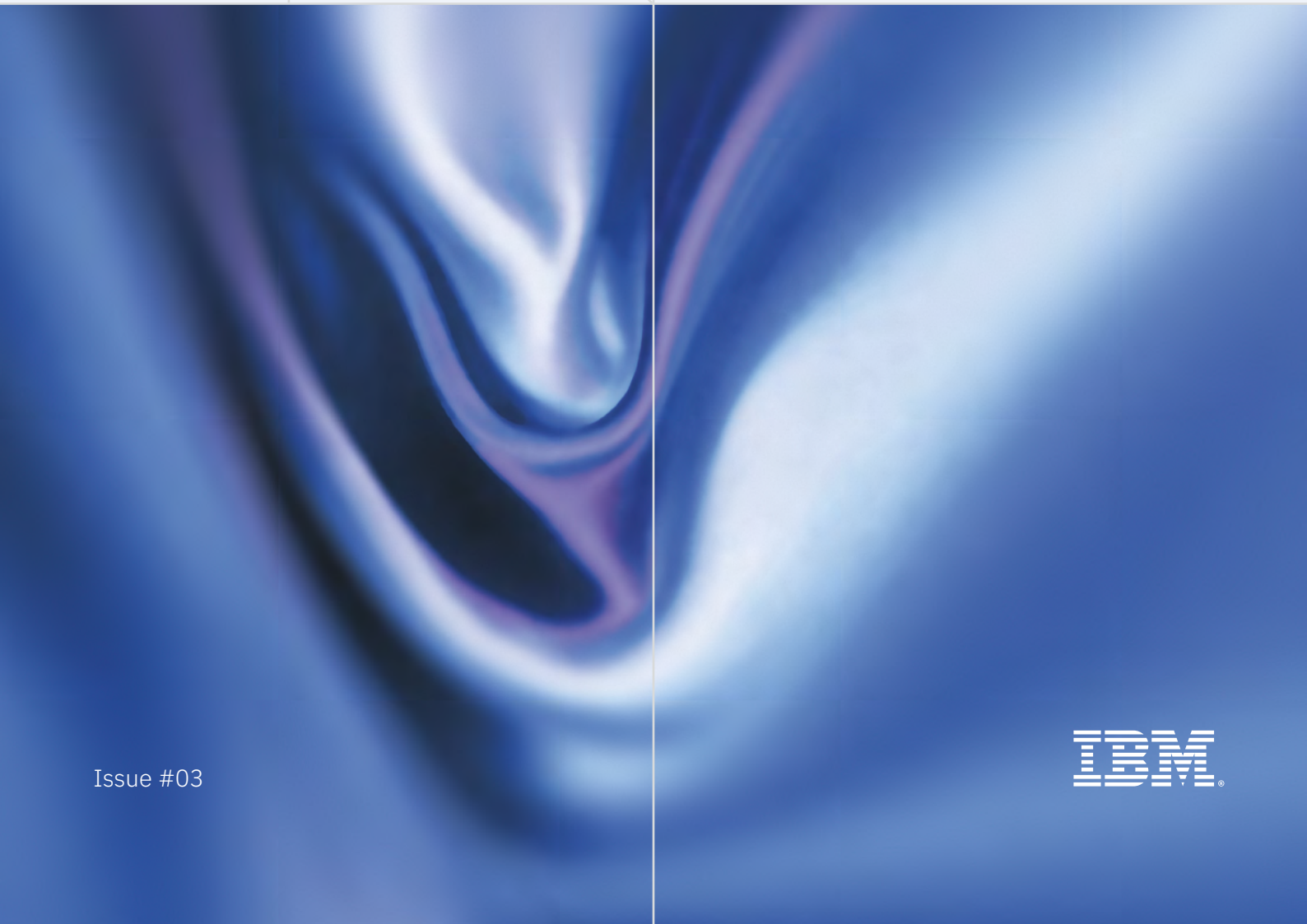
Intelligent Industry

IQ

Creating value with Industrial AI & Data:
Insights and learnings from successful implementations.



