An integrated solution advances artificial intelligence (AI) development with H2O.ai’s industry-leading software, validated and benchmarked on optimized Intel® technologies

Executive Summary

While the promise of artificial intelligence (AI) is vast, enterprises working to develop AI solutions face talent shortages, complex development processes, and the need to ensure trusted results. Intel has collaborated with AI innovator H2O.ai to create an integrated solution that addresses these challenges. The solution combines H2O.ai’s industry-leading AI software with hardware, libraries, and tools from Intel. These technologies help make AI innovation simple, fast, and explainable while enhancing total cost of ownership (TCO) and IT flexibility.

H2O.ai’s software accelerates the tasks of training and deploying trusted machine-learning models. Key H2O technologies include a proprietary machine-learning solution that uses AI to automate AI, a fully open source platform for AI development, and tools to integrate H2O algorithms with the capabilities of Apache Spark*.

Intel® technologies, including Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors, Intel® Optane™ Solid State Drives (Intel® Optane™ SSDs), and optimized Intel® software libraries, provide the foundation for innovation. The solution is validated and benchmarked, enabling rapid deployment and robust performance.

Meeting the Challenges of AI Adoption

Figure 1. An integrated, validated solution based on technologies from H2O.ai and Intel empowers enterprises to simplify artificial intelligence (AI) development and speed innovation.
Business Challenge: Capture Value from AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a critical differentiator—a revolutionary technology that organizations are using to maximize data value, augment human intelligence, and transform complex processes. AI adoption is rising, with 37 percent of respondents in a 2019 Gartner CIO survey saying they have implemented AI in some form. PwC predicts AI’s potential global economic impact will reach USD 15.7 trillion by 2030.

However, three significant challenges are slowing AI development.

- **Talent.** The demand for data science and AI experts far outstrips the supply. In Gartner’s 2019 survey, 54 percent of the CIOs said skills shortages are their biggest AI challenge.

- **Time.** AI and machine-learning workflows involve complex and iterative tasks. These workflows can delay results and impair the productivity of scarce talent.

- **Trust.** Many enterprises need more confidence in the validity of their AI models than a typical black-box environment can provide. Innovators must be able to explain what an AI solution is doing and how it reached its results.

Solution Overview: Addressing the Three Challenges

Addressing the challenge of talent, time, and trust requires easy-to-use tools and platforms that enable organizations to harness their data effectively and quickly develop AI algorithms.

H2O.ai and Intel, two companies with strong commitments to democratizing AI, have worked together to integrate H2O.ai’s software portfolio with hardware and software technologies from Intel:

- **H2O Driverless AI** is an automatic machine-learning platform that employs the techniques of expert data scientists in an easy-to-use application. Data science experts and beginners alike can streamline their AI development processes, accomplishing tasks in minutes that used to take months. The software provides information and insights about its operation and strategies, enabling organizations to explain their algorithms and results. **Impact: talent, time and trust.**

- **H2O Open Source Platform** offers a robust, high-performance machine-learning platform that supports widely used statistical and machine-learning algorithms. H2O includes an AutoML functionality that automatically evaluates the algorithms and produces a leaderboard of the best models for the task at hand. **Impact: time and trust.**

- **H2O Sparkling Water** allows organizations employing the widely used Apache Spark cluster computing framework to combine H2O.ai’s machine-learning algorithms with their Spark technologies. **Impact: time.**

- **Intel’s proven AI technology** includes optimized libraries, frameworks, and hardware infrastructure, including 2nd Generation Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors, Intel® Optane™ Solid State Drives (Intel® Optane™ SSDs), and Intel® Ethernet Network Adapters. Together, they empower enterprises to optimize price/performance and speed deployment of the development infrastructure. **Impact: time.**

The overall result is a benchmarked solution for developing high-quality, trusted AI innovations, making the most of AI talent and accelerating time to market.

