Hilton and IBM Pilot "Connie," The World's First Watson-Enabled Hotel Concierge

Domain knowledge from Watson and WayBlazer will help personalize and enhance the Hilton guest experience

MACLEAN, Va - 09 Mar 2016: Hilton Worldwide (NYSE: HLT) and IBM (NYSE: IBM) today announced a collaboration to pilot "Connie"–the first Watson-enabled robot concierge in the hospitality industry. Connie draws on domain knowledge from Watson and WayBlazer to inform guests on local tourist attractions, dining recommendations and hotel features and amenities.

Connie, named for Hilton's founder Conrad Hilton, marks the first time IBM has developed a Watson-enabled robot for the hospitality market. Connie will work side-by-side with Hilton's Team Members to assist with visitor requests, personalize the guest experience and empower travelers with more information to help them plan their trips.

Currently stationed near reception at the Hilton McLean in Virginia, Connie is learning to interact with guests and respond to their questions in a friendly and informative manner. Connie uses a combination of Watson

APIs, including Dialog, Speech to Text, Text to Speech and Natural Language Classifier, to enable it to greet guests upon arrival and to answer questions about hotel amenities, services and hours of operation. By tapping into WayBlazer's extensive travel domain knowledge powered by Watson, Connie can also suggest local attractions outside the hotel.

The more guests interact with Connie, the more it learns, adapts and improves its recommendations. The hotel will also have access to a log of the questions asked and Connie's answers, which can enable improvements to guests' experiences before, during and after their stays.

Connie is powered by Watson, a cognitive computing technology platform that represents a new era in computing where systems understand the world in the way that humans do – through senses, learning and experience.

"We're focused on reimagining the entire travel experience to make it smarter, easier and more enjoyable for guests," said Jonathan Wilson, vice president, product innovation and brand services, Hilton Worldwide. "By tapping into innovative partners like IBM Watson, we're wowing our guests in the most unpredictable ways."

"This project with Hilton and WayBlazer represents an important shift in human-machine interaction, enabled by the embodiment of Watson's cognitive computing," said Rob High, IBM fellow and vice president and chief technology officer of IBM Watson. "Watson helps Connie understand and respond naturally to the needs and interests of Hilton's guests -- which is an experience that's particularly powerful in a hospitality setting, where it can lead to deeper guest engagement."

"WayBlazer is excited to bring Watson's cognitive computing capabilities directly to the traveler as a way to improve the in-destination experience," said Felix Laboy, CEO of WayBlazer. "We believe providing personalized and relevant insights and recommendations, specifically through a new form factor such as a robot, can transform brand engagement and loyalty at the Hilton."

Connie is the latest example of Hilton's long history of innovation to enhance guest stays, as far back as 1947 as the first hotel company to introduce televisions into guest rooms. Recent innovations include digital check-in with Room Selection, which recently surpassed 10 million users; Digital Key; and partnerships with Uber to deliver 'Local Scene' and 'Ride Reminders' and with Tesla and Current, powered by GE, to rapidly expand the electric vehicle charging program.

About Hilton Worldwide

Hilton Worldwide (NYSE: HLT) is a leading global hospitality company, comprised of more than 4,600 managed, franchised, owned and leased hotels and timeshare properties with more than 758,000 rooms in 100 countries and territories. For 96 years, Hilton Worldwide has been dedicated to continuing its tradition of providing exceptional guest experiences. The company's portfolio of 13 world-class global brands includes Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, Conrad Hotels & Resorts, Canopy by Hilton, Curio - A Collection by Hilton, DoubleTree by Hilton, Embassy Suites by Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton by Hilton, Tru by Hilton, Homewood Suites by Hilton, Home2 Suites by Hilton and Hilton Grand Vacations. The company also manages an award-winning customer loyalty program, Hilton HHonors®. Hilton HHonors members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels have access to benefits including free standard Wi-Fi, as well as digital

amenities that are available exclusively through the industry-leading Hilton HHonors app, where HHonors members can check-in, choose their room, and access their room using a Digital Key. Visit news.hiltonworldwide.com for more information and connect with Hilton Worldwide on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn and Instagram.

IBM Watson: Pioneering a New Era of Computing

IBM is actively applying Watson's cognitive capabilities to companies across industries, including hospitality and consumer packaged goods, as part of IBM's ongoing efforts to serve a broader audience of users across various form factors such as robotics, desktop, tablets, mobile, and other Internet of Things devices. Toward this end IBM has announced a global strategic alliance with SoftBank Robotics to meet the expanding needs of enterprise clients. Watson represents a new era in computing called cognitive computing, where systems understand the world the way humans do: through senses, learning, and experience. Watson continuously learns, gaining in value and knowledge over time, from previous interactions. With the help of Watson, organizations are leveraging cognitive computing to transform industries, help professionals do their jobs better, and solve important challenges. To advance Watson, IBM has three dedicated business units: [Watson](), established for the development of cloud-delivered cognitive computing technologies that represent the commercialization of "artificial intelligence" or "AI" across a variety of industries; [Watson Health](), dedicated to improving the ability of doctors, researchers and insurers and other related health organizations to surface new insights from data to and deliver personalized healthcare; and [Watson IoT](), focused on making sense of data embedded in for more than 9 billion connected devices operating in the world today, which generate 2.5 quintillion bytes of new data daily. For more information on IBM Watson, visit: [ibm.com/Watson]() and [ibm.com/press/Watson]().

About WayBlazer

WayBlazer is the world's first cognitive travel recommendation engine. WayBlazer surfaces the perfect hotel for each traveler by using IBM Watson and proprietary cognitive computing technology. This technology analyzes cues and triggers from the traveler's search to personalize hotel results for each individual traveler. Beyond finding the best hotels, WayBlazer's cognitive technology dynamically merchandises recommendations, media, insights, and local area knowledge in the context of each individual and their trip profile. The combination of the best hotel and personalized content increases traveler engagement online and improves conversion rates. WayBlazer delivers this technology to companies merchandising hotels and to travel-related companies in search of revenue steams from hotel bookings with an easy-to-use API. The privately held company is based in Austin, Texas and is led by seasoned travel and technology entrepreneurs, including the Founder of Travelocity/Founding Chairman of Kayak.com, the former GM of IBM Watson, and former President of Sabre Hospitality. For more information, please visit [www.wayblazer.com]().

Related resources

Photo

[Meet "Connie," Hilton Hotel's robot-concierge pilot with IBM Watson]()

Visitors to the Hilton Hotel in McLean, Va. meet Connie, a robot concierge named after Conrad Hilton and powered by IBM Watson and WayBlazer. Connie, in pilot testing at the hotel, uses cognitive computing and

machine learning to answer questions posed in natural language about the hotel, local tourist attractions and restaurants -- while learning with each interaction. (Photo courtesy of Green Buzz Agency/Feature Photo Service for IBM)

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