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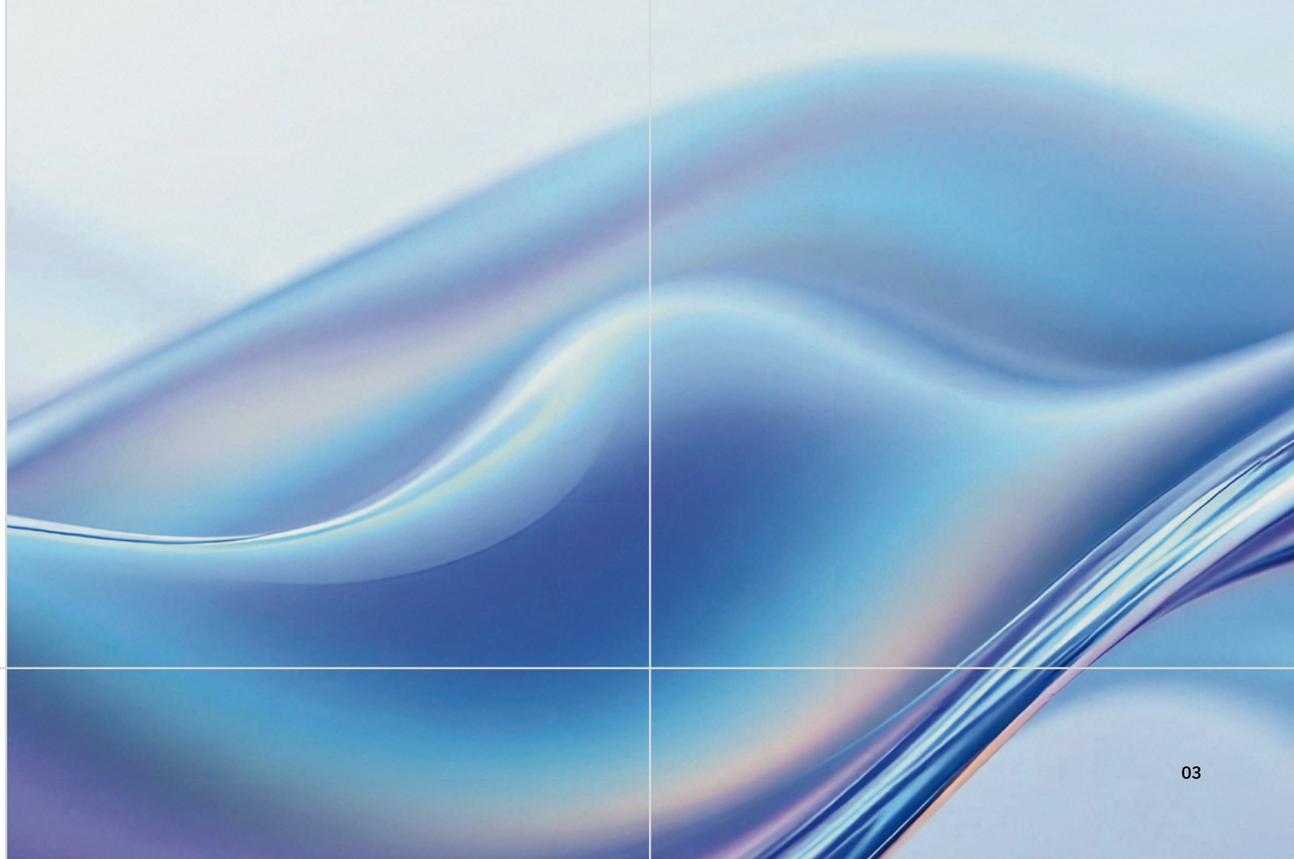

Thinking AI-first for Business Processes — Opportunities for Industrial Organizations

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To our esteemed readers and valued clients,

We are thrilled to share the third edition of the *IQ* magazine, fully dedicated to exploring ideas, approaches and examples of how data and AI create tangible value for industrial organizations.

In a recent survey of the IBM Institute for Business Value, 67% of respondents view the innovations in generative AI (gen AI) as a significant value creator and 77% agree that the technology is market-ready. In a time where the Industrial industry is more than ever under pressure, AI represents a sophisticated toolbox of capabilities to transform business processes for higher efficiency, faster time-to-value, and new experiences.

And indeed, there is work to do: Organizations have long relied on rigid corporate systems to structure business processes which are frequently turning into obstacles to achieving the necessary efficiency and agility. Efforts for automation have often been constrained to surface-level automation without really touching underlying business processes. Employees and customers who are accustomed to engaging digital experiences in other areas of their lives are still too often confronted with unintuitive and disjointed user experiences in their business applications.

In this magazine, you will find exemplary applications of AI across core industrial processes, including new market development, R&D, production, and customer service, as well as corporate functions attacking these issues. The examples demonstrate how AI can be used to fundamentally re-think business workflows to steer core processes with specialized foundation models, and to introduce new user experiences augmented by AI assistants along with more sophisticated automation driven by advanced AI and agents—all fueled by relevant operational and analytical data.

AI is a universal technology with huge potential to attack key challenges within the Industrial industry. As industry leaders and partners, it’s up to us to stay ambitious.

Best regards,
Markus & Stephan

“AI is a universal technology with huge potential to attack key challenges within the Industrial industry.”

Transforming Business Models with AI

Gen AI is reshaping entire business models, driving innovation and efficiency across industries. This case study highlights one such transformation.

Wintershall Dea always looks to the future, shown by its commitment to technological innovation, employee empowerment, and environmentally responsible energy production. Since 2020, Wintershall Dea has been collaborating with IBM Consulting to support and accelerate this ambition by working on AI@Scale, focusing on direct business processes like Reservoir Discovery, Drilling, and Safety, while also helping to speed up crucial business transformations towards Carbon Capture & Storage. Two key initiatives supported by gen AI are elaborated in the following paragraphs. A more comprehensive reference story can be found by following the QR code at the end of this article.

Carbon Capture & Storage has become a prime enabler for fostering sustainability and the move to a low or zero carbon footprint. In the medium term, as not all industrial production processes in sectors like steel or cement can run completely without carbon emissions, capturing and safely storing carbon underground remains essential for success. Wintershall Dea decided early on to build upon its strengths in geology and its vast experience in drilling and gas transportation to amplify its carbon storage business model. Therefore, they needed to revisit vast amounts of structured (reports, tables) and unstructured (geological graphics, seismic sensor data) data from 40-year-old drill holes to swiftly evaluate feasibility, security, and commercial viability for storage.

Digitizing the historic data and utilizing gen AI models to first retrieve relevant information from the vast amounts of paper-based data was a game changer for accelerating time to market in the relatively new space of carbon storage.

Additionally, based on promising old drill holes, the cumbersome process of obtaining local licenses to operate — which previously took years — needed to be accelerated.

Digitizing the historic data and utilizing gen AI models to first retrieve relevant information and then generate reports and evaluations from the vast amounts of paper-based data was a game changer for accelerating time to market in the relatively new space of carbon storage. The plethora of documents that would have required extensive manual work from engineers were processed and summarized quickly, enabling Wintershall Dea to seize market opportunities and solidify its position as the leading player in carbon capture across Europe.

