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From consumption to creation: IBM Malaysia supports MDEC 'digitalmaker' drive

AvantiKumar | Aug. 29, 2017



Photo: Malaysian students, IBM volunteers pose in group shot with IBM's Dave Raper and MDECs Sumitra Nair.

As part of national agency Malaysia Digital Corporation's (MDEC's) drive to encourage digital content creativity among students, IBM has added its support recently.

The initiative - part of the [#mydigitalmaker campaign](#) - involved a collaboration between IBM Malaysia and MDEC - using an IBM Watson Maker workshop for students from the SMK Kompleks KLIA school.

Students learned coding and AI (artificial intelligence) while assembling the TJBots with the help of IBM Malaysia volunteers.

Some 30 students built and assembled 'TJBots' from laser-printed cardboards and Raspberry Pi 3 boards before connecting them to Watson's Speech to Text application programming interface (API) service available on IBM Bluemix.

Commenting on the effort to strengthen students' problem solving skills as well as creativity, David Raper, lead, Corporate Citizenship, IBM Asia Pacific and Greater China Group, said: "It is gratifying to see students team build their own robots while learning and exploring technology." (Also, see - [Digital Malaysia: Penang teacher centre transforms into Digital Maker](#))

Preparing for disruption

"Technology is all about keeping experiments going and coming up with something truly life-changing for the world and the community," said Raper. "By exposing students to coding, robotics and artificial intelligence, we are preparing them for the future where digital technology is disrupting businesses."

"It was great to see the commitment from MDEC towards the #mydigitalmaker initiative to skill up youth in the ecosystem," he added.

Raper also joined in at the workshop and encouraged the students to continue their experiential journey with technology.



Photo: (From left) Sumitra Nair, Vice President, Talent & Digital Entrepreneurship Division, MDEC and David Raper, Lead, Corporate Citizenship, IBM Asia Pacific and Greater China Group.

The IBM TJBot is an open-source project and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) kit that allows anyone to build their own programmable cardboard robots powered by Watson. The cardboard cut-out can be 3D printed or laser cut, fitted with Raspberry Pi boards and a variety of add-ons such as RGB LED light, a microphone, a servo motor, and a camera.

To bring TJ Bots to life, students referred to a number of 'recipes,' which are step-by-step instructions to help them connect the TJBots to Watson services. Watson will then interpret and process the voice commands received via the microphone before prompting the robots to perform the commands. The recipes are designed to work on a Raspberry Pi and Makers are encouraged to try and create their own recipes based on their ideas and creativity.

Sumitra Nair, vice president, Talent & Digital Entrepreneurship Division, MDEC, said: "Technology as we know it today is a part of everyone's life and it is time we educate students, teachers as well as parents in unfolding its depths and potential."

"The #mydigitalmaker team are committed in coaching the younger generation and teachers with the correct education plans and effective workshops so that they can embrace technology as a skillset and be digital-ready in this digital economic future," said Nair.

"This will help empower our younger generation to be trained problem solvers and their ideas soon will benefit the society and fuel the nation's digital economy," she said. "The MDEC and IBM Watson Maker Workshop is definitely a good start and we are hoping to organise similar workshops this year for students from other schools to keep the momentum going, especially with the much anticipated #mydigitalmaker Fair 2017 inching closer."