IBM Offers "Watson Assistant for Citizens" to Provide Responses to COVID-19 Questions

Engagements with government agencies, healthcare organizations and academic institutions around the world including in Arkansas, California, Georgia, New York, Texas, Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, Spain and UK

ARMONK, N.Y., April 2, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- With COVID-19 affecting 206 countries, areas and territories, IBM (NYSE: IBM) is helping government agencies, healthcare organizations and academic institutions throughout the world use AI to put critical data and information into the hands of their citizens.

With a flood of information requests from citizens, wait times in many areas to receive answers can exceed two hours. Available for no charge for at least 90 days and available to our client's citizens online or by phone, IBM Watson Assistant for Citizens on the IBM public cloud brings together Watson Assistant, Natural Language Processing capabilities from IBM Research, and state-of-art enterprise AI search capabilities with Watson Discovery, to understand and respond to common questions about COVID-19.

"While helping government agencies and healthcare institutions use AI to get critical information out to their citizens remains a high priority right now, the current environment has made it clear that every business in every industry should find ways to digitally engage with their clients and employees," said Rob Thomas, general manager, IBM Data & AI. "With today's news, IBM is taking years of experience in helping thousands of global businesses and institutions use Natural Language Processing and other advanced AI technologies to better meet the demands of their constituents, and now applying it to the COVID-19 crisis. AI has the power to be your assistant during this uncertain time."

Watson Assistant for Citizens leverages currently available data from external sources, including guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and local sources such as links to school closings, news and documents on a state website. IBM already is delivering this service across the United States, as well as engaging with organizations globally in Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, UK and more.

Here are examples where IBM is engaging with government and healthcare agencies on Watson Assistant for Citizens:

- ARKANSAS: University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences – In 9 days, deployed a virtual agent so citizens can get their questions answered quickly about testing, symptoms or resources. Information is automatically sent to a mobile COVID-19 triage clinic electronically to help speed response. Average registration time has been reduced by fifty percent for those using the agent.
- CALIFORNIA: City of Lancaster in Los Angeles County – COVID-19 information for citizens on common questions such as symptoms and recommended procedures to follow in case of infection.
- GEORGIA: Children's Healthcare of Atlanta – The "COVID-19 Pediatric Assessment Tool" walks parents through a series of questions and results in suggested next steps that a parent should take. Recommendations on next steps are made according to the healthcare system's established protocols.
- NEW YORK: County of Otsego – COVID-19-related information will be available within the next few days for citizens to help them quickly get their health and non-health related questions answered regarding the

pandemic. Otsego County's COVID-19 virtual agent will be able to answer citizen's questions like: "How do I apply for unemployment?"

- TEXAS: City of Austin – COVID-19-related information will soon be available for citizens with interactive conversation on where to get testing and other information.
- CZECH REPUBLIC: Czech Ministry of Health – COVID-19 virtual agent called "Anežka" advises citizens about prevention, treatment and other related topics on the coronavirus.
- GREECE: Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance – COVID-19-related information for citizens and interactive conversation on preventive and precautionary measures issued by the Greek Government.
- POLAND: Polish Ministry of Health – COVID-19 information for Polish citizens on common questions such as symptoms and recommended procedures to follow in case of infection.
- SPAIN: Andalusian Government – A virtual agent to help respond to citizen's queries about COVID-19 is available through the app "Salud Responde" and the [Public Agency for Health Emergencies (EPES)](#) website, built also in collaboration with the Andalusian Health Service (SAS).
- UK: National Health Service Wales: Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board – CERi, an English and Welsh speaking virtual assistant, will soon go live to support healthcare workers and the general public in Wales who need information or have questions on the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 along with general information about the virus.

"Austin residents are counting on us to provide timely updates on COVID-19 response," said Tauseef Khan, Chief Technology Officer, City of Austin, Texas. "The City is pleased to use artificial intelligence technology to respond to that need, with a tool that quickly and easily helps residents find the information they need 24/7."

"The AI solution from IBM will be a great resource for the county's residents and will help alleviate call center volume to allow county employees to dedicate efforts elsewhere," said Brian Pokorny, Director of Information Technologies, County of Otsego, New York.

Using information provided by clients, Watson Assistant for Citizens automates responses to frequently asked questions about COVID-19 that come in via phone call or text, such as "What are symptoms?", "How do I clean my home properly?" and "How do I protect myself?"

State and local government agencies, hospitals or other healthcare organizations can choose to customize the solution to address questions specific to their area or region, including "What are cases in my neighborhood?", "How long are schools shut down?" and "Where can I get tested?"

IBM is offering Watson Assistant for Citizens for no charge for at least 90 days and will assist with initial set up, which can typically be done in a few days. The initial solution is available in English and Spanish and can be tailored to 13 languages.

The offer includes access to 15 pre-trained COVID-19 "intents" or queries. "Intents" are purposes or goals that are expressed in a customer's input, such as answering a question. By recognizing the intent expressed in a customer's input, the Watson Assistant service can choose the correct dialog flow for responding to it.

Clients can also work with IBM to customize the offering on top of the base model and intents to include information related specifically to a city or region for specific information that is pertinent to those citizens or

constituents, as well as integrate with client's back-end ERP systems.

IBM is also working with global businesses in other industries to apply AI to help them respond to COVID-19 and reimagine the way work will get done in this new operating environment.

For more information about IBM efforts around COVID-19,
visit https://www.ibm.com/covid19 and https://newsroom.ibm.com/covid-19.

For more information about Watson Assistant for Citizens, visit https://www.ibm.com/watson/covid-response.

For more information about how businesses in any industry can use Watson Assistant,
visit: https://www.ibm.com/cloud/watson-assistant/.

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