Well Integrity is key for sustainability and smooth operations.

Well Integrity is key for sustainability and smooth operations. In collaboration with IBM Consulting, Wintershall Dea developed a time-series-based foundation model to enhance their environmental surveillance systems. These systems were designed to continuously monitor and analyze sensor data from offshore oil platforms.

The model processes high-frequency time-series data from various sensors, such as pressure, flow rate, and others vital sensors. By combining time-series-based foundation model with classical machine learning techniques, including anomaly detection and predictive analytics, the system can identify subtle deviations from normal operational patterns—indicators of potential oil leaks or equipment malfunctions.

This approach ensures real-time detection of environmental risks, enabling rapid response to mitigate damage. By maintaining constant, data-driven oversight, the system helps Wintershall Dea uphold strict environmental regulations and sustain their license to operate in a highly regulated and fragile marine ecosystem.

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IBM Case Study: Wintershall Dea

Co-Scientists: Revolutionizing Research and Innovation

The greatest innovations of our time have been created by exceptional teams of researchers. Today, AI is becoming an integral part of these teams—acting as AI co-scientists, accelerating the pace of discovery and innovation.

AI co-scientists enhance the research process by generating and filtering the most promising ideas (1), followed by improving data acquisition (2), enhancing productivity across the entire research lifecycle (3), and concluding with intellectual property protection (4) and drafting reports (5).

1. Materials Science and Bio Foundation Models

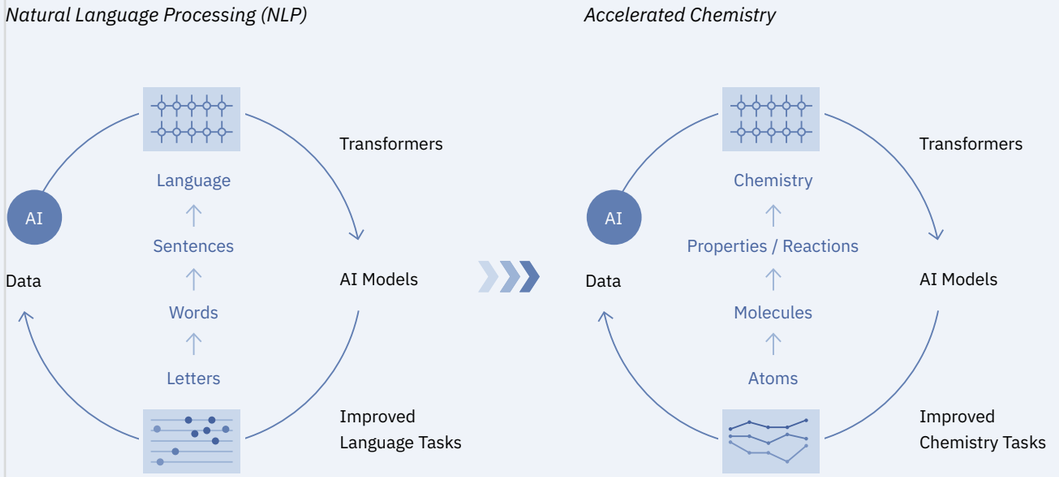
Traditional approaches to material science require screening millions of potential candidates, a process that is time-consuming and resource-intensive. AI-driven models bypass this inefficiency by directly generating material candidates with desired properties, such as enhanced mechanical strength, electronic conductivity, or magnetic response.

Recent breakthroughs highlight the momentum of AI in materials research. IBM's Materials Foundation Models offer multimodal frameworks for rapid customization, and Google DeepMind's GNoME leverages graph neural networks to generate new materials. AI's ability to generate and filter potential innovations ensures that only the most promising candidates progress to experimental validation, streamlining real-world testing and accelerating scientific discovery.

The partnership between IBM and L'Oréal further highlights how AI can contribute to sustainable product development, demonstrating its role in addressing global environmental challenges while ensuring scientific and technological progress.

IBM Case Study: L'Oréal

Generative modeling and transformers are achieving new breakthroughs in scientific disciplines



2. Gen AI in Sensing and Data Acquisition

Once we deepen our understanding of materials and biological systems, the next step is improving how we gather, analyze, and interpret real-world data. Gen AI is transforming our ability to sense and measure physical and chemical phenomena:

- AI-Enhanced Sensors: By analyzing chemical compositions, AI can predict and simulate taste, smell, and texture, aiding industries from food science to pharmaceuticals.
- Environmental Monitoring: AI-powered sensors detect pollutants and forecast climate trends, enabling more efficient regulatory actions.
- Precision Medicine: In healthcare, AI-assisted sensors identify early-stage diseases by detecting subtle biological markers, improving diagnoses and treatments.

Additionally, AI-driven chemical sensors revolutionize molecular recognition and pattern detection. Traditional sensors rely on a one-to-one mapping between molecules and sensor outputs, limiting flexibility.

In contrast, cross-sensitive sensor arrays use AI and automation to detect complex interactions, extending chemical testing beyond the lab to field, diagnostic, and industrial applications.

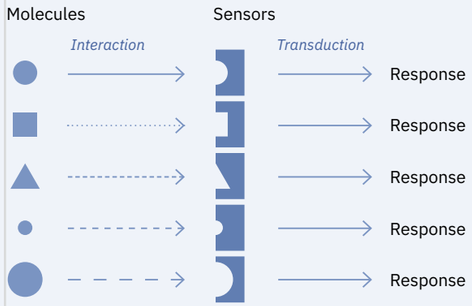
By refining sensing technology, gen AI improves data quality, supports real-time monitoring, and broadens the range of measurable scientific parameters.

