



THE MARKETING SOCIETY GCC AWARDS

Nominee: IBM and Weber Shandwick MENAT

Category: B2B

Campaign Title: The CEO's Guide to Generative AI

Executive Summary

Generative AI (GenAI) is creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity for businesses, with spending on GenAI in the Middle East rapidly climbing. However, IBM's research revealed that many CEOs grappled with accelerating responsible AI workflows within their organizations. As a leader in the AI landscape, our campaign provided a "north star" to executives seeking guidance on training and deploying GenAI models. We positioned IBM's watsonx AI platform as the solution for these challenges. With earned thought leadership at the heart of our campaign, we amplified IBM's GenAI expertise across owned digital and social channels, offline at conferences and summits, and leveraged strategic partnerships with public and private organizations.

Part 1 – Objectives

What were your objectives and why was this important to the business?

IBM's research into AI dates to the 1950s. But by the end of 2023, the region began embracing [Generative AI \(GenAI\)](#) - a market projected to reach \$1.3 trillion globally over the next decade. As organizations in the Middle East invested heavily in this technology, IBM's share of voice in AI was being eroded by competitors who, frankly, didn't have near IBM's depth of AI expertise or offerings.

At the turn of 2024, enterprises were leaning into [IBM watsonx](#) platform, with IBM's book of business for watsonx and GenAI roughly doubling in the [last quarter of 2023](#).

The business opportunity was two-fold:

- How do we empower Middle East business leaders to harness this transformative technology quickly and responsibly?
- Why should they choose IBM as their partner?

Our communications campaign thus aimed to:

- Spotlight the struggles business leaders face in deploying GenAI, while providing a clear roadmap for accelerating responsible AI workflows in business.
- Generate demand for IBM's watsonx AI platform.
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Part 2 – Insights and Data (Not for publication)

What were the insights and data that led you to the strategy?

[REDACTED]

Part 3 – Strategy, Planning and Execution

What new strategies and creative and innovative approaches did you take?

We began by setting our eyes on the UAE and KSA as two priorities markets for GenAI in the Middle East, based on their public commitments to AI technology and their readiness for AI deployments, as confirmed in our research.

Ultimately, we believed that IBM had a valuable and time-critical opportunity to become a definitive CEO guide on GenAI by advocating how **responsible AI is responsible business**. This would be the foundation and through-line of our comprehensive B2B marketing communications campaign.

We used our research to craft a compelling narrative around responsible AI for business in the Middle East. We consulted with IBM global research teams to include our local markets in upcoming AI studies, tapping into the regional nuances we identified in our research. IBM digital, production, and public policy specialists came together to develop story calendars. The strategy was structured around a 12-month campaign, planned from January to December 2024. Our activities were designed to align with key industry moments, including the LEAP conference in Riyadh (which put GenAI as its focus for 2024) and the World Government Summit in Dubai, which had AI as one of its five focus themes. Our campaign was phased to build momentum into GITEX Global, whose 2024 theme was *'Global Collaboration to Forge a Future AI Economy'*.

The execution phase of our campaign was multifaceted, employing various marketing communications tactics to ensure effective B2B audience engagement and action.

Thought Leadership in the Media

We leveraged tech trade publications, national dailies, and regional business outlets to provide C-suite leaders with actionable strategies for capitalizing on responsible AI. Our earned media efforts opened discussions on vital topics including [scaling AI workloads](#), leveraging [GenAI for sustainability](#), prioritizing [AI in government operations](#), and promoting [female leadership in the age of AI](#).

MIT Sloan
Management Review
MIDDLE EAST

NEXTTECH

Responsible AI: Balancing Innovation and Trust

Experts say fostering trust between users and society is the foundation for responsible AI innovation.

The National
Business Technology

Companies must be cautious introducing generative AI for consumers, IBM says

Safeguards need to be in place to address privacy and security concerns for the biggest demographic for end-user technology

Original Research in the C-Suite

We publicized two pivotal studies over the campaign. [The Global AI Adoption Index](#) included input from the Middle East and highlighted that the UAE leads globally in AI and GenAI adoption. The [CEO Study by IBM Institute for Business Value](#) further unveiled the hard truths CEOs need to face to outcompete in GenAI, with 68% of Middle East CEOs surveyed agreeing that the potential productivity gains from automation are so great they must accept significant risk to stay competitive.



In-Person B2B Activations

We secured speaking and media opportunities to communicate our new GenAI narrative at forums such as [GITEX Global](#), [IDC Middle East AI Roadshow](#), [World Government Summit](#), [LEAP](#), and the UAE's [AI Retreat](#). Additionally, at our [IBM Tech'24 event](#) in Dubai, we recognized our technical contributors while discussing the acceleration of our GenAI journey. We also produced [partner events on AI](#) and held our first [IBM AI for Business Summit](#).

