How ABB built an automation community

ABB

Industry
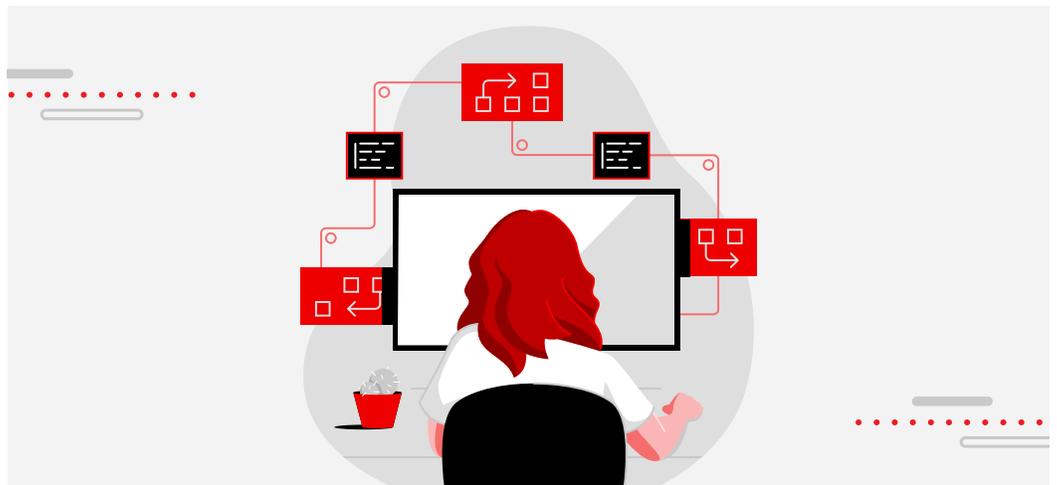
Technology

Headquarters

Zurich, Switzerland

Size

110,000 employees

"Our 32 teams that use automation report an average of 57 hours saved per month, allowing them to focus on higher-value work."

Grzegorz Tomczak
Global IS Service Owner
for Fundamental
Infrastructure & Automation
ABB

With a complex, decentralized IT environment, ABB's teams were using disparate automation tools that resulted in duplicated efforts. To unify its approach, the company deployed a global automation platform built on Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform. Centralized management and multitenancy now allow teams worldwide to reuse automations while maintaining local autonomy, supported by a valuable relationship with Red Hat and an internal automation community. This standardized approach has helped to save an average of 57 hours per month across 32 teams since January 2025. Automation has also helped to simplify compliance, support faster IT service delivery for end users, and contribute to reduced costs.

Software and services

Red Hat® Ansible® Automation Platform

Red Hat Technical Account Manager

Benefits

▸ Increased IT efficiency with an average of 57 hours saved per team per month

▸ Simplified system compliance and increased resilience

▸ Supported productivity gains with a community-based approach

Red Hat Innovators in the Open

About Red Hat Innovators in the Open

Innovation is the core of open source. Red Hat customers use open source technologies to change not only their own organizations, but also entire industries and markets. Red Hat Innovators in the Open proudly showcases how our customers use enterprise open source solutions to solve their toughest business challenges. Want to share your story? Learn more.

Managing a complex, decentralized IT landscape

ABB specializes in electrification and automation, providing engineering and digital expertise to help industries become more efficient, sustainable, and productive. As a global organization operating in more than 100 countries, ABB is built on a decentralized model in which each business division has the autonomy to choose the solutions that best fit its local market.

Decades of engineering excellence and a deep legacy of innovation have resulted in a highly complex IT landscape at ABB, which includes an interconnected mix of modern cloud platforms, on-premise systems, and longstanding industrial technologies. Across this landscape, disparate teams were using different automation tools and frameworks, often with narrow scopes and in isolated instances. While these efforts delivered value, the fragmented approach led to duplication, higher operational effort, and inconsistent levels of security.

ABB's Group Information Systems (IS) team recognized that a repeatable, standardized automation model would increase efficiency. "With a centralized approach to automation, we could embed resilience by design, reduce the risk of human error, and allow reuse to simplify the provisioning of services across the enterprise," said Grzegorz Tomczak, Global IS Service Owner for Fundamental Infrastructure & Automation, ABB.

Centralizing and standardizing automation

ABB launched a global automation platform built on Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform, a trusted, versatile solution for strategic automation. The company selected Ansible Automation Platform as it is an open source solution with a broad community ecosystem, strong vendor support, and multitenancy capabilities.

"We have a complex infrastructure, but as Ansible Automation Platform is certified by so many different technology providers with playbooks readily available, we could have confidence that it would work across our environments," said Agnieszka Kolasa, Service Manager, Automation Platform, ABB.

The team began with a small proof of concept and a hackathon-style event to build a compelling business case for stakeholders. Less than a year later, the platform supports 32 global teams across all ABB business divisions. Group IS manages Ansible Automation Platform centrally, while the solution's multitenant capabilities allow each business division, internal IT team, and external service provider to operate independently, reusing shared automations through a central repository while maintaining autonomy.