3. Enhancing Productivity in R&D

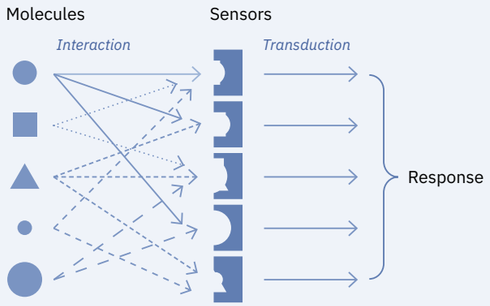
AI models analyze vast amounts of unstructured data, extract key insights, and classify relevant events more efficiently than traditional methods. Large language models (LLMs) help categorize text for structured analysis, enabling researchers to identify meaningful patterns in their studies. Additionally, retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) solutions allow scientists to interact with historical R&D content, making it possible to extract valuable insights from past research through natural language queries. AI-powered computer vision assists for example in analyzing microscopic images reducing manual assessments.

By integrating AI into research, teams can focus on high-value analytical tasks instead of routine data management.

Conventional chemical sensors



Cross-sensitive sensor array



Opportunity: Leverage AI and automation in a data-driven approach to substantially accelerate chemical tests and extend analytical capability from the lab to the field

4. AI-driven Patent Analysis & Management

Traditional patent research is time-consuming, requiring professionals to manually compare new inventions with thousands of existing patents. AI technologies can automate this process by extracting relevant information, analyzing similarities in chemical compositions, formulations, or technological innovations, and identifying potential overlaps. By incorporating AI-driven search capabilities, companies can efficiently scan vast patent databases, improving accuracy and reducing the risk of overlooking critical prior articles.

One of the significant applications of AI in patent management is infringement detection. AI-powered tools can compare existing patents with new products or research findings, ensuring compliance and preventing legal disputes. Based on the principles of transparency and explainability, AI cannot only find similarities and differences between patents but can also explain in detail why it believes that two ideas are similar or different in particular details.

AI also plays a crucial role in improving patent strategy and decision-making. By structuring patent data into organized databases, AI enables companies to track technological trends, monitor competitor activity, and identify valuable intellectual property assets.

5. Revolutionizing Documentation with AI-Powered Content Generation

AI-based content generation in R&D is transforming the way regulatory and scientific documentation is created, significantly reducing time and effort while improving consistency. As seen in the case study of a large life sciences company, AI-driven solutions streamline the process of generating regulatory submission content, reducing cycle times by 50-75%. By leveraging gen AI models, R&D teams can eliminate bottlenecks associated with manual drafting.

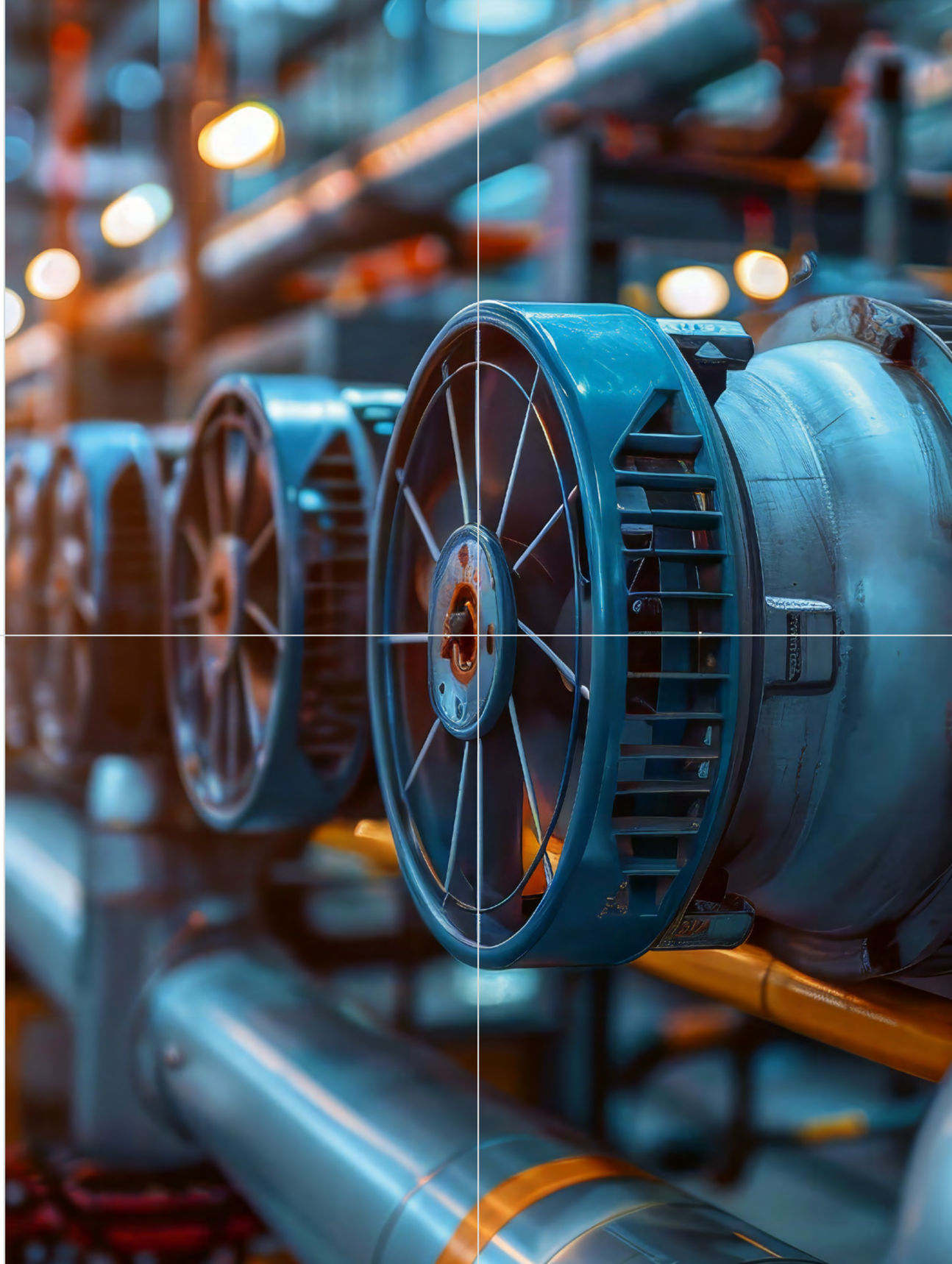
Beyond time savings, AI-powered content generation enhances the accuracy, quality, and reusability of scientific and regulatory documentation. With gen AI models covering 70-90% of content requirements, the approach ensures greater consistency in language, structure, and compliance, minimizing human errors and variability. Additionally, AI-driven platforms can integrate insights from large volumes of structured and unstructured data, helping organizations align their documentation with evolving regulatory standards and scientific best practices. This automation not only accelerates the innovation pipeline but also strengthens knowledge management, ultimately driving greater efficiency and compliance in the R&D ecosystem.

