

# Winds of change: shifting the balance

ABO Wind automates market analysis to sell more renewable energy



Seeking market intel in a complex field   Automated insight for competit

What will it take for the world to shift the balance of energy away from fossil fuels and toward renewable sources?



In addition to expanding renewable production and increasing its efficiency, it is critical to achieve more market uptake by offering renewable energy at competitive prices.

ABO Wind has been taking on these challenges far longer than most organizations. Founded in 1996 with a focus on developing wind-based power, ABO Wind is now one of the leading independent renewable energy developers in the world, operating wind and solar farms in 16 countries.

The company has always been ahead of its time, but its mission is to help up. And that's more urgent now than ever. Nations around the globe are setting carbon-reduction goals, and the war in Ukraine has pressured many European countries to reduce their reliance on oil.

How much ABO Wind can help depends on its ability to sell its electricity. operations in France, ABO Wind began using a solution from IBM Business Watson<sup>®</sup>, based on [IBM Watson<sup>®</sup> Discovery](#) software, to gather key market intelligence much faster than before, so it can optimize its offers and win more opportunities to propagate renewable energy.



# Seeking market intel in a complex field

In France, one of its top markets, ABO Wind must win contracts to build and sell power from new wind and solar farms by participating in an auction system that the French government launched in 2017. ABO Wind and hundreds of competitors—including other independent developers as well as traditional energy giants—make bids based on the prices at which they can supply the needed energy. The key, of course, is hitting a competitive price point: low enough to appeal to buyers, high enough to cover costs.

In this scenario, market intelligence is exceptionally valuable. The more you know about your competitors' proposals, the more equipped you are to counter them.

Developing a wind or solar farm requires a great deal of interaction with, and authorization from, government organizations at the national, regional and local levels. Thus, much of the technical information about proposed projects is available on governmental websites. Benoit Clouet, ABO Wind's Director of Development, summarizes the information that must be documented for a given project: "We really need to cross-reference the interests and the constraints of a large scale of topics. Regarding the territories we are working on, we need to have some political agreement, we need to check all the environmental, technical and acoustical constraints, and we need to find agreements with all the landowners of each area. With all these parameters accounted for, we are able to propose a project to the local administration, which then accepts or declines."

But tracking down all of this information for all competitive proposals—across disparate websites and records—is a huge task. "We were really blind on this topic," says Clouet. "We want to know how many wind farms are participating in an auction. And what are their characteristics? What size, what power? We also need a clear picture of local market prices for electricity, which fluctuate. But we could not manually follow all the authorizations and all the projects."

ABO Wind hired an outside data provider to research and compile key information, but it did not meet the company's needs, nor did it align with its charter to prioritize operational efficiency.

"We are an independent company down to our DNA," says Clouet. "Rather than paying another company to do the work, we felt we could work with a partner to implement a solution internally, based on automation, and get better results."



# 80%

improvement in efficiency by reducing manual tasks

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## Automated insight for competitive advantage

ABO Wind discussed potential solutions with several providers and came away most impressed by WATsNEXT and its team's expertise in developing market analysis solutions. A WATsNEXT proof of concept of its Automated Procurement Analysis Service sealed the deal.

ABO Wind now uses the automated WATsNEXT solution, which includes IBM Watson Discovery and IBM Watson Knowledge Studio software, to capture competitive insight. Based on parameters defined by ABO Wind, which can be refined and adjusted over time, the solution works in three phases:

