

# AskIBM. The AI-powered assistant that's changing the way IBM works

IBM Chief Information Officer organization



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# The time spent on routine tasks stood in the way of valuable activities

The advent of generative AI (gen AI) is empowering organizations to transform the way they work by integrating AI into their digital infrastructure, systems and processes. The same IBM Chief Information Officer (CIO) organization was challenged to build a new organization now known as AskIBM, to assist IBM employees so they can focus on more strategic work. The goal was to create an AI-first digital assistant that could automate day-to-day tasks like drafting an e-mail, translating a document or searching for information.

## 60 days

The AskIBM foundation was built in 60 days with watsonx.ai

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“There are many applications out there. Bringing them together is the key.”

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# offer a cohesive exp internal IBM users i what CIO is doing w

**Jay LaPlante**

Product Lead, CIO AI, Automation and Data Pl  
IBM

## And 60 days later ... AskIBM was at every IBM employee's fingertips

Given how fast the gen AI space is evolving, the CIO organization took quick action and leveraged IBM's own AI technologies to build the alpha release of AskIBM in just 60 days using a rapid development and onboarding approach. The 60-day period included the [IBM watsonx™](#) path to production as well as critical legal, privacy, cybersecurity and AI ethics reviews to meet the recommended AI standards and guardrails. During the process, the CIO organization collaborated with IBM Software and IBM Research® to deliver an application that was ready for enterprise release. As a result, access to the alpha release was made available to the more than 280,000 IBM employees globally in early January 2024.

The AskIBM foundation was built with [watsonx.ai™](#) and [IBM Granite™](#)-class large language models (LLMs)<sup>1</sup>, and augmented with strategic internal IBM content—excluding IBM confidential information, sensitive personal information and customer information. As part of the development and deployment from IBM employees to help train and tune the AI foundation for AskIBM. IBM employees were also encouraged to provide feedback to product teams about how to improve watsonx to scale for IBM. AskIBM was designed to automate normal activities, such as drafting a client email,

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creating a product brief or quickly summarizing a long document to prepare for a meeting, call or other need using gen AI.

About 5,000 documents in multiple languages were ingested in the internal alpha release of AskIBM to train the Granite-class LLMs—and that number has increased to over 30,000 as of July 2024. The Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) technique enables AskIBM to use the ingested contents to deliver tailored and appropriate responses to IBM employees by creating new responses from the most relevant information found. See figure 1 for the AskIBM answer flow.

