IBM Celebrates Global Women Leaders Shaping the Future of AI for Business

IBM's annual Women Leaders in AI program honors 40 professionals from 18 countries using AI to drive innovation

Honorees include women leaders from The Clorox Company, City of Austin, The Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation, EY, Ford Motor Company and more

ARMONK, N.Y., March 18, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- As part of its annual Women Leaders in AI program, today IBM (NYSE: IBM) recognized 40 innovative female business leaders from 18 countries who are using IBM Watson to help drive transformation, growth and innovation across a wide variety of industries. This year honorees include women leaders from The Clorox Company, City of Austin, The Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation, EY, Ford Motor Company, ServiceNow and many more.

Celebrating diverse talent in the field of AI and creating a culture of inclusion are important as the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the workplace becomes more apparent. A recent IBM Institute for Business Value study revealed that despite heightened awareness of the challenges facing women in the workplace driven by the pandemic, gender equality is still not a top priority for 70 percent of global businesses, according to business professionals surveyed. Moreover, fewer women surveyed hold senior vice president, vice president, director and manager roles in 2021 than they did in 2019.

IBM created the annual Women Leaders in AI program in 2019 to help encourage increased diverse participation in the field and provide honorees a network for shared learning. This year's class of honorees demonstrate how efforts to advance natural language processing and automation and build responsible AI can be used to help organizations better predict outcomes, automate processes and drive new efficiencies.

 "As AI adoption continues to accelerate, we believe that diverse teams are needed to help build and implement trustworthy AI that can help mitigate bias and deliver explainable outcomes," said Ritika Gunnar, Vice President, Expert Labs, IBM Cloud and Cognitive Software. "Today, we are sharing the incredible stories of 40 women who are paving the way forward in AI for business and impacting how people work and live. Working with clients in an era of global workplace and workforce change, we see the need for women and diverse teams working at the forefront of AI."

The 40 leaders recognized in 2021 were selected based upon the ways they are using AI as a transformation agent to help drive results for their organizations and the employees, customers and citizens they serve. Examples include:

- **Improving the effectiveness of advertising with AI: The Ad Council** partners with top advertisers and marketers to create campaigns that address pressing social issues. President and CEO **Lisa Sherman** used IBM Watson Advertising Accelerator to help improve the effectiveness of the Love Has No Labels "Fight for Freedom" initiative, which promotes diversity and inclusion, and is currently leveraging the technology for their "It's Up To You" COVID-19 vaccine education initiative
- **Empowering independent farmers with crop forecasts:** Farmers in developing countries often lack the tools and means to critical resources that could help them prepare and grow their crops efficiently.

Manoela Morais, Chimka Munkhbayar and **Helen Tsai** created a solution called **Agrolly,** as part of Call for Code in 2020, which uses IBM Watson to help farmers plan crop production and minimize risks caused by extreme weather conditions.

- **Detecting cybersecurity threats in global financial markets: The Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation (DTCC)** provides post-trade infrastructure for global financial markets, standardizing and simplifying administration of safety-critical securities transactions. **Poonam Verma**, who oversees DTCC's critical cybersecurity services function, implemented IBM services to help further advance the organization's cyber detection capabilities.

- **Meeting the challenge of a threefold surge in customer service calls:** As conversation volumes surged due to COVID-19 uncertainty, **Ekaterina Ostankova** and her team at **Lloyds Banking Group** helped design and define a solution using IBM Watson Assistant that enables customers to get support quickly. She drives adoption of conversational AI to unlock new opportunities for the bank and seeks to support customers by resolving ever more complex queries through messaging and web channels.

- **Helping teenagers land their first job with a friendly avatar:** Finding your first job can be intimidating, so Australian bank **Westpac** created "Wendy," a friendly digital coach, that answers spoken and written questions about job preparation. **Annie Shu,** Manager of Strategy and Innovation, used IBM Watson natural language processing capabilities to help make Wendy engaging and relatable. She championed Wendy's cause with bank executives and led the service design and innovation development teams.