Solution Value: Accelerating AI Development

By addressing the challenges of talent, time, and trust, H2O.ai’s software—integrated with the Intel® technologies—helps accelerate AI development and deliver the power of AI to a wide range of organizations. Enterprises gain capabilities to streamline the AI development workflow and increase productivity for data science experts as well as those with less advanced skills. Organizations can increase the business value of data and enjoy the competitive advantages of AI innovation. They can proceed with greater confidence in the workings of their algorithms and models—capabilities that are particularly important in regulated industries such as healthcare and financial services.

With libraries and frameworks optimized for Intel® architecture along with world-class Intel Xeon Scalable processors, the integrated solution enables enterprises to quickly deploy a reliable, powerful, comprehensive AI development platform. The validated solution helps improve price/performance while reducing the time needed to evaluate infrastructure elements and assemble the tools and services to advance AI innovation.

About H2O.ai

H2O.ai is an open source leader in AI with a mission to democratize AI for everyone. H2O.ai is transforming the use of AI with software with its category-creating visionary open source machine-learning platform, H2O. More than 18,000 companies use open source H2O in mission-critical use cases for Finance, Insurance, Healthcare, Retail, Telco, Sales, and Marketing. For more information about how H2O.ai is driving an AI transformation, visit www.h2o.ai.
Solution Architecture for AI Development

The integrated solution from H2O.ai and Intel offers a range of AI and data science platforms including H2O Driverless AI, H2O Open Source Platform, and H2O Sparkling Water, atop an environment of optimized libraries, frameworks, and software from Intel (Figure 2).

H2O.ai AI and Machine-Learning Software

H2O Driverless AI

H2O Driverless AI employs the techniques of expert data scientists in an easy-to-use application to automate complex tasks, scale an organization’s data science efforts, and accomplish tasks in minutes that used to take months. The platform delivers unique and advanced functionality for data visualization, feature engineering, model interpretability, and low-latency deployment. Relevant capabilities include:

- **Feature engineering**. Feature engineering is the secret weapon that advanced data scientists use to extract the most accurate results from algorithms. Driverless AI employs a library of algorithms and feature transformations to automatically engineer new, high-value features for a given data set.

- **Explainability**. Driverless AI provides robust interpretability of machine-learning models to explain modeling results. The system generates charts including K-LIME*, Shapley*, Variable Importance, Decision Tree, Partial Dependence, and more.

- **Natural Language Processing (NLP)**. Text data can contain critical information to inform better predictions. H2O Driverless AI automatically uses powerful NLP techniques to convert short text strings into features.

- **Scoring pipelines**. Driverless AI automatically generates Python* scoring pipelines and new ultra-low latency automatic scoring pipelines. This allows for highly optimized, low-latency, production-ready Java* code that can be deployed anywhere.

- **Time series**. Driverless AI delivers superior time-series capabilities to optimize for almost any prediction time window. The solution also incorporates data from numerous predictors; handles structured character data and high-cardinality categorical variables; and manages gaps in time-series data and other missing values.

- **Visualization**. To help users get a quick understanding of their data before model building begins, Driverless AI automatically generates visualizations and creates relevant data plots.

- **Data sets**. Driverless AI works across varied data sets, including Apache Hadoop® Distributed File System (HDFS) and Amazon S3*.

H2O Open Source Platform

H2O Open Source Platform is a fully open source, distributed, in-memory machine-learning platform with linear scalability. It supports the most widely used statistical and machine-learning algorithms, including gradient-boosting machines (GBM), generalized linear models (GLM), deep learning, and more. Key capabilities of the H2O Open Source Platform include:

- **Algorithm support**. H2O offers leading open source algorithms developed from the ground up for distributed computing and for both supervised and unsupervised approaches, including Random Forest, GLM, GBM, Deep Learning, XGBoost, Generalized Low Rank Models (GLRM), Word2Vec, and numerous others.

- **Language flexibility**. Developers can use familiar programming languages such as R*, Python, and others to build models in H2O. They can also use H2O Flow*, a graphical, notebook-based, interactive user interface that does not require coding.

