

ThoughtFocus Selected for IBM's Watson Build Challenge

Begins development on cognitive business solution using IBM Watson APIs on IBM Cloud to transform the way college students receive academic advising services

Irvine, CA – 21 Jul 2017: ThoughtFocus, a leading product engineering and technology services provider, has been selected in phase two of the [Watson Build](#) challenge to develop its cognitive business plan, eduBot for Higher Education, into a working prototype using IBM Watson APIs on the IBM Cloud. IBM will provide ThoughtFocus with access to IBM development tools, business mentors, and cognitive specialists to bring its concept to life.

The Watson Build challenge is IBM's first cognitive challenge designed solely for Business Partners. In phase one, IBM received hundreds of business plan submissions from business partners around the world. In phase two, select Watson based solutions were chosen to progress to the next phase where partners will build working prototypes to demonstrate these cognitive products and services.

"The response to our first-ever Watson Build challenge for business partners has been phenomenal," said John Teltsch, General Manager, IBM Global Business Partners. "We congratulate ThoughtFocus for presenting a strong business plan centered around IBM Cloud and Watson and progressing to the next round of the challenge. We look forward to supporting ThoughtFocus as it works on a prototype for eduBot for Higher Education, with the goal of bringing it to our joint clients."

Higher Education faces a systemic challenge associated with student success, reflected in declining graduation rates. Students are taking longer to graduate, piling up more loans while delaying their entry into the workforce. Graduation rates have been adversely impacted by the lack of academic advisors to provide guidance on programs and requirements. The average ratio of students to academic advisors is currently 375-to-one, with some schools exceeding a 600-to-one ratio, according to the National Academic Advising Association.

The eduBot solution framework provides a near human advisor experience for students using IBM Watson services including speech to text, text to speech, natural language processing, conversation engine and analytical tool kits. Watson services enable the required information to be extracted from multiple university systems. Students receive individualized advice based on their complete student records. IBM Cloud provides a seamless advisory service that is integrated with the university's secure infrastructure. This makes eduBot a compelling solution for higher education CIOs and academic administrators.

"We are excited to be working with IBM on this project to transform academic advising through cognitive computing. The eduBot solution has the potential to address a major economic issue associated with lagging graduation rates," said DT Raghu, Vice President for Education at ThoughtFocus.

The Watson Build program will accelerate ThoughtFocus' entry into the rapidly growing cognitive computing space with a high value solution for a core market. The eduBot offering extends ThoughtFocus' Higher Education solution portfolio with IBM Watson services that enable highly differentiated solutions. Additional IBM Watson services will be incorporated into future releases of the eduBot solution to provide users with greater value.

ThoughtFocus is an IBM Business Partner in IBM [PartnerWorld](#), a program that gives channel partners the resources and tools they need to succeed in the Cognitive Era.

For more on the Watson Build, click [here](#).

About ThoughtFocus

[ThoughtFocus](#) is a privately held technology consulting and services company serving middle market to large enterprise clients in [Manufacturing, Financial Services, Higher Education and Aerospace](#). Clients look to ThoughtFocus for innovation in product/application engineering, SAP Implementations, knowledge process outsourcing, and digital transformation. The company has over 1,300 employees globally and is one of the fastest growing technology companies. ThoughtFocus is a technology partner and portfolio investment company of Blackstone, a leading private equity firm.

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