IBM Watson Now Available Anywhere

-- New services prevent vendor lock-in, signaling a new chapter in how AI is adopted

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 12, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM Think -- IBM (NYSE: IBM) today announced a new chapter in the journey from AI experimentation to wide-scale deployment and industry transformation. IBM has made Watson portable across any cloud and empowered businesses to prevent vendor lock-in and start deploying AI wherever their data resides.

"Businesses have largely been limited to experimenting with AI in siloes due to the limitations caused by cloud provider lock-in of their data," said Rob Thomas, General Manager, IBM Data and AI. "With most large organizations storing data across hybrid cloud environments, they need the freedom and choice to apply AI to their data wherever it is stored. By breaking open that siloed infrastructure we can help businesses accelerate their transformation through AI."

Watson, IBM's AI, is designed to help organizations put AI to work to improve the performance of business. With a clear set of applications, development tools, machine learning models, and management services, Watson is helping organizations around the world mine their data, predict outcomes, and automate time- and resource-sensitive processes.

Today's announcements advance this mission by providing businesses with a simpler, faster way to build, deploy and run AI models and applications across any cloud. With these tools in place, organizations can:

- Run IBM Watson services, including Watson Assistant and Watson OpenScale, on any cloud. Through their integration with IBM Cloud Private for Data (ICP for Data), Watson and Watson OpenScale can now be run any environment – on premises, or on any private, public or hybrid-multicloud – enabling businesses to apply AI to data wherever it is hosted. Businesses will be able to infuse AI into their apps, regardless of where they reside. The flexibility this affords can remove one of the major obstacles to scaling AI, since businesses can now leave data in secure or preferred environments and take Watson to that data.

- Deploy AI software that automates business processes for improved efficiencies and performance. New AI digital automation software is designed to enable clients to discover patterns in their business processes and then create AI-embedded programs to automate certain workflows.

Though the use of AI continues to gain attention in business, many organizations are still challenged to move projects forward. According to an MIT Sloan report, 81 percent[1] of enterprises do not understand what data is required for AI, or how to access it. And a recent Gartner study[2] found that, "data and analytics leaders continue to struggle with the complexity, time to integration and cost implications of their data integration projects, thereby inflating their schedules and delivery costs with multiple cycles of revised project scope."

Still, the vast majority of enterprises, 83 percent, according to the MIT Sloan report, agree that driving AI across the enterprise is a strategic opportunity.

Qatar Development Bank has collaborated with IBM to establish the IBM Innovation Hub Doha. One of the key technologies that the Hub will deploy is IBM Cloud Private for Data. "The exciting thing about IBM Cloud Private for Data is how quickly we will be able to drive new innovations in FinTech and SportsTech using the microservices within the platform," said Abdulaziz Al Khalifa, CEO, Qatar Development Bank. "What makes it especially attractive is that it enables us to develop and deploy new models quickly that brings the tools to the data, rather than the other way around."

ICP for Data is IBM's open, cloud-native information architecture for AI that comes integrated with advanced data science, data engineering and application-building capabilities, and is designed to help companies uncover previously unobtainable insights from their data. Openness is at the core of ICP for Data, for which Watson Studio is a key part. For example, based on internal study, 85% of Watson users are using open source languages and frameworks like Python, R, and TensorFlow, within the Watson family.[3]

In its recent report, The Forrester Wave™ : Enterprise Insight Platforms, Q1 2019, Forrester Research named ICP for Data a "Leader." The report analyzes and reviews Enterprise Insight Platforms that combine data management, analytics, and insight application development tooling. In the study, Forrester noted: "IBM has pre-integrated capabilities that allow clients to be productive in a week or less. We were also impressed with its ML-assisted data cataloging and governance tools. IBM's platform uses Kubernetes to deploy on-premises or into the public cloud."

Watson Comes to ICP for Data

At the heart of today's announcements is a series of new Watson microservices built for ICP for Data that are based on open source technologies and easily scalable across cloud environments. Based on the open-source Kubernetes technology, these new Watson microservices can be run on IBM Cloud, and other public, hybrid or multi-cloud environments.

The microservices are based on the following software solutions:

- Watson OpenScale: IBM's open AI platform for managing multiple instances of AI, no matter where they were developed – including the ability to explain how AI decisions are being made in real time, for greater transparency and compliance.

