

Wintershall Dea and IBM partner up on broad-based AI drive

LONDON, UK, August 1, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wintershall Dea is one of Europe's largest independent oil and natural gas companies, and recently pivoted towards sustainable gas and carbon management. It has now been announced that Wintershall and IBM Consulting are launching a wide-ranging AI drive, establishing an AI centre of competence (CoC) and leading on over 80 use cases to improve efficiency in energy production. Microsoft, which has strong working relationships with both parties, will also have a role to play in the programme as a technology partner. Microsoft Azure has already been deployed by Wintershall Dea as a data platform, and has long been used to facilitate the delivery of IBM Consulting data and AI projects.

It is hoped that the initiative to scale up AI solutions across all business processes will allow Wintershall Dea to take full advantage of its data and improve production. The company was formed as a result of the 2019 merger between Wintershall and DEA (Deutsche Erdoel AG), and is now focused on improving innovation, employee satisfaction and environmentally sustainable energy production.

The potential role of AI was already apparent in the immediate aftermath of the merger, as the size of the organization meant that the potential rewards for linking and capitalizing on data were greater than for either Wintershall or DEA alone. Industry standards, regulatory guidelines and the partner ecosystem within which the company operates underline this new direction. The company decided on a holistic approach, implementing AI at the heart of its operations to better coordinate its usage and capitalize on vast enterprise data assets. This involves a combination of traditional, large-scale projects and smaller, easily implementable ideas. The efficiency improvements should also generate cost savings, allowing for reinvestment into new innovative energy production methods. The efficient exchange and sharing of data can also be extended to Wintershall Dea's partner network.

Kathrin Dufour, Senior Vice President of Digitization and Technology at Wintershall Dea. "We are exchanging more data internally and externally than in the past. And a smooth and efficient data exchange is a crucial process for us as we are working in a standardized environment, and we want to make cooperation within our ecosystem as easy as possible. Harnessing AI is key to reach this goal."

IBM Consulting will support Wintershall's data drive via a centralized platform and methodology

to optimize the AI approach, providing access to vast resources of AI expertise. The consulting company's experts have been cooperating with Wintershall Dea on a number of projects for over four years. The Wintershall team has deployed cutting-edge data management and data visualization tools, the Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service and AI model development and execution on Azure to create the technical basis for a component-based architecture at the core of its AI approach. IBM has implemented a tailored version of its AI at Scale methodology on Azure to power up the solution.

Ulrich Lorang, Vice President of Data Science, Data Governance and Data Hub at Wintershall Dea: "Driving value through AI definitely is top of mind at every step we are conducting at the CoC. And we already have several proof points that the AI projects empower our workforce and support our business objectives. Looking back, we build up everything from having just a vision until the complete implementation of the CoC in only two-and-a-half years and I am deeply impressed [by] how fast we as a team managed this."

AI at Scale has been designed to assist companies in building AI projects that are scalable from the outset. In addition to data scientists, the Wintershall-IBM CoC headquarters will host citizen data scientists coming from a wide range of backgrounds including geoscientists, engineers, economists and people from other professions who possess solid mathematical programming skills. They will work alongside the various data science teams on site. Efforts will be made to raise awareness among employees around the business benefits of AI and the potential gains to be had through cooperation with the CoC via a series of upskilling workshops and training sessions.

The AI projects being implemented by Wintershall Dea will fall into two broad categories: traditional, large-scale projects and so-called "fireflies". The latter are small, easily-to-implement projects that Wintershall Dea hopes will provide rapid and scalable AI methods for solving simple workflow issues, such as extracting important information from large numbers of PDF documents and feeding it automatically into spreadsheets. Another example of a firefly project could be generative AI-powered report summaries or database search tools to pull up relevant information from the Wintershall Dea knowledge base, improving company-wide productivity. Max Schemmer, Engagement Lead at IBM Consulting: "Generative AI can fuel a new era of efficiency and optimization, helping to unlock untapped reservoirs of productivity."

On the other side of the equation, larger-scale AI projects are expected to bring about a new era of technology leadership in the industry. For example, a solution for maintaining oil and gas wells was launched in Norway on the basis of AI and has now been rolled out internationally. Data from operational subsea wells is now being analysed using AI, helping engineers to detect potential leaks. In turn, this means that AI is helping Wintershall Dea make energy production cleaner and safer, thereby protecting the environment.

Stephan Bloehdorn, Practice Leader AI & Analytics at IBM Consulting: "Getting to a maturity level where AI is routinely and effectively leveraged at corporate scale requires a dedicated effort that

combines business strategy, organization, technology and company culture. We are very happy that Wintershall Dea has the confidence in us to support their AI journey. With their holistic and integrated approach as well as their drive and energy to achieve real results at every stage of the journey, they are a pioneer in AI management.”

IBM Consulting possesses deep industry expertise across strategy, experience design, technology and operations, helping it deploy hybrid cloud and AI technologies powered by an industry-leading partner ecosystem and accelerate business transformation for clients. The company is an innovation partner to over 3,000 high-value companies all over the world. The IBM Garage digital transformation methodology is used by more than 160,000 consultants.

German group BASF owns 72.7% of Wintershall Dea with remainder is held by Russian investors Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven and German Khan.

<https://newsroom.ibm.com/2023-08-01-Wintershall-Dea-works-with-IBM-to-ramp-up-AI-Initiatives-across-its-organization>

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