

EY helps clients accelerate their digital transformations through intelligent automation supported by Microsoft AI



Rethinking approach to traditional services

EY, a global professional services firm, saw an opportunity to automate and streamline their auditing processes using AI technology.

Supporting staff rather than replacing them

Using AI, EY developed several key principles to accompany the roll-out of any automation technology: free up resources, improve decision making, and ultimately complement people rather than replace them.

Benefiting organizations through automation

From the government of Malta creating a national AI strategy to a dairy products business transforming its inventory management, public and private sectors have benefitted using AI solutions developed by EY.

EY dates back to 1849, and over the 170 years since, has become one of the most successful and respected global professional services organizations. Its name is synonymous with credibility and trust, serving many of the largest multinational enterprises on their most complex business needs.

EY has a rich history of innovation and is no stranger to advising and helping clients navigate through their digital journeys. The organization explores new and emerging technologies to innovate inside its walls, and also passes those learnings and values to clients. For example, one area has been in adopting AI to its approach to traditional services like tax and audit by tapping into the power of AI to automate and streamline processes dramatically.

AI accelerates digital business

AI and automation have been hot topics, both for their transformative potential and also for their capacity to introduce new opportunities by disrupting old models. EY took a hard look at the impact that AI would have on its audit services: What if AI and automation could drastically reduce the number of documents EY smart auditors need to review so they can spend more time advising clients?

EY identified ways to give its people time back to work on the most important activities. This exploration culminated in the use of AI capabilities, supported by Microsoft, to automate over 250 processes globally — freeing up an estimated 2,000,000 human hours annually while improving quality and accuracy.

"Our partnership with Microsoft enables us to offer clients joint solutions that marry Microsoft's technology with EY's expertise in digital and the business world and help them accelerate their digital journey while amplifying business outcomes."

— Christopher Aiken, Executive Director of its AI and Automation Practice, EY

A multi-year vision for AI

The EY vision to improve its services through AI and automation has manifested in a multi-year plan, with each year in its roadmap representing specific and real advancements. Each step and progress must adhere to EY key principles for automation: that they free up resources, improve decision-making, and ultimately complement rather than replace people.

Now that EY had successfully proven the internal service value of AI, it was ready to apply and provide those types of successes as new services to its global clients. The EY approach is human-centered, pragmatic, and outcome focused. Its goal is to help clients achieve tangible progress, and guided by a robust ethics framework, to improve its workers' and customers' lives. To EY, AI and intelligent automation are proven tools and capabilities used to advance and improve services in ethical and thoughtful ways.

A strong EY and Microsoft AI alliance, grounded in customer value and ethics

When looking to support its new AI and automation services, EY wanted an alliance partner with values. The organization found similar values in Microsoft. Both organizations focus on the empowerment of people. Both organizations take the ethical implications of AI seriously. Moreover, both organizations address business and societal needs in practical ways.

Microsoft endeavors to empower organizations to apply AI across the spectrum of their business to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations, and transform products. "We are partnering with EY to combine Microsoft AI with intelligent automation. Using Azure AI, we are automating traditional services, streamlining processes, and improving worker productivity," says Gavriella Schuster, Corporate Vice President, One Commercial Partner, Microsoft.

Simran Sachar, AI Partner Lead and Sr. Strategy Manager, Microsoft, believes a strong alliance partner ecosystem is key to bringing AI innovations that deliver high value to customers. "Our alliance with EY is solid, grounded on the strong ethical use of AI and creating business value for customers," says Simran. "Together, we bring the power of our AI platform and EY knowledge to help customers accelerate their digital transformation through AI, solve high-value problems, and gain business service value by deploying AI solutions at enterprise scale."

For EY, the benefits of practical and useful AI tools that could be deployed immediately were important. The organization found this in the AI platform developed by Microsoft, which provides pre-built solutions like Azure Cognitive Services. Chris Aiken, Executive Director, AI and Automation Practice, EY, sees this as a great way to quickly provide customer value. "Our alliance with Microsoft helps enable us to offer joint solutions that marry Microsoft's innovative technology with EY deep domain and sector knowledge. We help our clients accelerate performance by realizing the full potential of digital across the enterprise."

EY helps a dairy company transform its inventory management

Today, EY clients are getting real value from this flexible approach to AI. One such client, a major Asia Pacific dairy products business, delivers its products across a vast network spanning from small local stores to large groceries. Because its products have short shelf lives, typically five days or less, ensuring effective inventory management is critical. EY and Microsoft helped enable this client to revolutionize its inventory management approach, improving both top-line sales, and operational savings.

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EY Smart Retail Solution, supported by Microsoft, brings together complex datasets, from weather to order history, and adds a new vision-analytics layer enriching in-store insight. Through the use of smartphone cameras by its delivery workforce, this client is collecting daily photographs of store shelves where its products are stocked. The Microsoft AI platform analyzes the photos across several key attributes—per SKU stock weight of shelf, number of facings, shelf position, and price.

From the data, this client can infer whether the local store is running special promotional prices to move aging products, or pinpoint unique demand for particular products in that area. The information also enables automating of the ordering process so that the optimal amount of each product is shipped to the store. This granular information, provided at the local level, helps drive targeted product consumption, pricing, demand, and inventory replenishment strategies. This client's senior leadership team and Board of Directors are very excited about the potential to transform its business.

EY helps Government of Malta enact ambitious AI transformation

EY is also advising governments on how they can apply AI to boost national economies and drive new levels of efficiency and quality in government services. The Government of Malta has been working with EY to create a first-of-its-kind national AI strategy.

As EY continues to work with Malta, they are pursuing AI advancements on a number of fronts, from improving government services to promoting business, and making Malta a magnet for new AI talent. This work includes:

- Development of an AI program aligned to national policy objectives and to identifying AI use cases and design prototypes for delivery of government services.
- Identification of private sector industries that can benefit from IT, and exploration of policies that can stimulate AI adoption.

- Strengthening of Malta's education system to attract AI researchers and graduates, positioning AI as a way to advance skills for the nation's workforce.

Together, the government of Malta, EY, and Microsoft are advancing a national digital transformation program with the capacity to affect every segment of Malta's economy, every government agency, and every business and citizen in the island nation.

"EY and Microsoft are working together to help the Government of Malta realize its digital transformation objectives, enabling business agility through the use of once-futuristic technologies to meaningfully improve service quality for our citizens and businesses," says Pierre Vella, Head of Programme Management, Malta Information and Technology Agency.

The next AI horizon

As EY works with clients to uncover their next AI opportunities, it also looks ahead to the horizon across its AI automation vision—going from robotic process automation to hybrid and intelligent services, the use of cognitive automation, and beyond. As it does, the company will continue to push the art of the possible through AI-driven automation to transform how organizations work and more value to their customers. EY will also continue to be a steward for safe, and ethically sound AI solutions—ones that help deliver on the promise of AI for the good of the planet.

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