

This IDC Spotlight explores the critical role of collaborative partnerships in navigating the intricate landscape of artificial intelligence.

The Purpose and Power of an Alliance to Reduce AI Complexity and Maximize Value

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Introduction

With all its potential and complexity, artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly defining the current era, making the necessity for strategic alliances more pronounced than ever. At the heart of alliances is a commitment to addressing customer challenges and capitalizing on opportunities that entities cannot tackle alone.

Strategic alliances are built on foundational tenets such as mutual trust, shared purpose, and goal alignment. These partnerships enable businesses to leverage each other's strengths, creating synergy and enhancing their ability to innovate and respond effectively to customer needs. Prioritizing the customer helps strengthen alignment and ensures the alliance can address challenges and capitalize on opportunities that might not be possible individually. By harnessing collective expertise and fostering a culture of collaboration, organizations can navigate the complexities of AI while maximizing value for all stakeholders involved.

This IDC Spotlight explores the critical role of collaborative partnerships in navigating the intricate landscape of artificial intelligence. This exploration will reveal why alliances matter and how they can catalyze the next wave of AI-driven transformation.

The AI Ecosystem

Artificial intelligence is multifaceted, necessitating a purpose-built AI ecosystem to address diverse requirements and lead to successful implementation. The complexity arises from integrating various AI data sources, models, infrastructures, platforms, tools, and people while ensuring ethical governance and business goal alignment. AI encompasses a range of technologies, from machine learning (ML) to natural language processing to computer vision. Each domain has unique challenges and requirements. Machine learning models thrive on vast data sets for training, and natural language processing requires an understanding of context and semantics. This diversity requires a multimodel approach where different AI systems work harmoniously, leveraging strengths to deliver comprehensive solutions that are easy to deploy and operate.

AT A GLANCE

KEY STAT

IDC's September 2024 *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 8*, confirms that cloud marketplaces are the leading channel for technology buyers, with more than 30% of businesses using these marketplaces.

The integration of AI into existing systems involves addressing complex workflows and processes. Businesses must ensure that AI solutions integrate seamlessly into operational frameworks. To successfully harness the potential of advances in AI, such as generative AI (GenAI), organizations must rely on well-structured partner ecosystems that include:

- » **AI model flexibility and choices:** There should be a combination of large language models and specialized models designed for specific domains and tasks.
- » **Robust data architecture:** Architecture must support efficient data movement across hybrid cloud and edge environments to facilitate real-time data processing and give AI systems access to high-quality data.
- » **Ethical considerations:** Solutions must prioritize ethical governance to build trust. This includes transparent practices that ensure fairness, accountability, and compliance with data privacy regulations.
- » **Regulatory compliance:** Ongoing assessments of compliance risks associated with generative AI deployment should be conducted to identify potential violations and take appropriate corrective action. This is especially important in highly regulated industries, such as financial services and healthcare.
- » **Transparency and explainability:** Generative AI models are complex and understanding how they arrive at specific outputs can be a challenge. Organizations should strive for clear explanations for how these models use data and make decisions.
- » **Security measures:** Robust security protocols must be in place to protect sensitive data from unauthorized access.

Hyperscaler and AI Solution Provider Convergence

Generative AI creates a pivotal shift in the technology landscape, providing organizations with unprecedented opportunities to reduce complexity and amplify AI's value. The collaboration between hyperscalers and AI platform providers can catalyze innovation and efficiency. Hyperscalers provide vast computing resources, infrastructures, and generative AI services that allow AI platform and solution providers to focus on creating models, algorithms, and applications without the burden of managing the underlying infrastructure. The partnership facilitates a streamlined approach to deploying AI solutions, significantly reducing the complexity often present with implementation. The alliance democratizes access to advanced AI tools. With platforms becoming more accessible and user-friendly, businesses across industries can harness the power of AI without needing extensive technical expertise or significant capital investments. By combining strengths, hyperscalers and AI platform suppliers can codevelop solutions tailored to customers' needs. Integrating AI capabilities and tools enhances compliance and security measures and speeds deployment and time to value.

Hyperscalers invest heavily in robust security frameworks that protect sensitive information while ensuring compliance with industry regulations. This commitment to security reassures businesses that data is safe when utilizing AI technologies, encouraging wider adoption. As businesses traverse an increasingly complex AI-driven landscape, embracing these collaborations is essential for organizations to thrive.