- Watson Assistant: IBM's AI tool for building conversational interfaces into applications and devices. More advanced than a traditional chatbot, Watson Assistant intelligently determines when to search for a result, when to ask the user for clarification, and when to offload the user to a human for personal assistance. In addition, the Watson Assistant Discovery Extension enables organizations to unlock hidden insights in unstructured data and documents.

The new Watson services join Watson Studio and Watson Machine Learning, among other services, which are currently available on ICP for Data. Later this year, IBM will bring additional Watson services to ICP for Data, including Watson Knowledge Studio and Watson Natural Language Understanding.

In addition to this news, IBM today also announced that IBM Watson Machine Learning is being extended with a new Accelerator (Watson Machine Learning Accelerator) that enables high performance GPU clustering on Power Systems and X86 systems. Combined with IBM POWER9's industry-leading GPU memory bandwidth, the solution can offer up to 10x faster[4] machine learning training than competitive solutions. You can read more about the benchmark here.

IBM Business Automation Intelligence with Watson

In addition to the release of these solutions, IBM announced a forthcoming software capability, called **IBM Business Automation Intelligence with Watson**. With this new software, business leaders will be able to apply AI directly to applications, helping to strengthen their workforce, from clerical to knowledge workers, to intelligently automate work from the mundane to the complex. In addition, the software will measure the level of impact and effectiveness of AI on business outcomes.

IBM Business Automation Intelligence with Watson is anticipated to be available later this year. In the meantime, for more information, visit our early access program IBM.biz/GoAutomate.

About IBM & Artificial Intelligence

A world leader in AI for business, IBM has deployed Watson solutions in thousands of engagements with clients across 20 industries and 80 countries. IBM's Watson solutions are widely used in industries, including by 7 of the 10 largest automotive companies and 8 of the 10 largest oil and gas companies. Additionally,

IBM Research is a world leader in the science of AI. In 2018, IBM secured 1,600 AI-related patents. And, IBM recently revealed its leading-edge Project Debater, created by IBM Research scientists.

Think 2019

At Think 2019, IBM will outline new offerings, client engagements, partnerships, technology breakthroughs and developer tools that underscore how IBM and partners are changing the way the world works. For more information, visit the IBM Think 2019 Newsroom: https://newsroom.ibm.com/think. Follow the conference on Twitter at #think2019 and @ibmlive, and go to https://www.ibm.com/events/think/ for the full schedule and live streaming agenda.

Forward-Looking and Cautionary Statements

Except for the historical information and discussions contained herein, statements contained in this release may constitute forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Forward-looking statements are based on the company's current assumptions regarding future business and financial performance. These statements involve a number of risks, uncertainties and other factors that could cause actual results to differ materially, including the following: a downturn in economic environment and client spending budgets; the company's failure to meet growth and productivity objectives; a failure of the company's innovation initiatives; damage to the company's reputation; risks from investing in growth opportunities; failure of the company's intellectual property portfolio to prevent competitive offerings and the failure of the company to obtain necessary licenses; cybersecurity and data privacy considerations; fluctuations in financial results, impact of local legal, economic, political and health conditions; adverse effects from environmental matters, tax matters and the company's pension plans; ineffective internal controls; the company's use of accounting estimates; the company's ability to attract and retain key employees and its reliance on critical skills; impacts of relationships with critical suppliers; product quality issues; impacts of business with government clients; currency fluctuations and customer financing risks; impact of changes in market liquidity conditions and customer credit risk on receivables; reliance on third party distribution channels and ecosystems; the company's ability to successfully manage acquisitions, alliances and dispositions; risks from legal proceedings; risk factors related to IBM securities; and other risks, uncertainties and factors discussed in the company's Form 10-Qs, Form 10-K and in the company's other filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or in materials incorporated therein by reference. Any forward-looking statement in this release speaks only as of the date on which it is made. The company assumes no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements.

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[1] MIT Sloan Management Review, Reshaping Business with Artificial Intelligence

[2] Gartner: "Predicts 2019: Data Management Solutions," Dec. 6, 2018.

[3] IBM internal study, Feb. 6, 2019.

[4] IBM Systems Blog: New Watson Machine Learning Accelerator for Power Systems

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