Dr. Max Schemmer
Industrial AI Lead
IBM Consulting

By integrating AI into research, teams can focus on high-value analytical tasks instead of routine data management.

Driving Production Efficiency and Quality through AI

For industrial companies, production is the heartbeat of the value chain—so it is no wonder that it holds the greatest potential for competitive differentiation through AI.



AI can work with the full variety of data encountered on factory shopfloors: Voice commands issued by factory workers, scene data recorded by computer vision systems and time series of sensor data logged by production equipment.

In the face of ever-changing global market dynamics and fierce competition, continuous innovation is key, first and foremost for productivity and operational excellence.

In a recent benchmark study of the IBM Institute of Business Value, the selected group of AI leaders have reported substantial KPI improvements in key areas such as production forecast accuracy, reduction of product defects and minimization of excess inventory. Modern applications of AI for production range from demand sensing for better planning to high precision quality assessments. At the same time, AI can work with the full variety of data encountered on factory shopfloors: voice commands issued by factory workers, scene data recorded by computer vision systems and time series of sensor data logged by instrumented production equipment. The recent innovations in gen AI and Foundation Models to quickly learn from large amounts of data and adapt quickly to unseen data, adds to the value it brings for both process and discrete manufacturing.

AI for Visual Inspection in Discrete Manufacturing

An exciting application of modern AI technology to validate material and products against CAD data, identify quality issues and determine process states through computer vision. In recent engagements, IBM Consulting has worked with leading automotive manufacturers on using image footage to automate inbound & outbound logistics processes and to check products for quality aspects such as parts attachment, screw positioning and surface conditions. A unique example of the successful use of AI in quality control is the work of IBM with Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy. The company faced the challenge of improving efficiency and quality in the discrete manufacturing of offshore wind turbine blades. Today, the company works with an industry-leading solution that integrates Computer Vision, Edge Computing, and a scalable Industrial Internet of Things architecture. A laser grid guides technicians where to place each layer of fiberglass, IoT-connected cameras monitor the process, and CV models analyze the data in real-time. Constant feedback enables precise placement and immediate error detection, thus reducing production error rates, increasing efficiency and better serving the market with turbine blades.

Time-series Foundation Models for Process Optimization

While Large Large Models (LLM) have shown their value in numerous language-oriented applications, a new frontier in AI for production lies in Time-series Foundation Models (TSFMs), which are particularly beneficial for industrial process optimization. Time-series data, which consists of sequences of data points collected or recorded at specific time intervals, is pervasive in manufacturing environments. Today, TSFMs and related methods can be used to forecast equipment failures, predict maintenance needs, and optimize production schedules. For instance, IBM partnered with Wintershall Dea to develop the “Intelligent Well Alarming Tool” (iWAT) to detect anomalies in well sensor data for predictive maintenance. The implementation of iWAT has significantly enhanced well reliability and proactive asset management at Wintershall Dea leading to overall optimization of the process manufacturing. Another notable example is IBM’s work on optimization of energy-intensive processes in cement production, where TSFMs are employed to optimize the process control parameters of kilns. By continuously analyzing time-series data from the production process, the AI models can fine-tune parameters in real-time to enhance efficiency, reduce energy consumption, and improve the quality of cement. This application has led to significant operational improvements and cost savings, demonstrating the powerful impact of TSFMs in process manufacturing.

AI for Seamless E2E Supply Chains Process Orchestration

As critical parts of the value chain, production and supply chain activities are characterized by a unique complexity with a multitude of systems. Often enough, disjoint experiences, system barriers and lack of standardized data stand in the way of seamless process visibility and execution. In this context, AI becomes a flexible toolbox to provide for the missing integration and seamless experiences. In IBM engagements with leading industrial players, AI has helped to detect anomalies in master data and automatically match data records from different sources. Likewise, AI-driven document analysis has helped to automate the analysis, enrichment and generation of text and image documents from physical and digital sources such as freight or customs documents.

The examples demonstrate novel ways of re-thinking production and supply chain with AI, creating new experiences and support complex process decisions.

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IBM Case Study: Siemens Gamesa

IBM Case Study: Wintershall Dea

How foundation models can help make steel and cement production more sustainable

The interplay between AI, human agents and customers creates unique value while building operational proficiency in new ways of engaging.