- **Workflows automation**. Developers can automate the machine-learning workflow with AutoML, which includes automatic training and tuning of many models within a user-specified time. H2O’s Stacked Ensembles feature identifies top-performing models.

- **High performance**. H2O uses in-memory processing with fast serialization between nodes and clusters to support massive data sets. Distributed processing on big data delivers dramatic speedups compared to fine-grain parallelism, enabling optimal efficiency without degrading computational accuracy.

- **Simple deployment**. Easy-to-deploy Java models allow for fast, accurate scoring in any environment, including very large models.

---

**Figure 2.** The artificial intelligence (AI) platform integrates industry-leading H2O.ai software on platform technologies, libraries, and frameworks from Intel, providing a validated, benchmarked environment for AI development.
H2O Sparkling Water
Sparkling Water lets users combine H2O.ai’s fast, scalable machine-learning algorithms with the capabilities of Apache Spark. Integrating these two open source environments provides a seamless experience for users who want to make a query using Apache Spark SQL, feed the results into H2O to build a model and make predictions, and then use the results again in Spark. Significant capabilities of H2O Sparkling Water include:

- **Access.** Developers can add a broad range of H2O algorithms developed from the ground up for distributed computing. Algorithms are available for both supervised and unsupervised approaches, including Random Forest, GLM, GBM, XGBoost, GLRM, Word2Vec, and more.

- **Flexibility.** Developers can drive computation from Scala, R, or Python and use the H2O Flow open source user interface, providing an ideal machine-learning platform for application developers.

- **Convenience.** Easy-to-deploy Java models allow for fast and accurate scoring in any environment, including very large models.

**Intel® Technology-based Infrastructure**
Intel offers an end-to-end, performance-tuned solution with H2O.ai to ensure outstanding performance and TCO on Intel technologies. This empowers enterprises to quickly harness a reliable, powerful, comprehensive solution that accelerates AI development as it optimizes TCO and simplifies the AI development environment. Organizations can:

- **Prepare for the future** with IT transformation investments on scalable, industry-leading, technologies for storage, memory, and compute.

- **Generate excellent TCO** with general-purpose hardware that IT organizations are used to managing, plus special-purpose AI accelerators that provide performance boosts as needed.

- **Accelerate time to market** by using a turnkey, validated solution with a rich development toolset and built-in optimizations.

**Software Infrastructure**
Optimized libraries, tools, and frameworks from Intel enhance performance while reducing programming complexity. These software optimizations, coupled with Intel Xeon Scalable processor-based hardware, deliver peak performance and compelling TCO across a broad range of analytics and AI workloads.

**Intel® Math Kernel Library (Intel® MKL)** optimizes code with minimal effort for current and future generations of Intel® processors. It is compatible with a range of compilers, languages, and operating systems, as well as linking and threading models.

**Deep-learning frameworks** such as TensorFlow have been optimized using Intel MKL for Deep Neural Networks (Intel® MKL-DNN) primitives, a popular performance library for deep-learning applications.

**Intel® Distribution of the Open Visual Inference and Neural Network Optimization (OpenVINO™) toolkit** extends workloads across Intel® hardware (including accelerators) and maximizes performance.

**Intel® Data Analytics Acceleration Library (Intel® DAAL)** boosts machine-learning and data analytics performance by optimizing data ingestion and algorithm execution.

**Hardware Infrastructure**
 Enterprises can gain a competitive advantage by using platforms based on Intel hardware building blocks—familiar, cost-effective technologies on a trusted platform.

**Intel Xeon Scalable Processors**
- 2nd Generation Intel Xeon Scalable processors provide a powerful platform for data-centric workloads, with significant enhancements for performance, AI inference, network functions, persistent memory bandwidth, and security.

- These processors incorporate Intel® Deep Learning Boost (Intel® DL Boost), providing built-in hardware acceleration capabilities for deep-learning inference. The processors also support Intel® Optane™ DC persistent memory, extending accessible memory for currently constrained workloads.

