AIR CANADA

Air Canada Cargo hosts the airline's first in-house Artificial Intelligence lab

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Earlier this year, we introduced you to the ways that Air Canada sees artificial intelligence (AI) playing an integral role in the airline's future and the use of in-house AI labs.

The first lab was set up last spring at Air Canada Cargo and is developing a model that can be adapted for other parts of the company. Because logistics (including air freight) is among the sectors that AI experts have identified to benefit from advancements, Air Canada now has over a dozen analytics specialists and data scientists devoted to Cargo projects.

"It's very exciting to see how AI can benefit both our customers and employees. Our first project focused on increasing the load factor of freight on our flights," said Jean-François Pagé, Director, Cargo Artificial Intelligence. "The predictive algorithms that we've been working on help give our people access to richer and more reliable information, which will help them make strategic decisions."

Cargo's first field test started in late June on select Canadian and European routes. By the end of the year, about 200 employees will have access to the application as an added means to help manage capacity and ensure maximum utilization on all lanes. Eventually, AI will also help identify errors and inconsistencies in booking information and reduce the time that employees spend cross-checking for accuracy.

"One the things that makes AI different from other uses of 'big data' is that the models continue learning and adapt to changes over time. The more we use our AI, the more data that we build into the system to improve its long-term performance," Pagé adds.

Because Cargo's AI is data driven, the lab team is working closely with the branch's Business Intelligence (BI) team to integrate existing data systems and dashboards into the enhanced AI environment. Change management and the implementation process for new AI tools are also at the forefront of their current efforts.

"Cargo is our 'lighthouse' on establishing AI as a business enabler. Our mission in the Air Canada AI Centre of Expertise is to empower and train business and functional groups across the organization to leverage AI with minimal ramp-up and technical barriers," said Wayne Madhlangobe, Director, Artificial Intelligence at Air Canada. "Our vision as an organization is to establish ourselves within five years as a global airline leader in profitability and customer satisfaction, leveraging AI as one of the key enablers."

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