Alpitour World Selects IBM Hybrid Cloud and AI Capabilities For a More Personalized Customer Experience

IBM Services is helping to implement a digital transformation strategy for the global travel company, using IBM Watson and Red Hat OpenShift

ARMONK, N.Y. and MILAN, Nov. 2, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM (NYSE: IBM) and Italy's leading travel company, Alpitour Group, announced that it has selected IBM Watson, enabled by hybrid cloud solutions, to modernize existing customer-oriented digital applications and help accelerate the development of new ones to promote a more user-friendly, personalized experience for its clients.

With its five divisions - Tour Operating, Aviation, Hotel Management, Incoming and Travel Agencies - Alpitour Group provides vacation services to millions of travelers worldwide and works with thousands of travel agencies. It has a mission to meet the growing expectations of travelers looking to make the most out of their journey, while also addressing the complex challenges of the sector like the ebb and flow of the travel seasons and the current pandemic.

As part of the solution, Alpitour Group is working with IBM Services to use natural language processing (NLP) solutions from IBM Watson to help develop applications to design and provide more personalized, simpler booking experiences. Using IBM Watson products including Watson Discovery and Watson Natural Language Understanding on IBM Cloud, the solution is aimed to extract the subject and text of each email to help recognize the type of request, capture the main information and classify its content.

With more than two million messages being received by Alpitor annually, the AI solution is expected to process an estimated 80% of those, thereby enabling their employees to focus on effectiveness and efficiency in their responses, with the most complex and priority requests addressed with greater precision and speed. The alliance between AI and IT infrastructure, could help produce a real leap in the delivery of digital services.

"The organized tourism sector has been going through a new phase of transformation for some years now, driven by digital technologies but also by the emergence of an increasingly open and dynamic business model along the entire supply chain: it is the concept of the business-platform, which has in its agility and ability to interconnect with the socio-economic ecosystem in which it operates its distinctive factors," said Francesco Ciuccarelli, CIO and CTO of Alpitour Group. "This path has been accelerated by the recent crisis, which has made clear the importance of the ability to adapt the elasticity of infrastructure and applications: in a word, resilience. The collaboration with IBM aims to help build this capacity, first by taking charge of legacy infrastructure and applications, then by introducing new enabling technologies, such as Red Hat OpenShift, and finally by using AI in various areas across the Alpitour Group, from contact center to B2C sales."

Additionally, with the support of IBM Services, Alpitour Group has moved from on-premises environments to hybrid cloud environments, to help gain extra capacity during peak seasons and to create new cloud-native applications that use IBM Watson NLP services. Alpitour Group implemented an open model, based on Red Hat OpenShift - the industry's leading enterprise Kubernetes platform, designed to help quickly build applications that can be run anywhere, on-premise, on private and any public cloud- according to business needs. The Red Hat environment rests on Alpitour's infrastructure managed by IBM Services at its Italian data centers and

enables applications to scale automatically according to load, be released automatically, avoiding downtime and, with an efficient monitoring system, be quickly able to detect anomalies in individual instances and if necessary, restart them automatically.

"We manage enviable information assets and thanks to the exponential technological enhancements of the last years, the right time has come to draw value from this information," said Fabio Olgiati, head of AI & Automation competence center of the Alpitour Group. "Dominating the information and no longer being only observers, is a challenging goal that absorbs our full energy. The application of the right AI models in the mail channel, will not only bring added value but it will be the enabling challenge to obtain the complete technological mastery, in order to space on future new channels."

"Today, companies in all industries operate in an experience-first world, where you can get immense value from data if your confidence in technology and the flexibility that comes with it remain at the core," said Stefano Rebattoni, Vice President Enterprise Sales at IBM Italy. "It is with these principles that we continue after more than 10 years to help accompany Alpitour in its innovation process, integrating AI functionality, enabled by Red Hat Openshift platform and enhanced by our infrastructure and business experience to help address current and future challenges in a major sector for our country."

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