Gen AI-Driven Customer Service

How to Increase Your Service Agents' Efficiency with gen AI

Service plays a crucial role for manufacturing companies, often contributing over 35% of profit margins and therefore in some areas surpassing the importance of the actual product itself. As a result, many manufacturing companies are shifting from product-based strategies to service-driven business models to drive growth and competitiveness. And despite already delivering high profit margins, industrial services hold even greater optimization potential that so far remains untapped. In today's macroeconomic environment, service business stands out as one of the few business sectors that consistently offers opportunities for growth and profitability.

IBM Technology as Client Zero in Service Transformation

At IBM, we understand the relevance of services firsthand. Since our foundation 114 years ago, services have been central to our business and our competitive advantage. To maintain this edge, we continuously enhance our service offerings and provision, with AI playing a key role in driving efficiency gains. Due to this fact, we deem our colleagues of IBM Technology as our "Client Zero" for AI excellence in industrial service transformation. Handling nearly 800,000 cases annually and supporting 22,000 hardware and software issues, AI is essential to improving service quality and efficiency. Specifically, the customer service function has evolved from a cost center to a key growth driver, allowing businesses to stand out through exceptional customer experience. A unified platform underpins this transformation, streamlining customer support across hardware and software. Its key benefits include centralized ticket management, integrated knowledge bases, and automated workflows that seamlessly connect partners, regions, and sectors to enhance client service. IBM Technology leverages Salesforce as a single source of truth, consolidating four core capabilities to equip service agents with the tools needed for a more efficient and seamless client experience.

1. Virtual Assistant for Client Self-Service:
This comprises chat-based and personalized support within the IBM Support Portal, helping clients quickly find documentation, open a ticket or if needed escalate issues to a live engineer. Crucially, all self-service interactions are summarized and prepared by an AI agent before being passed on to the engineer, ensuring a clear overview rather than raw data. When a new ticket is created, it is standardized into a searchable format for streamlined support.

2. Case Summarization:
For long-running cases across multiple geographies, engineers need significant time to review case histories. To streamline this, IBM Technology leverages watsonx to generate AI-powered summaries, enabling faster service delivery. Tickets are then sorted, ranked, and grouped based on factors such as past cases, installed base, configuration, and internal documentation.

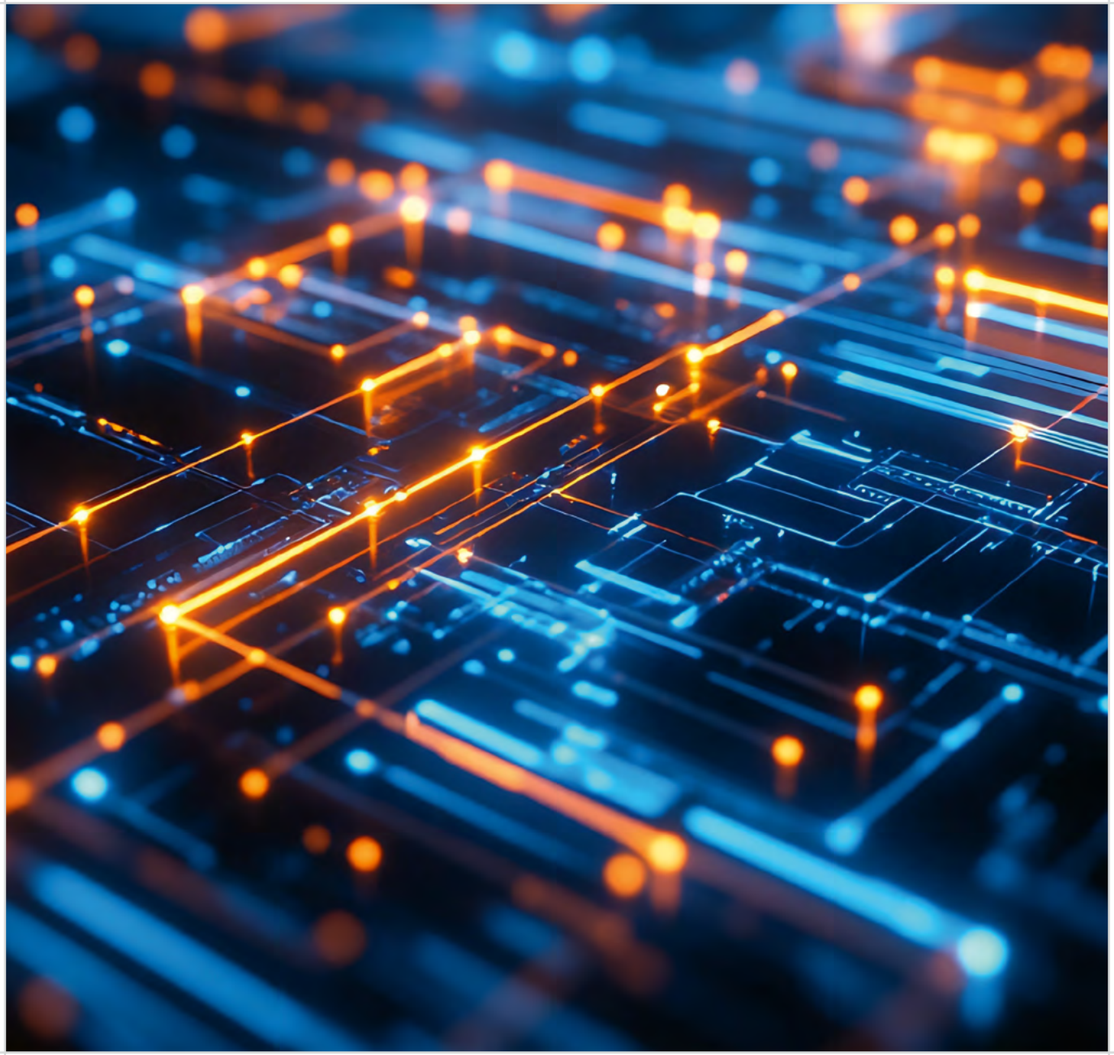
3. Agent Assist:
Once a case reaches an engineer, they gain access to IBM Technology's service history and documentation. To ensure quick and accurate support, an AI agent powered by watsonx extracts key information from the knowledge base and ticket history. It then generates a set of "Top Gear Recommendations," typically offering three relevant solutions to assist engineers in resolving the issue efficiently.