The **2021 IBM Women Leaders in AI honorees** are:

- **Joan Francy**, CEO, **AdMed** (United States)
- **Chimka Munkhbayar**, Co-founder, **Agrolly** (Mongolia)
- **Manoela Morais**, CEO and Co-founder, **Agrolly** (Brazil)
- **Helen Tsai**, Web Developer Lead and Co-founder, **Agrolly** (Taiwan)
- **Airei Soh**, Assistant Manager, Marketing Strategy System & Solution Planning, **All Nippon Airways** (Japan)
- **Leah Karlin**, Director of Machine Learning and Data Engineering, **At Point of Care** (United States)
- **Fella Benaziza**, UX Designer Consultant, **Capgemini France** (France)
- **Elisabetta Burei**, BRM Technology CRM, **CheBanca!** (Italy)
- **Divya Rathanlal**, Emerging Technology Program Manager, **City of Austin Texas** (United States)
- **Regina Olivares**, Principal Management Analyst, **Clark County** (United States)
- **Siew Choo Soh**, Managing Director, **DBS** (Singapore)
- **Sandra Corkern**, Associate Director, Real Estate Technology and Innovation, **EY (Ernst & Young LLP)** (United States)
- **Jennifer Turner**, Senior Director, Digital Innovation, Strategy and Transactions, **EY-Parthenon (Ernst & Young LLP)** (United States)
- **Sabita Sharma**, AVP, Automation and Innovation, **Everest Re Group** (United States)
- **Tracey Hawes**, General Manager, Marketing and Trading, **Fine Wine Delivery** (New Zealand)
- **Julie Losee**, Manager, Equipment Lease Accounting, **Ford Motor Company** (United States)

- **Denise Stokowski**, Group VP, Platform Products, **Gainsight** (United States)
- **Hagit Tzafrir**, SVP Healthcare Division, **Harel Insurance & Finance** (Israel)
- **Annapurna Vishwanathan**, Former Head of Digital, **HCCB (Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd.)** (India)
- **Curren Katz**, Director of Data Science R&D, **Highmark Health** (United States)
- **Satoko Maeda**, Senior Managerial Staff, **Hiroshima Prefectural Government** (Japan)
- **Mari Sasaki**, Data Construction and Media Product Director, **Kakuichi** (Japan)
- **Anette Böhm**, General Manager, Corporate HR, **KBC Group** (Belgium)
- **Ekaterina Ostankova**, Product Manager – Virtual Assistant Lab, **Lloyds Banking Group** (United Kingdom)
- **Kaori Matsue**, Senior Director, General Manager of Responsible Care and Quality Assurance Division, **Mitsui Chemicals** (Japan)
- **Alu Rodríguez**, SVP Business Transformation, **NH Hotel Group** (Spain)
- **Jeanette Fürst**, Director of Sales, **OpenAdvice IT Services** (Germany)
- **Donatella Sciuto,** Professor of Computer Engineering and Executive Vice Rector, **Politecnico di Milano** (Italy)
- **Bharathi Ramadass**, IT Product Manager, **ServiceNow** (United States)
- **Gema T. Pérez Ramón**, Director, Taxation Office, **Madrid Municipality** (Spain)
- **Melissa Dorey**, Digital Experience Principal, **Telstra** (Australia)
- **Lisa Sherman**, President and CEO, **The Ad Council** (United States)
- **Pam Griffin**, Associate Director, Cleaning Division, **The Clorox Company** (United States)
- **Poonam Verma**, Managing Director, Head of Security Engineering and Operations, **The Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation (DTCC)** (United States)
- **Supaluck Umpujh**, Chair, **The Mall Group** (Thailand)
- **Manami Endo**, IT Planning Section, Information System Department, **TRUSCO Nakayama Corporation** (Japan)
- **Mio Sugihara**, Assistant Manager, System Management Section, **TRUSCO Nakayama Corporation** (Japan)
- **Catharine Fennell**, CEO, **videoBIO** (Canada)
- **Amy Oding**, Operational Support and Automation Manager, **Vodafone** (New Zealand)
- **Annie Shu**, Manager of Strategy and Innovation, **Westpac** (Australia)

Explore the stories of how these women leaders are using AI to help transform their businesses — and the lessons they've learned along the way — at https://www.ibm.com/watson/women-leaders-in-ai

About IBM Watson
Watson is IBM's AI technology for business, helping organizations to better predict and shape future outcomes, automate complex processes, and optimize employees' time. Watson has evolved from an IBM Research project, to experimentation, to a scaled, open set of products that can run anywhere. With more than 40,000 client engagements, Watson is being applied by leading global brands across a variety of industries to transform how people work. To learn more, visit: https://www.ibm.com/watson.

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