**Intel® Optane™ Technology**
- Revolutionary Intel Optane technology provides exciting opportunities to advance data-intensive workloads while increasing uptime and flexibility in the data center.

- Intel Optane DC persistent memory offers more than 3 TB of byte-addressable memory per CPU socket. The memory resides on the system bus, bringing data closer to the CPU and helping to reduce latency.

- Intel Optane DC SSDs help reduce storage bottlenecks and enable larger, more affordable data sets. These SSDs can help accelerate applications, reduce transaction costs for latency-sensitive workloads, and improve overall TCO in the data center.

Performance results are based on testing as of June 26, 2018 and may not reflect all publicly available security updates. See configuration disclosure for details. No product can be absolutely secure.

Software and workloads used in performance tests may have been optimized for performance only on Intel® microprocessors. Performance tests, such as SYSmark and MobileMark, are measured using specific computer systems, components, software, operations and functions. Any change to any of those factors may cause the results to vary. You should consult other information and performance tests to assist you in fully evaluating your contemplated purchases, including the performance of that product when combined with other products. For more complete information visit intel.com/benchmarks.
Veriﬁed Performance and Scalability

To assess performance and scalability, members of the AI Solutions Group at Intel veriﬁed the integrated solution from H2O.ai and Intel by conducting industry benchmark tests. The tests used the platform conﬁgurations in Tables 1 and 2 with H2O.ai’s popular XGBoost supervised learning algorithm. XGBoost is a gradient-boosting library that implements machine-learning algorithms under the GBM framework. For many problems, XGBoost is considered one of the best GBM frameworks today.

Performance

The performance benchmarking highlighted the strengths of Intel hardware technologies and optimized software libraries.

- **H2O Driverless AI** is a single-node training solution that runs best on a CPU with many cores. To test performance for this use case, the benchmarking team used the 2nd Generation Intel Xeon Platinum processor with Intel Optane SSDs in the cache tier (see Table 1). Tests used a dataset from the Modiﬁed National Institute of Standards and Technology (MNIST) database, a database of handwritten digits. The team isolated the performance of XGBoost inside H2O Driverless AI, and then inserted XGBoost from the optimized Intel DAAL. The optimized algorithm increased performance more than threefold, shrinking total experiment time from 4,048 seconds to 1,347 seconds while maintaining accuracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Performance Benchmark Conﬁguration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nodes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data network</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firmware and software optimizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software setup</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance results are based on testing as of March 28, 2019 and may not reﬂect all publicly available security updates. No product can be absolutely secure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Scalability Benchmark Conﬁguration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Nodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nodes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data network</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firmware and software optimizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software setup</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Configurations used the Intel® Server System platform, ucode: 0x004d, and CentOS* 7.4 kernel: 3.10.0-862.11.6.el7.x86_64. Performance results are based on testing as of December 10, 2018 and may not reﬂect all publicly available security updates. No product can be absolutely secure.
• **The XGBoost algorithm** in H2O Open Source Version 0.82 has been optimized with performance scaling for multicore CPUs. To assess the impact of these optimizations, the team used a five-node configuration based on the 2nd Generation Intel Xeon Gold processor (Table 1). The results showed a 450 percent performance improvement over the previous version (0.81) of H2O Open Source.

• **H2O Sparkling Water** is architected to execute over many cluster nodes. The benchmark team ran the H2O Sparkling Water GBM algorithm with the Public Airlines Dataset, a massive collection of 20 years of airline data compiled by the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics (formerly the Research and Innovative Technology Administration). Tests were performed on the five-node configuration shown in Table 2. These results demonstrate the ability to achieve excellent training and classification performance with flexible, general-purpose CPU infrastructure.

