

Nomination: 6604

## Watson Orchestrate Digital Employee for Promotions Planning

<b>Page: General Information</b>
Provide information about the company to be considered for the award. If you will be nominating an individual, specify the nominee's employer.
<b>Name of Organization/Company</b> IBM
<b>Additional Contacts</b> I do not wish to list additional contacts
<b>Page: Entry Information</b>
<b>Entry Title</b> Watson Orchestrate Digital Employee for Promotions Planning
<b>Category</b> B01 - B59 Achievement > B55 - Most Innovative Deployment of HR Technology
<b>Achievement Submission Format</b> Written Answers
<b>a. Briefly describe the nominated organization: its history and past performance (up to 200 words). Required</b> In 2021, the IBM Watson® Research Lab introduced IBM HR to a new technology called the IBM Watson Orchestrate. Initially, HR understood it to be a new version of digital assistant and conversational AI technology. However, after an initial review they quickly realized its potential. Partnering with the IBM Research team and CIO, HR created a 'digital worker' to assist HR specialists in running the quarterly promotion program. Within one quarter, the team automated 12,000 hours of previously manual data-gathering and data-entry tasks for IBM managers in one region. The transformative capabilities of this new software provided a significant benefit to IBM's HR department and have the potential to revolutionize daily work processes for businesses everywhere.

**b. Outline the team's or organization's achievements since the beginning of 2021 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words). Required**

IBM's HR digital worker, HiRo, based on the IBM Watson Orchestrate solution, transformed the promotions process by handling tasks such as information compiling and formatting, which took up a significant amount of time for Talent Partners. HiRo replaced spreadsheets with a pro-active real-time view of employee data that auto-calculates whether employees meet pre-defined promotion criteria. It also highlights what steps need to be taken by employees and managers to fulfill baseline requirements in the future and helps create coaching opportunities and learning paths.

IBM Consulting Business Unit has employed HiRo over the past three promotion cycles, initially in the North America region and subsequently extending to eight additional countries in the most recent cycle. The implementation of HiRo has led to a significant reduction in the end-to-end promotion process from 10 weeks to 6 weeks, resulting in a decrease of 85% in the full-time equivalent (FTE) effort needed by HR Partners to facilitate the process. This solution has also resulted in annual productivity savings of over 50,000 hours for managers and up-lines.

HiRo enables:

- Making final promotion and salary-increase decisions for managers and practice leaders. (HiRo does not make any automated decisions. Instead, it collects relevant data and provides guidance to the manager. Ultimately, the manager is accountable for the decision.)
- Ensures promotion criteria aligns with business strategy.
- Analyzes diversity metrics and impact due to promotion nominations.

HiRo has also been adapted for IBM Cloud Business Unit in their latest promotion cycle, catering for 25 countries.

**c. Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the team's or organization's past performance (up to 250 words). Required**

HiRo demonstrates how automation can enhance human roles within an organization. IBM's quarterly promotions process is a crucial element for retaining top talent but managing it has become increasingly challenging due to the time-consuming nature of the process. In North America alone it took 10 weeks every quarter and involved analyzing data on over 15,000 employees and matching them to the published promotion criteria, which made HR staff feel overwhelmed.

With HiRo as part of the team, the HR specialists can now spend time monitoring the process end-to-end with real-time dashboards, coaching managers on who to nominate and why (rather than how) and understanding the impact of the nominations on key organizational metrics. They can also gain insights on the effectiveness of the promotion criteria each quarter and ensure that in the future the promoted employees support the wider development of the workforce and its ability to deliver on organizational growth priorities.

A key element in deploying HiRo to automate large parts of the promotions cycle, was to ensure that it aligned to the five principles of technology ethics (Explainability, Fairness, Robustness, Transparency, Privacy). Key areas that these ethics focused on was how HiRo:

- Compilation, using defined rules, and display of employee data against the published criteria.
- Automate simple calculations, based on parameters defined by the compensation team, to display minimum suggested salary increases to managers.
- Loads approved data from and into appropriate applications, providing near real-time status updates.

**d. Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words). Optional**

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