Establishing an automation-first mindset

From day 1, ABB's collaboration with Red Hat has accelerated the automation program. ABB works closely with a Red Hat Technical Account Manager to continuously refine, optimize, and grow its environment. The company also works with the Red Hat Customer Success Executive and the launch team to expand the automation platform and the community they have developed together.

"We have a direct, honest, and open relationship with Red Hat and our Technical Account Manager," said Kolasa. "The team doesn't just support the technology, but has helped us win buy-in, build a community, and create an automation-first culture."

Working with the Red Hat Customer Success team, ABB has developed a joint success plan that aligns with ABB's Objective Key Results, and defines what they aim to achieve, how ABB defines success, and the associated metrics. The team has also established monthly Automation Café sessions, attracting more than 100 participants to share successes and discuss best practices. These sessions help to unify efforts across teams that previously operated in isolation.

To make automation more accessible, ABB has also introduced an internal automation portal where employees can access and reuse playbooks, even if they aren't highly technical. This transparency and reuse help to scale automation while reducing duplication.

"If we want people to reuse automation, they need to know what exists," said Tomczak. "The community and portal make this possible and contribute to a culture where teams actively share and learn from each other."

Saving time and simplifying compliance

Increased IT efficiency with an average of 57 hours saved per team per month

Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform now supports more than 75 live use cases, with more than 150 additional use cases in development, backed by an infrastructure that has doubled in size since launch. "Our 32 teams that use automation report an average of 57 hours saved per month, allowing them to focus on higher-value work," said Tomczak.

The platform's automation capabilities extend across ABB's varied IT ecosystem. For example, an early use case was automating virtual machine resizing and rebooting across Amazon Web Services (AWS), Azure, and Google Cloud Platform, spanning both Linux and Windows.

Automation has also unlocked major efficiency gains in core business systems. For example, the SAP team in China cut monthly patching time for over 100 servers from 6.5 hours to just 20 minutes per server, reducing effort and maintenance windows.

Simplified system compliance and increased resilience

Automation contributes to increased compliance across ABB. Some systems have up to 400 configuration items, from encryption to file sharing, which are time-consuming to manage using manual processes. "With Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform, we have automated configuration settings to standardize and simplify compliance with Center for Internet Security (CIS), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and ABB's internal standards," said AiJia Pan, Regional Information Security Manager, ABB.

To help increase resilience and reduce manual effort, ABB has automated disaster recovery workflows, including failover and testing. The company also uses Event-Driven Ansible, a feature of Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform, to support Splunk observability in the Czech Republic. "By using AIOps to automatically verify false positives and Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform as the execution engine to restart systems when needed, we have increased accuracy and freed time for engineers to focus on real issues," said Tomczak.

Supported productivity gains with a community-based approach

Centralized automation hasn't just increased efficiency for IT teams. ABB has automated several service desk workflows by integrating Ansible Automation Platform with ServiceNow, with 4,000 tickets handled automatically to reduce processing time by nearly 40,000 hours.

For example, Active Directory password restores are now fully automated, giving employees faster resolutions without waiting for manual ticket handling.

"Automating service desk workflows has resulted in faster response times for end users and boosted satisfaction, while saving up to 1,800 hours per month in IT time," said Kolasa.

Teams across ABB have reported faster delivery, greater efficiency, and measurable cost reductions via the company's quarterly Automation Business Value Surveys. One team alone identified US$100,000 of cost avoidance savings over 3 years from a single use case.

The cultural shift toward automation-first thinking is also supporting continuous improvement at ABB, with teams encouraged to question existing processes, share knowledge, and investigate opportunities for innovation.

Advancing ABB's automation strategy

ABB is continuing to advance the maturity of its automation strategy and platform. The team plans to upgrade to the latest version of Ansible Automation Platform, transition from on premise to a cloud-based deployment, and onboard additional teams in the US and Mexico.

"With Ansible Automation Platform as the foundation, we can scale automation more efficiently," said Tomczak. "We're recruiting for a dedicated role to drive adoption and support new teams, which will further increase our return on automation investments. In the future, we're planning to introduce dashboards to better validate efficiency gains and explore AI-assisted coding to accelerate development."

Building on its success with Ansible Automation Platform, ABB is now evaluating Red Hat OpenShift® to support a more centralized, scalable approach to application modernization.

About ABB

ABB is a technology leader in electrification and automation, supporting a more sustainable and resource-efficient future. The company's solutions connect engineering know-how and software to optimize how things are manufactured, moved, powered, and operated. Building on over 140 years of excellence, ABB's more than 110,000 employees are committed to delivering innovations that accelerate industrial transformation.

About Red Hat

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers develop cloud-native applications, integrate existing and new IT applications, and automate and manage complex environments. A trusted adviser to the Fortune 500, Red Hat provides award-winning support, training, and consulting services that bring the benefits of open innovation to any industry. Red Hat is a connective hub in a global network of enterprises, partners, and communities, helping organizations grow, transform, and prepare for the digital future.

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