

Press Release

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MITSUI-SOKO LOGISTICS Co., Ltd.
IBM Japan, Ltd.

MITSUI-SOKO Logistics and IBM Japan Develop Hands-On Talent Cultivation Model for Frontline Staff to Build and Run AI Applications

Developing DX leaders who can identify and resolve issues in logistics frontline operations

MITSUI-SOKO LOGISTICS Co., Ltd. (Chuo-ku, Tokyo; Teruo Ishikawa, Representative Director, President Executive Officer; hereinafter “MSL”) and IBM Japan, Ltd. (Minato-ku, Tokyo; Akio Yamaguchi, General Manager and President; hereinafter “IBM Japan”) have jointly created a hands-on digital transformation (DX) talent cultivation model. Under this model, frontline employees identify business issues and lead the entire process of planning, developing, and running AI-powered operational applications.

By combining MSL’s practical logistics expertise with IBM Japan’s experience in AI adoption, AI-driven development, talent development, and business transformation (BX) support, this initiative aims to foster DX professionals capable of managing the full cycle—from problem identification to AI-driven resolution—across frontline operations.

■ Background and Objectives

In the logistics industry, the business environment is changing drastically due to severe labor shortages, rising geopolitical risks, and increasingly frequent and devastating natural disasters. These factors require logistics companies to respond to diversifying customer needs and to enhance supply chain management. As operational complexity and uncertainty increase amid these environmental changes, the utilization of digital technologies such as AI has become essential. It enables accurate, data-driven decision-making and process optimization without relying solely on past experience or individual judgment.

However, simply introducing digital technologies is not enough to accelerate transformation on the front lines. It is crucial that employees have a deep understanding of operations, can identify issues themselves, and use digital technologies to implement and refine solutions. Looking to address this, both companies have combined their expertise and experience to jointly build a DX talent development model that drives frontline-led AI adoption.

■ Overview of the Talent Development Model

This model is an OJT (On-the-Job Training) program designed to empower frontline employees to move beyond simply using AI tools, enabling them to actively identify operational challenges and apply AI to solve them firsthand. Through the planning, development, implementation, and improvement of AI-powered operational applications, participants will cultivate practical capabilities needed to drive BX. Participants are selected from employees with deep operational knowledge in logistics and related departments, undertaking the program alongside their daily duties.

Press Release

With this model, practical skills will be developed through the following cycle:

1. Identifying and Defining Challenges from a Frontline Perspective

MSL frontline employees discover and identify challenges in their daily assignments, defining requirements directly from an operational standpoint.

2. AI-Powered Application Development

Leveraging IBM Japan's expertise in AI-driven development and BX support, MSL frontline employees take the lead in planning and developing operational applications. Furthermore, IBM Japan provides hands-on support throughout the entire journey—from issue analysis and use case design to application development and operational integration.

3. Continuous Operation and Improvement

By introducing developed applications into business practices, continuously verifying effectiveness, and making iterative improvements, this program drives continuous, frontline-led BX.

■ Results of the Pilot Program

Prior to the full-scale rollout, a trial was conducted with eight MSL frontline employees. Participants took on the challenge of developing AI-powered applications designed to address actual operational issues.

Examples of the developed applications include the AI Volume Forecast Assistant, which predicts workload volumes using historical shipping and receiving data to help build optimal work plans, and the Logistics Quality Analysis Tool, which uses product image data to identify the root causes and to suggest preventive measures when quality issues occur on the logistics floor. These applications are already operational on the front lines, validating the real-world effectiveness of employee-led AI adoption. The trial demonstrated that frontline employees can independently identify issues and lead AI-based solutions through every stage—from planning and development through to operation. Ultimately, it proved the model's success in both developing DX talent and driving continuous operational improvement.



List of Developed Operational Applications

Press Release

■ Future Plans

MSL is positioning this model as a cornerstone for cultivating DX talent and plans to expand the program to around 50 participants over the next three years. By deploying AI insights and solutions generated on the front lines across the entire Group, MSL aims to advance logistics operations, create new value, and contribute to solving societal challenges.

IBM Japan provides end-to-end support, covering every stage from identifying frontline challenges and creating use cases to developing AI applications and ensuring operational integration. Furthermore, IBM Japan will systematize the practical processes developed through this initiative and offer them as a scalable, replicable model to drive frontline-led AI adoption. Moving forward, the company will continue to support the refinement and expansion of this model by leveraging its expertise in AI technology and AI-driven development, alongside its rich experience in talent cultivation and BX.

For inquiries regarding this matter

MITSUI-SOKO LOGISTICS Co., Ltd.
Strategic Sales Headquarters
Sales Promotion Division
Email: scm_sales_div@mitsui-soko-lg.com

For media inquiries regarding this matter

MITSUI-SOKO HOLDINGS Co., Ltd.
Strategic Planning Division
Public Relations Team
Email: kouhou@mitsui-soko.co.jp

IBM Japan, Ltd.
Communications & Public Relations
Hazuki Ichinose
TEL: +81-3-3808-5120
Email: pressrel@jp.ibm.com