4. Exception Handling:
Exceptional service goes beyond solving standard issues—it requires handling special cases, such as support eligibility, parts availability, or field engineer scheduling. Engineers must navigate vast amounts of information to make qualified decisions quickly and accurately. AI assistance streamlines this by extracting relevant data and generating solution proposals based on past service requests and successful resolutions.

20% Reduction of Time to Solve

IBM Technology's AI-first approach has delivered significant efficiency gains. In 2024, approximately 70,000 cases were resolved using agent assist, which provided recommendations and solutions based on similar cases. While effectiveness varies by case complexity, IBM Technology's service team has achieved a 20% reduction in time to resolution. Additionally, user ratings of the solution are very high reflecting its strong impact on efficiency and solution quality. The impact is even greater in case summarization, where watsonx processed roughly 80% of handled cases, with 80% of these summaries rated as "high quality"—being readily usable with minimal agent intervention.

Beyond IBM's own success stories, similar transformative results have been achieved in various client examples, such as in the automotive and electronics industry.



What companies need to do: Turning human agents into heroes by giving them gen AI tools.

smart Europe GmbH

With the shift of smart to a direct-to-consumer business model, where customers purchase vehicles entirely online, a much greater emphasis is placed on the role of the service agents guiding the customers through the purchasing journey and service process. This initially led to challenges resulting from manual CRM workflows, such as inconsistent categorization and prioritization of customer requests, inefficient allocation of resources and an inability to identify trends and patterns, resulting in customer dissatisfaction and delays in processing requests. To improve this situation and enhance customer service, AI was integrated into smart's existing Salesforce CRM and knowledge management system, delivering various key benefits: a 30% improvement in case categorization accuracy, a 3x faster resolution time for recurring issues, and a 60% increase in first-contact resolution. Additionally, it achieved a 97% employee acceptance rate.

Leading European Electronics Manufacturer

Jointly with IBM, a large electronics manufacturer has brought its digital and AI-first vision to life—implementing a gen AI-powered omni-channel experience, enhanced personalization and better-equipped agents. IBM supported in transforming their contact center into a dynamic, direct to consumer experience hub, with several key benefits, such as cost savings and increased sales. Gen AI drove a major shift in service operations, accounting for >50% of contact center savings and 15% in warranty cost reductions. Additionally, its application in hyper-personalization and proactive sales strategies boosted the sales conversion rate by 20%.

What's Next?

Gen AI has already delivered significant impact in customer service across all three cases outlined. However, the journey toward even greater efficiency and customer satisfaction continues. Next priorities include automating repetitive tasks with agent assist, enabling proactive problem detection through AI, and minimizing on-site visits through enhanced remote support and smarter resource scheduling. These initiatives will further elevate service quality and are easily scalable across the manufacturing industry.

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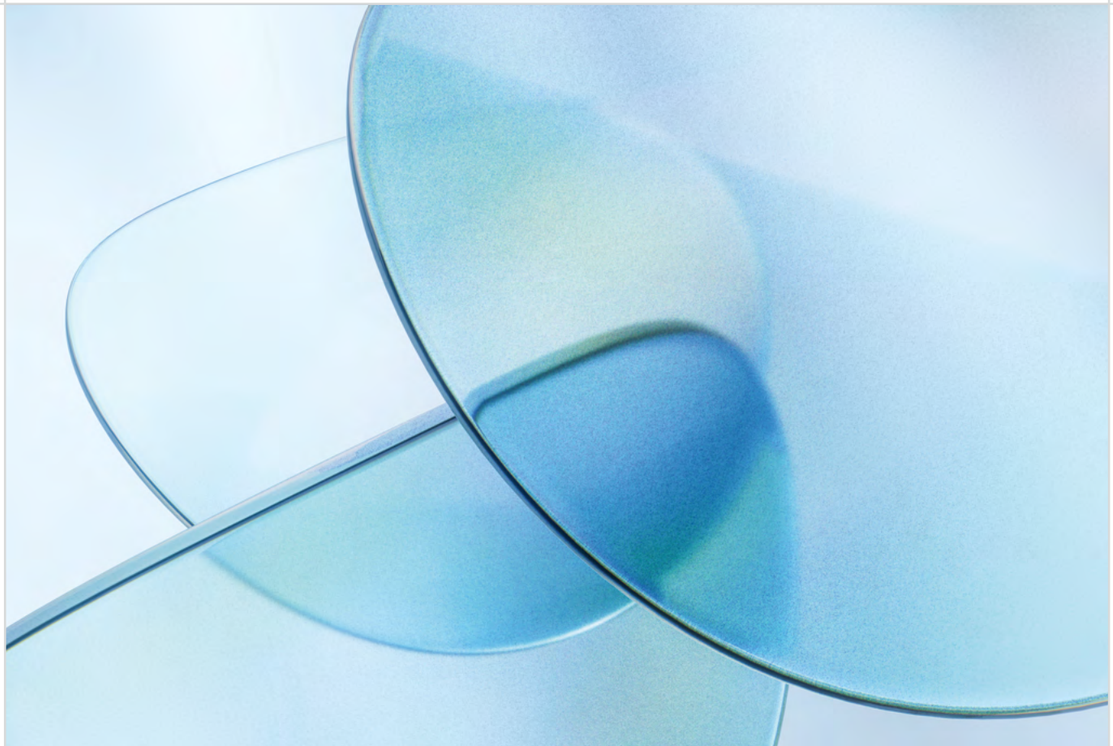
IBM Case Study: smart Europe

