for the non-regulated parts. Let's just see, what do the service reps recommend? What's the result of that? Is that achieving a positive outcome or a not positive outcome? Okay, and then we have a report, and basically, it says, "Hey, customer, we actually now think that AI is as good or better than people doing this part of the job. Do you want the AI to take over? Okay, great." So, then you can basically have that seamless transition of having the AI take over parts of the process with the rules that comply with all of your regulations and laws and all of that, ensuring that it's working in a way that you would want.

Albert Chou:

It sounds logical to me. There's got to have to be a recommendation engine because observing, like you said, negative patterns and finding a solution enable negative patterns is not a good thing. So, give me an idea of your opinion on how you think automating the automation's going to work out in the next couple years.

Matt McLarty:

I mean, the whole category of RPA, we just talked about launching our RPA product, the process of business process automation, the process of process automation used to be everyone gets the business experts in a room or do interviews of people in the field and get some business analysts to put a process together, and then get some developers in the room, and architects, and come up with a whole solution. We're taking the... I'm probably dating myself with pop culture references. We're taking the Kramer Moviefone approach, if you'd ever remember this episode from Seinfeld.

John Kucera:

Why don't you just tell me what you are looking for?

Matt McLarty:

Exactly. Why don't you just tell me what you're looking for, of saying, "We'll give the tool to the person who's actually executing the process today," and then have them execute the process. We record that, and then that becomes the automated process. So, it's a nice complement to what John's talking about around next best action. You're getting hands-on from the people who are the experts in how the process works. You're going to catch a lot more... You're going to eliminate the broken telephone. That might happen if you've got frontline people talking to business analysts, talking to developers. But we still have the opportunity to have line of sight and governance of what gets created in that approach, but it's just a much more automated way of capturing the actual process of automation.

Albert Chou:

Listen. When you guys talk about these potential solutions to these problems, I get hyped up because I think about all the problems that I personally have, which potentially could be solved. So, now I got to flip it to you guys. I kind of named some industries, but I'd be curious for yourselves, Matt, we'll start with you, tell me something that you'd like fixed that doesn't exist today, but you'd like fixed. It could be any realm of services you consume, whatever you do. What would you like to be improved upon that

you think it won't be much longer before this is definitely possible? You kind of gave an example of the airplane before, but I think that's... I'd love to hear another one. Give us a little personal thing you're like, "Hey, if you solve this for me, I'm happy."

Matt McLarty:

Happy wife, happy life. My wife works as a social worker in hospital environment. Prior to that, she worked as a social worker in child protection, and we're talking about these incredibly important services for society that are so starved for funding, and so their IT experience, we complain about these automated mobile situations, and hey, here I am flying on a business trip, and why can't my flying experience be better? She's dealing with complete swivel chair integration of going from this... They're using green screen apps. They're moving files from... They've got documented processes that say, "Copy and paste this file to this file. Print this PDF. Fax it over here." So, if we could transform the experience for public service, especially those fundamental healthcare and child protection, other social services like that, that would make me happy as a citizen and happy because it would make my wife's job a lot easier and allow her to help a lot more people.

Albert Chou:

No doubt. For anyone's who's ever dealt with state, local, federal governments, I just worked through one state that doesn't accept eSignature. I was like, "This is a challenge."

John Kucera:

Right. That's exactly where I was going to go too.

Albert Chou:

Go ahead.

John Kucera:

I can't name names. We've got one large government organization. My headline is I want to have death to PDF. If you don't have to deal with paper and PDFs, oh, my goodness, billions of hours saved for humanity. So, one customer, they're just like, "Yeah, we've got literally 7,000 PDFs we want to digitize." So, we've got those tools so that you can do these low-code and pro-code forms that then seamlessly work with all the systems to automate it, whether it's your DMVs, whether it's your other government entities, whether it's federal and other country level. So, what I'm super encouraged by is there's so many of these entities that are like, "Yeah, yeah. We want that too," because not only does it make a better community experience, now we can save so much time for all the people within our company. So, now that you don't have to write a boatload of code to go and create digital forms, yeah, let's do it. Let's automate it.

Albert Chou:

Listen. I'm with you both because what I thought about is what's happening locally in our community, and I was thinking to myself, man, really, data should be a bigger part of the decision trees of local governments. Mine was... So, I live in a community where, and I think my community's not unlike yours, which is building permits are issued faster than schooling permits. So, we're constantly... Kids are in trailers. My kids have never actually... I feel like they've never been inside a school. They're in a trailer outside school, and my community's not really different than others.

But it really shouldn't be a person who doesn't know the whole story making that decision. It should recognize, hey, the second these building permits get issued, it should instantly fund the next school that goes there, plus the public utilities that are going to be necessary there, so that we don't have grid strain in addition to schooling strain and hundreds of other services. But as you guys talked about, each of these departments, they vote separately. They're all doing things separately. No data is communicating between these things. I feel like the way we build communities probably [inaudible 00:37:40] quite a bit.

John Kucera:

Yeah, and what I'm encouraged by is I've seen a lot of these forward-thinking government entities starting to lean into this pretty heavily. So, I'm optimistic that there's change on the horizon.