The Need for a Collaborative Approach

In the rapidly evolving AI landscape, a strategy is emerging that emphasizes the importance of harnessing data across enterprises using open source technologies and interconnected tools. The approach focuses on optimizing AI capabilities within hybrid cloud environments, enabling businesses to leverage advanced models and applications tailored to

customer needs. Governance frameworks ensure the confidence and integrity of project execution, complementing the development of high-performing AI models designed for business applications. By collaborating closely with partners, organizations can support clients from initial pilot projects through scaled production, delivering distinct value while facilitating access to software and solutions in cloud marketplaces. Advancements in AI make it possible to integrate sophisticated models into cloud service provider platforms. This integration enhances the functionality of existing applications and introduces new capabilities that streamline workflows and improve operational efficiency.

The selection of appropriate models has become crucial. Open enterprise-grade foundation models that are seamlessly integrated into hyperscaler environments empower organizations to scale AI initiatives efficiently, providing trusted, cost-efficient solutions tailored to business requirements. The latest version of these models supports deep learning workloads, allowing businesses to harness the full potential of data.

Embedding governance, security, and observability across the AI life cycle is also a primary focus. By prioritizing these elements, organizations can transform AI governance into a facilitator for growth rather than a hindrance. This proactive approach offers valuable insights and enhances explainability, allowing projects to progress with assurance.

Rapid advancements in automation optimize operational processes, allowing organizations to prioritize tasks and increase overall efficiency. Organizations can seamlessly manage the entire AI model life cycle by integrating comprehensive governance frameworks. Future enhancements will further streamline user experiences, making it easier for teams to assess risks and approve models.

Integrating enterprise-grade models with hyperscaler platforms significantly improves enterprise AI capabilities by providing a robust solution deployment framework. Organizations can take advantage of pre-integrated model features in hyperscaler environments. This capability allows developers to run complex AI applications on purpose-built inference and training instances. Using advanced computing resources, enterprises can scale their AI efforts more effectively, ensuring they have the computational power necessary to meet changing needs. This integration provides customizable risk assessment and model approval workflows so that enterprises can manage compliance and ethical considerations effectively and at scale.

Cloud Marketplaces Accelerate Deployment of Advanced AI Solutions

Cloud marketplaces continue to transform technology procurement, delivering levels of efficiency well beyond traditional methods. As cloud budgets soar, marketplaces have become a primary channel for purchasing software and services. IDC's September 2024 *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 8*, confirms that cloud marketplaces are the leading channel for technology buyers, with more than 30% of businesses currently using them. Purchasing AI solutions through cloud marketplaces offers a range of benefits, including streamlined procurement processes. Other benefits include the following:

- » Centralized procurement for a wide array of AI solutions
- » Expedited procurement processes accelerating time to value
- » Use of existing cloud commitments to take advantage of volume discounts
- » Transparent pricing models
- » Enhanced security and compliance

- » Prevetted solutions
- » Seamless integration with existing cloud services
- » Flexible purchasing models
- » Increased visibility and control

Benefits

Cloud marketplaces offer organizations many advantages when deploying advanced AI solutions. These benefits include the following:

- » **Accelerated innovation:** Cloud marketplaces streamline the integration of AI solutions into existing cloud environments. This reduces setup and configuration time, allowing businesses to focus on leveraging AI for innovation rather than on technical hurdles.
- » **Lower development costs:** Organizations can significantly lower their development costs by using prebuilt AI solutions available in cloud marketplaces.
- » **Ethical AI practices:** Established AI providers help businesses navigate the ethical considerations accompanying AI deployment. Partnerships can provide access to governance frameworks that ensure compliance with regulations and mitigate risks related to bias and transparency.
- » **Scalability:** Hyperscalers provide a robust, scalable infrastructure that allows businesses to rapidly scale their AI solutions without significant up-front investment in hardware or software.
- » **Simplified access:** Cloud marketplaces are centralized platforms where businesses can quickly discover, evaluate, and purchase AI solutions. This simplifies the procurement process significantly, allowing organizations to quickly find and deploy solutions.

Considering AWS and IBM

IBM watsonx.governance accelerates responsible, transparent, and explainable AI with a powerful governance, risk, and compliance (GRC) toolkit built to automate AI life-cycle workflows, detect and mitigate risk proactively, and meet the changing legal, compliance, and regulatory landscape. The toolkit helps direct, manage, and monitor AI assets across the entire life cycle. Some of its key product offerings include:

- » **AI life-cycle governance:** To effectively operationalize AI and bring transparency and visibility to its use cases, watsonx.governance provides a model inventory to track ML models, GenAI apps, and agents across the AI life cycle. Businesses can evaluate and assess multiple GenAI prompt templates and ML models simultaneously, accelerating time to production. Automating the model metadata capture simplifies report generation, while dynamic dashboards and visual reporting improve collaboration among stakeholders.
- » **Risk and security management:** Businesses can identify and manage AI risks early with risk assessments at the use case and model levels. AI guardrails can be leveraged to mitigate risks and moderate content. The toolkit also provides the ability to observe and understand AI assets through continuous monitoring with preset alerts to

trigger appropriate action and aid explainability. To protect businesses from security threats, there is the ability to discover AI models, data, and applications to ensure all AI inventory is accounted for, which helps automatically identify unregistered AI deployments and trigger the appropriate governance workflow.

