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## Press release

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### **HLB International hosts its second Tech & Innovation Symposium in Barcelona**

HLB International brought together colleagues from over 17 countries within its global network yesterday for its second Tech & Innovation Symposium in Barcelona, focusing on developing practical applications of AI and automation to address challenges facing the accounting, advisory and tax professions and to provide better outcomes for clients.

A key feature of the symposium was the hackathon, which gave participants hands-on experience with cutting-edge agentic AI tools, enabling them to put their ideas into practice. Working in teams, colleagues collaborated to develop prototypes based on challenges they face in their daily work before pitching their ideas to the wider group, allowing them to experiment with the technology and explore how it could be applied in their day-to-day roles.

Official hackathon partner, Lovable helped guide firms through the live build, delivering a live demo and sharing prompt engineering expertise to enable HLB's members to turn ideas into working prototypes in the room. Potential applications built and tested included automation that turns new regulatory requirements into client-ready solutions, a readiness toolkit for new e-voicing mandates, tools that draft VAT returns, faster, safer client onboarding through digital identity and smarter KYC, and technology that identifies trends and spots potential issues early, helping professionals provide more timely and informed advice.

Lovable also shared expertise covering enterprise AI adoption, how it uses its own platform internally, and practical opportunities for accounting and advisory firms to turn ideas into useful products for both teams and clients.

Representatives from FC Barcelona explored how AI is redefining the operating model of modern football clubs. A strategic enabler of its digital transformation, AI is being used to unlock value across performance analytics, fan engagement and commercial operations. Strengthening decision-making and performance, FC Barcelona has leveraged AI without compromising its football identity.

Hosts Bové Montero (HLB Spain) also shared examples from their own AI journey, including an audit tool, an automated tax workflow, and a firm-wide training programme. A key takeaway from this session was that firms must thoroughly test internal capability before using solutions in client-facing work.

**Abu Bakkar, HLB Chief Innovation Officer**, said: “AI and automation are already changing the way professional services firms operate, but the real opportunity lies in moving beyond experimentation and identifying where they can make the biggest difference to our people and to our clients.

“Today, many professional services firms are largely focusing on using AI for efficiency; to streamline operations, increase efficiency and cut costs. It can save colleagues time on routine work, and also help analyse much larger amounts of information, drawing out insights that might otherwise be difficult to identify. This approach can lead to better advice for clients and give teams more time to focus on the areas where their experience and judgement really matter.

“Where the opportunity is starting to arise is in the next wave of using AI - using it to enhance quality. So, not just making processes faster but also smarter and creating new ways of doing things.

“The aim of this symposium was to give people the space to test these technologies for themselves. By applying them to challenges they face in their work, we can better understand which ideas have the potential to be taken forward and implemented across our network.”

## **About HLB**

HLB International is a global network of independent advisory and accounting firms and through the power of 58,538 professionals across 155 countries, we combine local expertise and global capabilities to service client's needs. Learn more about HLB's global services and capabilities: [www.hlb.global](http://www.hlb.global)

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