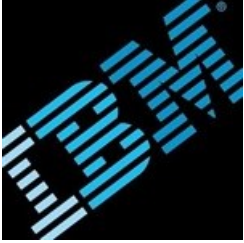


IBM wins Frost & Sullivan leadership award

Based on its recent research on the big data solutions market, Frost & Sullivan has presented IBM with the 2014 sub-Saharan African Frost & Sullivan Award for Competitive Strategy Leadership.



While most companies in sub-Saharan Africa already undertake various forms of data analytics, one of the key challenges facing big data solutions providers is convincing companies of the longer term payoffs resulting from effective big data implementation. Uneven market maturity and a shortage of skilled personnel are other issues specific to the region. IBM has employed a Big Data and Analytics strategy that effectively addresses these challenges.

IBM is already a dominant player in the emerging global big data market and the uptake of its solutions in sub-Saharan Africa has followed a similar vein across a broad range of industries. To meet growing client demands, IBM has established the world's deepest portfolio of big data and analytics research and development, solutions and software, and assembled a strong team of researchers, mathematicians, data scientists, as well as strategy, analytics and design services consultants. In addition, the company continues to secure numerous patents related to big data and analytics and engage a broad range of university partnerships.

"Competition amongst IT integrators is intense, but one of IBM's key advantages is its ability to provide the full spectrum of big data services - from the infrastructure and hardware aspects through to analytics and visualisation," noted Frost & Sullivan senior industry analyst Gareth Mellon. "This is something that most competitors do not have the capability to offer, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa."

IBM's ability to partner with specific industry providers at different points in the big data value chain has further entrenched the broad scope of its portfolio and allowed it to offer customisable solutions throughout the market.

A viable cost-benefit analysis is critical

Recognising that a viable cost-benefit analysis is critical to achieving big data solution buy-in, IBM has also been purposeful in its efforts to educate the market of the value it can derive from effective big data solutions. This awareness is created through the provision of training materials and online resources, the publication of numerous reports and case studies, and committed involvement with high-profile projects.

"IBM's ability to facilitate integration between the various threads of a business has been critical to its big data solutions offering," added Mellon. "As such, it has both leveraged and reinforced existing market perceptions of it as a leading ICT integrator."

The company's Big Data and Analytics solutions strategy maintains its emphasis on innovation. For instance, IBM is a leading player in the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project, which has significant and highly advanced "big data" requirements. The SKA is an international effort to build the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope, to help better understand the history of the universe. IBM also continues to build on its renowned Watson cognitive computing system, which is able to draw on big data techniques to provide evidence-based responses.

An ongoing supply of skilled personnel

On the skills side, IBM has gone to considerable lengths to ensure an ongoing supply of skilled personnel in Africa through its establishment of Innovation Centres - it now has three on the continent, with plans to open two more during 2014 - and the provision of online platforms such as "big data boot camps" and bigdatauniversity.com.

Numerous case studies testify to the uptake of IBM's solutions by a vast range of companies, including banks, insurance providers, petroleum suppliers, health care providers, telecommunications operators, research bodies, and various government-related entities. Most recently, IBM announced a partnership with the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) through which it will establish a comprehensive database of cancer patients in Africa and use big data tools to utilise this information effectively.

An additional opportunity stemming from the rise of big data solutions is the link with smart cities, an emerging field in which IBM has already developed strong competency and is recognised as a "leading game changer". See Frost & Sullivan's "Strategic Opportunity Analysis of the Global Smart City Market" (August 2013).

Smart cities are characterised by the integration of millions of smart devices and the co-ordination of businesses, the public sector, knowledge institutions, and a city's inhabitants to produce real-time solutions and services. Effective big data solutions underpin such developments and, while smart cities are not yet a feature of the African landscape, IBM is well positioned to play a leading role in their establishment on the continent.

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