IBM Watson Assistant Continues to Drive Global Business Transformation

IBM's AI enterprise assistant is helping brands across 20 industries around the world reimagine customer relationships

London, UK - 13 Feb 2019: Watson Assistant helps companies manage the large and often wide range of customer and employee service inquiries they field on a daily basis. Companies across more than 15 industries including automotive, banking & financial services, healthcare, telecommunications, manufacturing, and software and technology, use Watson Assistant to develop distinct virtual assistants that uniquely represent their brand attributes. These solutions help companies deliver quick and consistent customer service experience across all touchpoints while also helping automate customer support operations – allowing employees to focus on higher value tasks.

"Enterprise-grade AI virtual assistants are more than just chatbots," said Beth Smith, General Manager, IBM Watson. "A true enterprise assistant understands when to search from a knowledge base, when to ask for clarity and when to direct users to a human – helping to resolve more requests while reducing misunderstandings and alleviating frustration for both employees and customers."

Through a new integration with IBM Cloud Private for Data (ICP for Data), Watson Assistant can be run in any environment – on premises, or on any private, public, hybrid or multicloud – giving businesses the ability to apply an enterprise-class, intelligent virtual assistant to all of the company's data. Watson Assistant also works with tools business already use by easily integrating with CRM systems and channels – like Facebook and Slack.

Organizations that have deployed Watson Assistant include:

Bradesco, the second largest bank in Brazil, is using Watson Assistant to enhance support and meet the evolving expectations of customers. Bradesco first deployed the Watson-enabled Bradesco Inteligencia Artificial (BIA) assistant in 2016, which recently hit the mark of 87 million interactions with the bank's employees and clients. Using Watson, BIA takes about three seconds to answer questions and perform searches such as balance and withdrawal queries, transfers, account payments, loans, investments and more.

Nationwide Building Society, a British mutual financial institution and largest building society in the world with over 15 million members, is launching Arti, a Watson Assistant powered virtual agent. Arti will work side-by-side with Nationwide employees to enhance their member experience. Initially, Arti will act as a first line of support for first-time home buyers, responding to preliminary inquiries – and will escalate questions to a human agent as needed**.**

SPF Private Clients, one of the UK's leading financial services firms, has launched Ava, a new Watson-enabled virtual Help-to-Buy mortgage adviser, helping first time buyers onto the property ladder. Offering round the

clock support for queries, Ava augments the role of the traditional adviser while delivering an improved service to clients. Ava is trained on 200 common questions, offering quick clear answers that help guide buyers through the early stages of the mortgage process. Buyers can now get a mortgage recommendation in just three minutes, a decision on principle rates in 15 minutes, and be connected to an advisor for a full mortgage recommendation in 30 minutes.

Online retailer, **Very.co.uk,** part of Shop Direct, launched a Watson Assistant powered chatbot during the 2018 holiday season. Their "Very Assistant Chatbot" is designed to answer and support service type questions such as 'where is my delivery' and 'what is the returns policy?'. Having beta tested the virtual assistant with a selection of customers, Very.co.uk launched the virtual assistant in time for the 2018 peak trading Christmas timeline. A focus on improved customer service and online self-service options, including the Very Assistant, helped Shop Direct reduce customer calls into contact centers by 30% during its peak trading period (seven weeks up to and including December 28 2018).

24 ORE Group, the leading Italian multimedia publishing company across the economic, financial and professional information sector, recently unveiled Alf (Artificial Loyal Friend), a Watson Assistant powered virtual agent designed to support tax professionals as they search for information within the 24 ORE Group's Plusplus24 Fisco AI database. Alf marks a significant change in the service model for Italian tax professionals, who have access to more than 1.5 million documents from specialized magazines and media archives to accredited e-learning courses and official company documentation for immediate, accurate answers to their tax enquires.

IBM's Watson Career Coach, MYCA, is a Watson Assistant-powered virtual assistant that interacts with employees to learn their skills, interests and aspirations. MYCA helps to match employees with opportunities within their company they are qualified for today, as well as, opportunities they could pursue with recommended trainings. To date, employees and enterprises have found MYCA's conversational approach and data driven recommendations to helped to have strong impact on employee engagement retention, growth, and internal mobility.

Organizations like **NBC** and **Ernst & Young** are using another Watson-assistant powered tool, Watson Candidate Assistant, to help engage potential candidates. Watson Candidate Assistant engages candidates in personalized career discussions, beyond their qualifications, and recommends job roles, by inferring skills and experience, sometimes even suggesting careers not previously considered.

About IBM Watson & Artificial Intelligence
A world leader in AI for business, Watson solutions have been deployed in thousands of engagements with clients across 20 industries and 80 countries. Additionally, IBM Research is a world leader in the science of AI. In 2018, IBM secured over 1600 AI-related patents. And, IBM recently revealed its leading-edge Project Debater, created by IBM Research scientists.

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