- » **AI regulatory compliance:** This feature helps automate tracking and documentation of model metadata across the AI life cycle in support of stakeholder requests, audits, and fines with factsheets. GRC capabilities provide automated workflows with approvals, access to persona-based customizable dashboards/reports, and risk scorecards to meet AI regulations, industry standards, and internal policies. This helps simplify compliance while fostering transparency.
- » **Enhanced value through integrated strengths:** The integrated offering helps unlock enhanced value and convenience for businesses with Amazon SageMaker's best-in-class ML capabilities and IBM watsonx.governance's powerful AI governance toolkit in one unified experience.
- » **Accelerated time to market for AI initiatives with trust:** Organizations can leverage the direct integration of the toolkit's governance console to SageMaker's model registry to reduce manual efforts and save developer time to adopt trusted AI at scale.
- » **Centralized management:** Having a consolidated view of watsonx.governance helps organizations to easily oversee multiple SageMaker accounts in a single instance.
- » **Optimization of costs:** Businesses can leverage AWS to commit their spend toward procuring and deploying IBM watsonx.governance.

Together, AWS and IBM seek to help businesses harness GenAI to streamline processes, reimagine customer experiences, and modernize applications. The partnership offers a comprehensive suite of GenAI software for automation, AI, and data platforms via AWS Marketplace. Businesses can build custom AI applications, manage data sources, and accelerate AI workflows on one platform. Key integrations include watsonx.governance with Amazon SageMaker for responsible AI workflows and IBM Instana with Amazon EKS and Amazon ECS for optimized cloud-native and GenAI application performance.

Organizations can easily procure and integrate IBM SaaS products through AWS Marketplace, enhancing IBM's software portfolio and BYOL options. This streamlined experience includes direct integration of watsonx.governance with SageMaker, offering customizable risk assessment, automatic model use case integration, and centralized management.

Challenges

The alliance between the two companies seeks to transform how businesses buy, deploy, and manage GenAI technologies and solutions. While the benefits of this partnership are many, there are also challenges:

- » **Skills gap:** A lack of internal skills and training to support AI initiatives may inhibit adoption and effective use of AI solutions by potential customers. To overcome this hurdle, IBM and AWS will need to provide these organizations with assistance in configuring solutions to meet their specific needs.
- » **Procurement complexities:** Despite the efforts of IBM and AWS to streamline procurement through a cloud marketplace, some businesses may encounter challenges in procuring rights for AI applications, particularly in regulated industries.

- » **Technical debt:** Many businesses struggle with redundant tools, which can impede the effective implementation of new AI solutions.
- » **Data silos:** The existence of data silos within organizations can hinder efforts to successfully deploy AI solutions that rely on comprehensive data access.
- » **Integration:** Integrating new AI solutions with existing systems and workflows may be challenging for some businesses. Seamless integration between offerings is essential for a cohesive customer experience.

Conclusion

Strategic alliances formed to bring new AI solutions to market through a cloud marketplace represent a significant advancement in enterprise-grade AI adoption. By integrating open models and AI governance with cloud infrastructure, enterprises can implement responsible AI solutions more efficiently, complying with regulatory and data protection requirements.

The benefits of such a collaboration extend beyond software and include professional services and leveraging the considerable ecosystems of each partner. A comprehensive approach enables businesses to accelerate AI initiatives, providing a clearer and more attainable path from pilot to full production.

As the AI landscape evolves, this partnership between AWS and IBM positions them at the forefront of responsible AI adoption, offering enterprises the tools, governance frameworks, and expertise needed to capitalize on the opportunities created by AI while successfully navigating complex regulatory and compliance environments. To the extent that the two companies can address the challenges described in this paper, the partnership has a significant opportunity for success.

Strategic alliances formed to bring new AI solutions to market through a cloud marketplace represent a significant advancement in enterprise-grade AI adoption.

About the Analysts



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Frank Della Rosa is a research vice president responsible for SaaS, business platforms, and industry cloud. Della Rosa's core research analyzes current market conditions and trends and provides strategic guidance to technology suppliers and midmarket and enterprise technology buyers. Ongoing research highlights various SaaS and cloud computing aspects, including hybrid cloud and multicloud application deployments, business platforms, cloud marketplaces, buyer behavior, and global trends across vertical and functional markets.



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