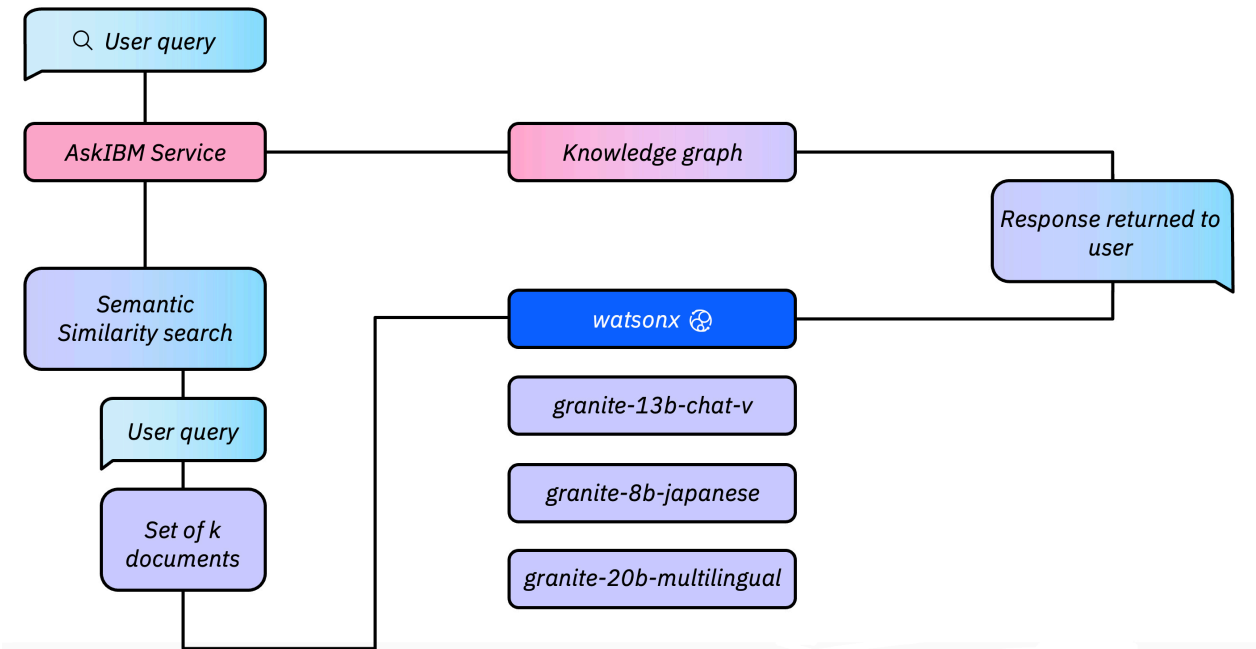


Figure 1: The AskIBM response flow

The CIO organization plans to continue collaborating with IBM Software and other AI teams at IBM to use [watsonx Orchestrate™](#) to help further enhance the unified user experience by automating other tasks and simplifying complex workflows.

<sup>1</sup> watsonx.ai includes IBM-built foundation models referred to as Granite. Granite multi-size foundation models apply generative AI to business use cases.

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“With this new technology it was important to prioritize progress over perfection. CIO had to be comfortable with moving at clock speed and pivot fast from solutions that did not work. That was a key learning from day 1.”

**Niloofer Salahi**

AskIBM Product Owner, CIO AI, Automation and Data Platform  
IBM

## When we learn, you benefit

The AskIBM beta release was launched in May 2024. With the beta release the CIO organization delivered a unified user experience by having a single-entry point for all IBM employees to automate tasks to help increase productivity. Users can now go to one place to summarize, translate and create content, draft documents, chat with documents, find information and access other strategic digital assistants. Turning this type of work over to AskIBM helps to focus attention on

Interestingly though, initial results showed that AskIBM was not the roadblock to additional success was behavioral. The key to the success of AskIBM is using natural language to create clear and intentional prompts that provide the context needed to generate effective answers. However, at first many IBM

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employees searched using single or double keyword-based queries rather than natural language queries. In fact, upon release, natural language queries only accounted for 2–4% of the questions asked, but as a result of education and training, this amount increased to around 10% by the end of January 2024. Through continuing education, training and hands-on use, IBM employees are steadily adapting to this new way of working.

The CIO organization's experience designing, developing and deploying AskIBM has yielded valuable lessons we can share with IBM clients worldwide. These include:

- Being adaptable and open to managing and incorporating approved changes while in development
- Making effective decisions by having the right people involved to expedite decision-making and foster collaborative teamwork to support a scaled enterprise initiative
- Creating a scalable solution by scoping a larger effort and employing a manageable, phased approach to development and user onboarding based on performance results and stress testing
- Prioritizing organizational change management from the beginning to plan education and training to help users adopt new AI technology and ways of working

“Initially, many IBM employees searched using single or double keyword-based queries rather than natural language queries. Education and adoption have helped changed t

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**Jonathan Chu**

Software Development Manager, CIO AI, Automation and Data  
Platform  
IBM



## About IBM Chief Information Officer organization

The IBM Chief Information Officer (CIO) organization leads IBM's internal IT strategy and is responsible for delivering, securing, modernizing and supporting the IT solutions that IBM employees, clients and partners use to do their jobs every day. The CIO organization's strategy encompasses creating an adaptive IT platform that makes IT tools, applications and systems easier to access across the enterprise, accelerates problem-solving and serves as an innovation engine for IBM, catalyzing business growth.

### Solution components

IBM Granite™	→	IBM watsonx™	→
IBM watsonx.ai™	→	IBM	→

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# AskIBM uses gen AI to transform the way work gets done

The CIO organization built AskIBM, an enterprise-wide digital assistant, using watsonx.ai and Granite-class LLMs—augmented with strategic internal IBM content—to help increase IBM employees’ productivity by automating some day-to-day business tasks with gen AI.

**Learn more about watsonx.ai**



**View more case studies**



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