

# Softbank uses AI to assess students' job applications

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Softbank Corp. will use artificial intelligence to drastically cut the time spent screening applications from university students who hope to join the company on a main career track in April 2018.

The tech giant's announcement on May 29 marks the first time any Japanese company has made public its use of the IBM Watson AI system in its selection process, according to IBM Japan Ltd.

As the AI engine analyzes and evaluates the content of papers instantly, Softbank said it will reduce the time officials spend screening the "entry sheets" to a quarter of that prior.

Watson will grade the answer to one of two questions asked by Softbank in the entry sheets that prospective job candidates for its main career path are required to complete when applying.

Softbank began accepting students' entry sheets last December.

Ahead of Watson's assessment of those answers, Softbank will teach the AI engine to recognize good and bad answers by analyzing the content of 1,500 high and low-marked entry sheets already graded by officials from its human resources department.

The AI engine will then evaluate answers to the question written by an estimated 400 students who sent their entry sheets in the middle of this month or later, and grade them by three ranks.

Watson won't have the final say on low marks, however, as officials will re-examine them to see if they are appropriate.

Softbank said candidates' results in the entry sheets stage will not be determined alone by the grade Watson gives, but jointly with the marks officials give them for the other answer.

Softbank has not released data on the candidates' success rate at the stage of the entry sheets.

In the entry sheets, Softbank presents five values the company champions such as what constitutes the concepts of "No. 1" and "challenge," and asks applicants to write about their strengths that match either of those values, and to give an example that illustrates their achievements resulting from that strength.

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