



Business challenge

Leading Italian technology distributor CGI needs to maintain a huge catalog of products to meet its customers' needs. How could it help customers to find the right items fast?

Transformation

A social robot called Pepper, powered by cloud-based cognitive technologies from IBM, provides engaging assistance to customers in CGI stores, helping them navigate the product catalog with ease.



Gianluca Guasti,
Value Business &
Marketing Director,
Computer Gross Italia

Business benefits:

Cuts

waiting times by boosting staff presence, enhancing the in-store experience

5%

increase in sales by identifying opportunities for up- and cross-selling

4%

reduction in inventory costs through predictive analysis of sales data

Computer Gross Italia Creates a unique shopping experience and boosts sales with Pepper, a social robot sales assistant

Established in 1994, Computer Gross Italia S.p.A. (CGI) is a leading information and communications technology distributor headquartered near Florence, Italy. The company provides comprehensive support for more than 350 products and integrated solutions, including IBM technology platforms.

“Enhancing Pepper with IBM Watson technologies has made a vital difference to both CGI and our customers, helping us achieve what matters most: cutting-edge customer service and an engaging shopping experience.”

Gianluca Guasti
Value Business & Marketing Director
Computer Gross Italia

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Adding fun to function

Imagine a store where your customers are greeted by a friendly robot. The robot isn't just there for show: it can guide shoppers through a huge product catalog to find the items they need in a matter of minutes.

Sounds like science-fiction? Think again: this is exactly what Italian technology distributor Computer Gross Italia (CGI) has in store—literally—for its customers.

Gianluca Guasti, Value Business & Marketing Director at CGI, begins: “CGI has a long tradition of combining great technical expertise with exceptional customer service. To further highlight our commitment to our clients, we have opened a network of stores called Cash & Carry, with the aim of making products immediately available to customers across the country.”

To meet the complete technology needs of its customers, CGI stocks a huge range of products, including over 5,000 items in each physical store. For customers, the choice was unrivaled, but they often spent a long time browsing through the catalog to find the items they wanted.



“If customers couldn't find what they were looking for, then we potentially missed sales opportunities,” says Gianluca Guasti. “Equally, our in-store teams were spending a lot of time helping clients navigate the catalog. We needed a better way of working.”

CGI decided to add a revolutionary new component to its stores: Pepper, a social robot that acts as both a greeter and an information-point for customers. After a successful launch, the company decided to augment its social robot with cognitive technology.

Gianluca Guasti explains: “Our goal in giving Pepper cognitive capabilities was to make her a virtual extra member of staff at our Cash & Carry stores. We wanted her to be able to recognize customers and suggest products relevant to their unique purchase histories. With this in mind, we set out to find the best technology to support our vision.”

Promoting the human-machine partnership

CGI didn't have to look far to identify the solution that best suited its requirements. Gianluca Guasti comments: "As a long-standing IBM Business Partner, it was natural to choose IBM as our strategic technology vendor. Working with IBM gives us the peace of mind that we are supported by the best people, and the best solutions—including leading-edge cognitive technologies."

CGI began its cognitive journey by connecting its Pepper solution via APIs with [IBM® Watson Analytics®](#) and [IBM Watson Assistant](#), running in the [IBM Cloud™](#). CGI uses the IBM Watson technologies to monitor and analyze the interactions between its customers, its virtual assistant Pepper, and its back-end systems—with the aim of constantly improving the customer experience.

For example, the natural-language processing capabilities of IBM Watson enable Pepper to analyze customer requests via cognitive algorithms, search through CGI's product catalog, and suggest the most relevant products or product combinations in a matter of seconds.



Gianluca Guasti illustrates how the cognitively enhanced version of Pepper works in practice: "When you enter one of our Cash & Carry stores, Pepper greets you and explains how she will assist you during your visit. Pepper then inquires about your previous purchases, your interests, and your current needs.

"Using cognitive algorithms, Pepper identifies an appropriate bundle of products to suit your requirements, and provides all the necessary information such as technical specs, prices and product availability. On top of that, Pepper can identify and suggest additional items to complement your purchases—for example, paper and ink cartridges for your printer, or a cable for your TV.

"Once you have selected your items, Pepper helps you to complete your purchase. With Pepper, visits to our stores are quicker, smoother, and more pleasant—which means that customers leave satisfied and are more likely to come back again."

Transforming the customer experience

With cognitive capabilities delivered by IBM Watson, CGI is now able to offer faster, smoother customer service in-store.

Gianluca Guasti confirms: “Waiting times have significantly decreased, because customers don’t have to wait for a member of staff to become available. With Pepper, customers receive timely, proactive assistance that boosts service quality.”

Moreover, by pinpointing the most suitable combination of items for a customer’s needs, Pepper has opened up new up-selling and cross-selling opportunities for CGI. This has helped to boost sales by five percent and significantly reduced the number of clients who leave Cash & Carry stores without making a purchase.

Additionally, the company’s new predictive analytics capabilities have contributed to a four percent reduction in stock and inventory costs. The combination of Pepper and Watson Analytics makes it much easier for each store to identify the best-selling products based on local preferences and requirements, enabling the company to optimize stock levels and product mix.

CGI’s customers have praised Pepper for being a fun, friendly, and efficient sales assistant, as well as providing useful information and advice.

Gianluca Guasti remarks: “Clients who come to our Cash & Carry stores continue to approach Pepper with a great deal of curiosity and enthusiasm, and this clearly adds value to the time they spend in store.”

Gianluca Guasti concludes: “Enhancing Pepper with IBM Watson technologies has made a vital difference to both CGI and our customers, helping us achieve what matters most: cutting-edge customer service and an engaging shopping experience.”

Solution components

- IBM® Cloud™
- IBM Watson Analytics®
- IBM Watson™ Assistant

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Cloud, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/cloud

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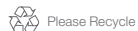
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