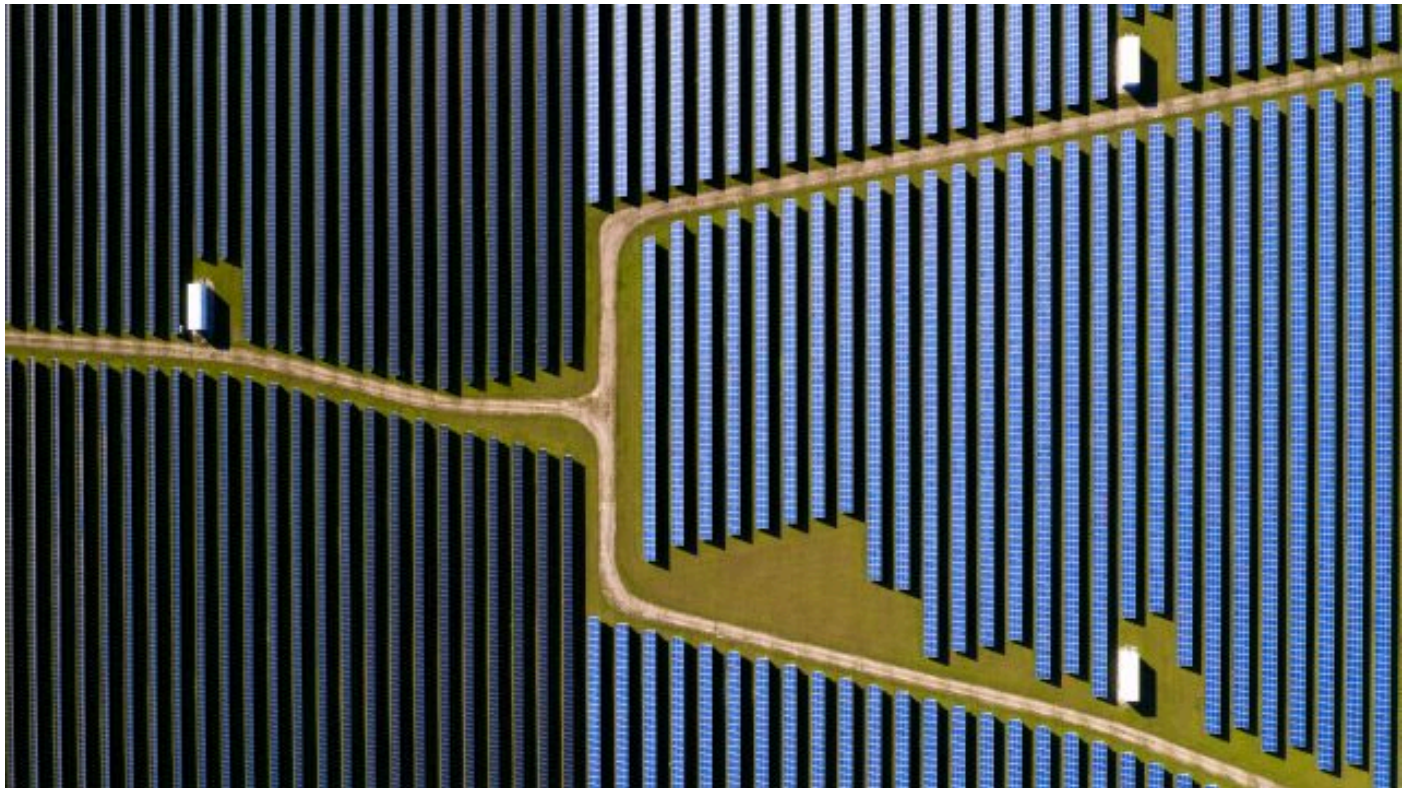
- Selection of target files on identified external websites
- Search of key data in each file and consolidation into a single Microsoft Excel file
- Analysis and output into a decision-support file



WATsNEXT also performed some custom development, based on feedback from ABO Wind, to make the solution's interface as user-friendly as possible for ABO Wind staff.

According to Clouet, "We're getting much more accurate data than if we were to continue using the data provider."

ABO Wind currently uses the solution for new wind-power opportunities, but Clouet and team are continuing to work with WatsNEXT to apply it to solar as well. "For solar energy," he explains, "it's more difficult because the information is even less structured in its administrative documents and so on. But we are still working on it."



## Optimizing prices to win more business

Since implementing the solution, ABO Wind has improved efficiency by 80%, eliminating tasks such as exploring and extracting data manually. This has freed up the team to concentrate on the business. "We are now really strong on the wind market," says Clouet. "We are able to know what's happening in the French market from the early stage of project development. In some cases, we have discussions with the government and it's us who are able to provide them national figures." This level of insight, in addition to helping optimize pricing, lends even greater credibility to ABO Wind in front of prospective authorizers and buyers.

It also helps ABO Wind navigate the added pressure on the global energy market today. "Since the Ukrainian war began, the prices of electricity and materials are so high," explains Clouet. "So selling electricity with the best price possible is now not just preferable but actually necessary in order to realize a project."

Looking forward, Clouet and team see more that they can do with the WATsNEXT and Watson solution. One plan is to have the tool gather geographical insight and put it into a periodical newsletter for ABO Wind's prospecting and development team—to help them more easily recognize competitive activity in proximity to their own projects.



## About ABO Wind

[ABO Wind](#) (link resides outside of ibm.com) plans, builds and manages wind and solar farms as well as energy storage systems in 16 countries in Europe, Africa, North America and South America. Its installed plants generate more than five billion kilowatt hours of green energy every year. ABO Wind is headquartered in Germany, where it was founded in 1996.

## About WATsNEXT

IBM Business Partner [WATsNEXT](#) (link resides outside of ibm.com) helps companies accelerate and optimize digital transformation. Its team combines expertise in AI with IBM products and homemade solutions such as intelligent data extraction and recognition (IOCR) and intelligent robotic process automation (IRPA). The company offers an understanding of business challenges to support its customers end to end, from strategic consulting through technology implementation. WATsNEXT is based in Colombes, France.

### Solution component

[IBM Watson® Discovery](#)



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