**Scalability**

To validate multi-node performance improvements with large data sets, the team used the three-node and five-node configurations in Table 2, along with the GBM algorithm, and the Public Airline Dataset. The five-node configuration improved performance by 38.5 percent over the three-node configuration. These results demonstrate an impressive increase in speed as more compute resources are added, highlighting the solution's ability to scale for long-running training jobs.

**Conclusion**

H2O.ai and Intel are collaborating to democratize AI with an integrated, validated, high-performance solution that empowers enterprises to optimize their AI development environment and meet the challenges of talent, time, and trust. Organizations can take advantage of the solution's easy-to-use tools and general-purpose Intel technologies to position themselves to accelerate time to market and gain the competitive advantages of AI innovation.

H2O.ai is a member of the Intel® AI Builders Program, an ecosystem of industry-leading independent software vendors (ISVs), system integrators (SIs), original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), and enterprise end users who have a shared mission to accelerate the adoption of AI across Intel® platforms.

Intel's proven AI technology is driving enterprise-wide AI adoption with industry-leading performance and security based on scalable storage, memory, and compute resources. Intel's broad product portfolio offers excellent TCO and flexibility aligned to customer needs, whether the need is general-purpose hardware that the IT organization is already managing or purpose-built AI accelerators for the most demanding performance requirements. The result is a significant step toward AI for everyone.

Find the solution that is right for your organization. Contact your Intel representative or visit [intel.com/ai](https://www.intel.com/ai).

**Learn More**

You may also find the following resources useful:

• Download Driverless AI for a free 21-day trial
• H2O.ai and its AI product suite
• Intel and AI
• Intel® AI Builders Program
• 2nd Generation Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors
• Intel® SSD Data Center Family
• Intel® Ethernet Products
• Intel® Data Analytics Acceleration Library
• Intel® Math Kernel Library
• Intel® Distribution of OpenVino™ Toolkit
• Intel® Deep Learning Boost
• Intel® Optane™ DC Persistent Memory
h2o.ai/blog/what-business-leaders-need-to-know-about-ai
4 See endnote 1.
5 H2O.ai, XGBoost,
docs.h2o.ai/h2o/latest-stable/h2o-docs/data-science/xgboost.html
6 MNIST Database of Handwritten Digits,
http://yann.lecun.com/exdb/mnist
7 Open Source 0.82 Release notes.
https://github.com/dmlc/xgboost/releases
8 Public Airline Dataset,
stat-computing.org/dataexpo/2009/the-data.html
All information provided here is subject to change without notice. Contact your Intel representative to obtain the latest Intel product specifications and roadmaps. Performance results are based on testing as of December 10, 2018 and may not reflect all publicly available security updates. See configuration disclosure for details. No product or component can be absolutely secure.
Software and workloads used in performance tests may have been optimized for performance only on Intel microprocessors. Performance tests, such as SYSmark and MobileMark, are measured using specific computer systems, components, software, operations and functions. Any change to any of those factors may cause the results to vary. You should consult other information and performance tests to assist you in fully evaluating your contemplated purchases, including the performance of that product when combined with other products. For more complete information visit intel.com/benchmarks. Cost reduction scenarios described are intended as examples of how a given Intel-based product, in the specified circumstances and configurations, may affect future costs and provide cost savings. Circumstances will vary. Intel does not guarantee any costs or cost reduction. Intel processor numbers are not a measure of performance. Processor numbers differentiate features within each processor family, not across different processor families: Learn About Intel® Processor Numbers.
Intel technologies’ features and benefits depend on system configuration and may require enabled hardware, software, or service activation. Performance varies depending on system configuration. No computer system can be absolutely secure or error free, and therefore Intel makes no warranty, representation, or guarantee regarding the performance of its products, the information contained in this paper, or the suitability of its products for any particular purpose. Check with your system manufacturer or retailer. No license (express or implied, by estoppel or otherwise) to any intellectual property rights is granted by this document.
Intel, the Intel logo, OpenVINO, Optane, and Xeon are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries.
*Other names and brands may be claimed as the property of others. © 2019 Intel Corporation