Investing in AI Innovation

In March 2024, IBM announced a [\\$200 million investment in a new software lab in Riyadh](#) focusing on AI and digital innovation to support the ambitious goals of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Later in the year, IBM reinforced its commitments to [advancing AI research and consulting capabilities](#) by expanding the IBM Consulting Advantage platform. Working with the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA), IBM also aims to establish a [specialized Centre of Excellence](#) for developing GenAI technologies in the Kingdom.



We promoted ongoing advancements to the watsonx platform, such as the [evolution of watsonx.governance](#), to ensure AI safety and transparency policies. Our partnership with AWS allowed us to announce plans to train 10,000 consultants on AWS generative AI services by the end of 2024, benefiting clients in the UAE. IBM introduced Granite 3.0, further solidifying our leadership in practical AI solutions and enhancing the accessibility of generative AI for enterprise clients.



NEWS / AI / MENA

↳ **SDAIA and IBM Launch Arabic Large Language Model on Watsonx**

TECHREVOLT

We produced a made for social mini-series ["Curious about #watsonx?"](#) with IBMers from the region commenting on business and government uptake of AI, and the capabilities of watsonx to support their needs.

A screenshot of a tweet from Shukri Eid (@ShukriEid). The tweet text reads: "I had the pleasure of delivering a keynote at the IDC AI Roadshow in #Dubai sponsored by #GBM to talk about how organizations can harness the power of Gen #AI and solve business problems using #watsonx." The tweet includes a profile picture of Shukri Eid, a verified account, and a timestamp of "10mo". Below the tweet, there is a video player showing a man speaking at a podium during a conference. The video player has a play button icon and a progress bar.

What were the risks, how were you brave?

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

- [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Part 5 – Results (Not for publication)

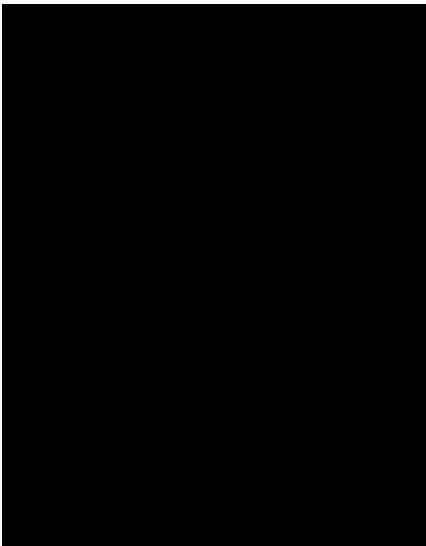
What were the measurable results?

[Redacted]

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
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- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
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“This [IBM] collaboration will serve as a catalyst for further technological advancements. At the heart of this transformation is the adoption of generative AI, with Saudi Arabia taking the lead in partnership with IBM.”

H.E. Dr. Esam Alwagait, Director of the National Information Center at SDAIA (KSA)

Part 6 – Impact on Marketing’s Reputation

How does your work advocate the reputation/importance of the Marketing industry?

Jonathan Adashek, IBM’s senior VP of marketing & communications, has recently spoken about how every campaign must be designed to support IBM’s sales and business growth goals. “If it’s helping us to sell another instance of watsonx, a mainframe, or whatever it might be, we need to make sure that all the work we’re doing is driving those business objectives.”

With this in mind:

- Our campaign showcases how B2B marketers are focused on creating truly **personalized, relevant, and consistent experiences** for buying groups at scale.
- Our campaign underscores the importance of having a **data-led strategy**, as well as ongoing research throughout a campaign’s lifecycle.
- Our campaign shows **the power of earned influence**, with nearly all of our activities done by earning the attention of media, partners, and customers – not just dumping millions of dollars behind traditional advertising.
- Our campaign reinforces the power of **thought leadership within the marketing mix**, and how this needs to complement direct promotions of a particular product or service – in this case, watsonx.
- Our campaign demonstrated the **appetite of the C-Suite** to share their perspective on the future of this exciting technology, and how vital their voices are to rallying action within a modern marketing campaign.
- Our campaign proved once again how marketing can be a **driving force for innovation** and inspire meaningful change in any industry – including technology – thus elevating the perception of marketing as essential to future business success.
- Our work to advance GenAI for businesses will have the knock-on effect of **supporting more marketers to adopt AI safely and effectively**. AI is changing the way marketers approach everything, and those who can lean into AI can expect to enjoy more precise data analysis, better-personalized content creation, and more efficient content delivery.