Albert Chou:

Well, listen. John, Matt, it was awesome having you both join us today on IT Visionaries to share some of the things that you've seen in the automation workspace, how Salesforce and MuleSoft are coming together to enable bigger transformations across all types of companies from government to financial to public sector to cloud-native. It doesn't matter. It seems like there's an opportunity to fix things. But before you go, it is time for the lightning round. The lightning round is brought to us by Salesforce platform, the number one platform for digital transformation of your experience. John, Matt, this is where we ask you questions outside of the world of work so our audience can get to know you a little better. You guys ready?

John Kucera:

Let's do it.

Matt McLarty:

Ready.

Albert Chou:

All right. What got you into tech? Who was your hero? What was your inspiration? Matt, let's start with you. What got you into this field?

Matt McLarty:

Okay. I have to confess I kind of fell into. My summer job before going off to university, I worked for a software company that my dad had worked for previous. A friend of the family said, "Hey, come in and hang out and help us out." So, that was my start.

Albert Chou:

Awesome. How about yourself, John?

John Kucera:

I've been in love with tech for a long time. In college, I worked at UPS, and one of my jobs was basically creating a TPS report, for those of you that like that.

Albert Chou:

We're really dating ourselves.

John Kucera:

Yeah, exactly.

Albert Chou:

Green screens, TPS.

John Kucera:

So, it was literally like, "Hey, this person's going out for two weeks. Can you literally spend four hours copy and pasting all these documents to generate this one report that we need to do daily? Okay, thanks, intern." I said, "Okay. If you do that, what I'm going to do is I'm going to take Microsoft Access, I'm going to basically start Googling all the visual basics for applications code, and I'm going to make that a five-minute job." In two weeks, I basically turned a four-hour thing into five minutes, and I'm like, "Oh, God. This is awesome." So, I basically did a lot of that, and then I wanted to do it at a bigger stage, and so I feel super privileged to have that opportunity at Salesforce.

Albert Chou:

All right. Now I got to ask, when did you know, because that sounds like a big epiphany moment, when did you know you were really good at this job?

John Kucera:

Oh, God, never. Every day [inaudible 00:39:52] different opportunities and new humbling situations. But I've liked it. I've embraced it well, and what I appreciate is we have great rich conversations with our customers to understand what's important to you all, and then translate that in a way that can help solve their problems with the various constraints. So, that's been really rewarding and fulfilling.

Albert Chou:

How about you, Matt? You said you fell into it, but there must have been a point when you're like, "Wow. I'm pretty good at this."

Matt McLarty:

I ended up actually taking math in university, another story about less homework than English, but no, in all honesty, I just had... Similar to John, I always had an affinity for putting stuff together. As a kid, I would code on our Texas Instruments home computer and write little Christmas carol applications, little basic choose your own adventure games and stuff. So, it was always a passion, never really about being good, but does the stuff I like doing add value to anyone? It seems like that's been the case.

Albert Chou:

There you go. Matt, what do you like to do for fun outside of work?

Matt McLarty:

Lots of things. I would say my current position, it's all about family. I'm like the Phil Dunphy, Clark Griswold, traveling with family especially. We just took a family vacation to Banff National Park here in Canada. It was amazing.

Albert Chou:

There you go. That's a beautiful place, no doubt. John, how about yourself? How do you like to do outside of work?

John Kucera:

Well, Matt, I'll have to get tips. We're going to Banff too in a little bit. I also have a couple kiddos, and I like to go rock climbing, so every week that's my workout, and I took the two kiddos on Sunday, which was a blast. So, they're little monkeys going up the walls, and we all had fun at the climbing gym.

Albert Chou:

Oh, dang. Man, rock climbing, for me personally, I'm scared. I don't want... Oh, man. Well, it was awesome having you two on the show. Thanks for sharing some of the things that you are most excited about. Thanks for sharing some of the things you're working on. Yeah. You guys both sound like quite outdoors, lovers of nature. We got climbing. We're both going to Banff. I've only seen pictures of Banff. I know it's a beautiful place.

Matt McLarty:

The pictures don't do it justice. I'll leave it at that. I've lived in Canada my whole life. I finally went to Canada [inaudible 00:42:00].

Albert Chou:

So, any of you out there listening, go look at... Google it up. Go search for the pictures of Banff, and John, that's got to hype you up for your trip. You just heard from Matt, whatever you thought you saw, not good enough. It's better.

John Kucera:

We'll make it a work trip.

Albert Chou:

John, Matt, thanks for joining us today on IT Visionaries, man. It was a lot of fun having you both sharing the future of automation, what you guys are up to. It was a lot of fun.

John Kucera:

Yeah, this was great. Thanks.

Matt McLarty:

Awesome. Thanks for having us.

Albert Chou:

All right. That's a wrap. Appreciate it. Thanks for listening to IT Visionaries. We want to hear from you. Let us know how you like the podcast by leaving us a rating and review on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you listen. IT Visionaries is created by the team at Mission.org, and brought to you by the Salesforce platform, the world's leading low-code platform. If you loved the thought leadership on this podcast, Salesforce has even more IT thoughts to chew on. Take your company to the next level with in-depth research and trends right in your inbox. Subscribe to a newsletter tailored to your role at salesforce.com/newsletter.