



ETIHAD AIRWAYS AND MICROSOFT TEAM UP TO LAUNCH REGION'S FIRST AI ACADEMY

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Etihad Airways announced a strategic partnership with Microsoft to launch the first ever in-house AI Academy in the region, which will revolutionise the way the airline serves its customers by upskilling its workforce, optimising operations and creating alternate revenue streams.

As part of the AI Academy, all Etihad employees will be given access to an online training programme, and instructor led classes, to drive companywide AI literacy, empowering every employee to deliver more value to the company and its customers. Microsoft specialists will also conduct a series of AI business workshops and hands-on technical lab sessions to help identify business challenges that can be optimised with AI.

Etihad is currently embarking on a digital transformation journey in order to enhance the capacity and quality of its services to the almost 20 million passengers it carries each year.

“There is a simple reason that we are long-term partners with Microsoft – we think alike,” said, Tony Douglas Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Aviation Group. “Our people make us who we are. By upskilling them to use technology powered by AI, we are future-proofing our organisation. We believe that human interaction augmented by technology delivers an enhanced experience for our guests which will give us a competitive edge”

Etihad has also adopted Office 365 as part of its strategy to become a more efficient organisation. The group's senior leadership has also spearheaded initiatives for the automation of numerous business processes, to enhance day-to-day operations. The airline plans to provide structured, flexible education programmes for its employees that will allow them to use AI and other smart technologies to 'supercharge' their productivity and innovation. The training seminars will be carefully designed around the roles of their attendees, for maximum impact.

“In a world where every company is becoming a digital company, it's great to see Etihad and its leadership set an example by investing in their people, and in embracing what we refer to at Microsoft as tech intensity” ,” said Ihsan Anabtawi, Chief Operating and Marketing Officer,

Microsoft Gulf. “By building their own unique digital capabilities, Etihad is becoming a fast adopter of best-in-class technology on a company-wide level - and our AI Academy partnership is a key part of that objective. AI is one of the technologies that will transform every industry, and we’re proud to be partners with Etihad in readying and upskilling their world-class team and organization, which is foundational to achieving their transformation vision and digital outcomes.”

There are signs that private and public organisations across the Middle East are becoming bolder in their stances towards AI. According to a recent Microsoft survey, more than 72% of the region’s companies are planning to spend on AI in 2019, and previous adopters are planning further investments. As many as two in five Middle East organisations have already adopted AI solutions, and more than one third are planning to adopt an AI-based solution this year.

Following a significant surge in the demand for its cloud services in the region, Microsoft has announced that this year (2019) it will make available the secure, flexible and intelligent Microsoft cloud to its middle east customers through two dedicated cloud data centres, one in Abu Dhabi and one in Dubai. Organisations in the region can make the most out of the Microsoft Cloud by availing themselves of enterprise-grade reliability and performance, combined with data residency and the broadest compliance.

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