IBM IBV: The CEO's guide to generative AI – Customer Service

Reinventing Corporate Functions with AI

Transforming Corporate Functions for Success— by the example of HR and Procurement



"You've got to start with the customer experience and work backward to the technology." This is what Steve Jobs once stated. And IBM takes it even a step further by focusing on the most valuable asset of any company—our employees.

What is true for the consumer of your products and services also applies to your workforce. The question 'Would you buy this service if it was available on the open market' was a key driver for IBM to optimize its internal structures and processes for its talent. Despite having implemented an HR cloud solution, the scope of HR services and employee perceptions on HR called for a new approach. IBM engaged managers and employees to break down silos, ensuring processes and technology generate a best-in-class experience. And although the heterogeneous landscape was unified into a central global HR solution, local regulations, legislations and individual processes remained essential for hiring, retaining, and developing talent.

Since 2017, IBM is working on improving the employee experience by consolidating all activities on one single interaction platform. The solution initially focused on addressing basic HR queries applying smart AI analysis to extract answers from structured documents. However, over the past three years, as part of an aggressive program of IBM to realize 3.5 billion Dollars in productivity impact across corporate functions, the solution has evolved significantly leading to the following two major improvements:

- First: The solution now processes unstructured documents and enhances responses with user-specific details, ensuring a personalized, employee-centric approach.

- Second: In-depth data analysis and design thinking revealed that raised questions often indicate a potential intention to take action. As such, the experience platform now enables seamless execution of processes across multiple backend systems within a single front-end (AskHR).

These enhancements significantly boosted acceptance among managers and employees. And let's be honest, if you ask for travel details to a foreign country, any great service doesn't just provide you with a checklist, but instead prefills available data, initiates processes in the travel system, and coordinates with external parties. And finally, imagine receiving a mobile push notification on your travel day—letting you know if you need sunscreen or an umbrella.

By combining internal company data with external information (e.g. currency rates, local specifics), the solution goes beyond advice—it delivers a seamless service, allowing you to focus on what truly matters for you and your company's success. IBM achieved 40% savings through HR transformation while securing critical resources as experts to maintain and enhance its technology structures. Today, these internal best practices and technological solutions of IBM are taken forward with clients across the globe.

Moving from HR to Procurement

Beyond its impact on HR, the advent of gen AI has driven innovation and efficiency also across other corporate functions, such as procurement. It revolutionizes contract management, automates data extraction from invoices, and streamlines procurement processes. While the first spotlight on the HR function was focused on IBM's internal transition, this second part highlights the external perspective—client benefits and savings achieved in applying AI to procurement processes in various IBM client projects.

Enhancing Contract Management

Contract management is a critical aspect of procurement, often involving complex and time-consuming tasks.
Gen AI-powered solutions offer a revolutionary approach to streamline this process by automating contract analysis, extracting key insights, and ensuring compliance.

“Finally, no more waiting on the phone or asking my manager to book my holiday in the HR system. With AI, I can request time off in just a few clicks—anytime, anywhere, 24/7!”

One of gen AI’s key capabilities in contract management is automated contract analysis, where gen AI can ingest contracts, summarize terms, translate content, and compare versions. This not only saves time but also ensures that all relevant information is captured accurately.

Another significant feature is the intelligent query response. Intelligent chatbots provide instant responses to contract-related queries, reducing search time and enabling professionals to focus on strategic tasks.

Gen AI also excels in conducting thorough contract assessments. By identifying deviations or discrepancies in alignment with established guidelines, gen AI ensures compliance and reduces the risk of human error. This capability is particularly valuable in industries where adherence to regulatory standards is paramount.

The impact is significant: up to 85% faster contract reviews and a 40% reduction in errors, boosting efficiency and improving contract management quality.

Revolutionizing Data Extraction and Invoice Management

Beyond contract management, gen AI is revolutionizing data extraction and invoice processing. Content intelligence solutions leverage gen AI to extract, validate, and digitize invoice data—critical for procurement teams handling large volumes.

A key innovation is template-less extraction, enabling flexible and scalable data capture without predefined templates. Gen AI also enhances accuracy with 4-way matching and code prediction, validating invoices against ERP data like purchase orders.

The impact for organizations is significant: up to 99% extraction accuracy and a 75% reduction in processing time. A recent client example where IBM leveraged a gen AI-based content intelligence solution involves a leading German brewery, which faced storage constraints and therefore relied on raw material supply close to the production date.

Manually comparing deviations between purchase orders (PO) and supplier confirmations—about 60,000–70,000 annually—was error-prone and time-consuming. Automation streamlined this process, boosting efficiency, employee satisfaction, and reducing operational risk.

More ideas, more value

The capabilities and potential of gen AI to re-shape corporate functions are transformative. And the AI productivity story does not end with HR and procurement functions—just think of finance & accounting, legal, or communications processes. Combining new AI-led user experiences with agentic workflows for automation, AI-first workflows can drive significant benefits in terms of efficiency, speed, and employee experience.

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