





# INTERVIEW

## IT TRENDS DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

MARIUS FILIPAŞ, *Country Manager, SOFTLINE ROMANIA*

### **1. Most of your career you were a key player in the IT industry. What are the top 3 learnings from this market segment?**

During the recent years we experienced a major transition in the decision makers of technology purchases. While in the past IT decided on most (if not all) of the technology investments, nowadays business departments are taking an increasing role in defining technology needs and purchases. The reason for this change is the need to align technology solutions to business goals, which blurs the lines between the two disciplines when it comes to decision making. This means more technology professionals are becoming business savvy (and vice versa), building skills they need to support business growth and real digital transformation.

Continuous change is significant part of the IT industry DNA. The IT companies are constantly facing different challenges: sourcing, hiring and retaining top IT talent, increased complexity of delivered IT projects, adoption of new technologies and external forces like the 2008 economic downturn or now pandemic situation. As a result - the IT industry needs to adopt change management approach to keep up with the fast-changing environment and the business needs.

Digital transformation is not only a buzzword, it is happening at an ever-growing speed which has been accelerated by the pandemic! IT drives digital transformation strategy, but efforts to implement

and adapt to changes in the business resulting from digital transformation are a company-wide endeavour. Digital transformation leads to fluid departments, processes and job responsibilities, with skills that require a better IT knowledge and a need to increase the IT culture throughout all company roles.

### **2. You just started your tenure as Country Manager of Softline. What are your top 5 priorities for 2022?**

Our top priority is to support our customers through their digital transformation journey. We see the need of a vertical and horizontal knowledge to implement customers projects. Our local, regional, and global services department has the necessary expertise to significantly improve the benefits and results of implemented digital transformational projects and consequentially grow the overall Softline business in Romania.

Another important priority for me is to build a solid local team with a consultancy mindset with strong industry-specific and business knowledge. A strong local team can leverage our international best practices, tailored to the Romanian the market needs to guide customers in their transformational journey.

As I already mentioned, the knowledge transfer from our international experts is another top priority that we have. Being present in 55 countries Softline provides a good perspective of global trends, challenges, and opportunities that customers

in different geographies and industries are facing. We want to leverage these to foresight our local customers' business needs and provide them with solution that best fits their needs.

Strengthening the partnership with our top global and local vendors, supporting their vision and aligning our strategy and execution with them is another important goal that we have.

Finally, we would like to further elevate our customers' experience by extending our solution and services portfolio to provide the best fitting, complete solution for every customer need.

**3. Many companies offering digital transformation and IT services were positively impacted by the current evolution of the pandemic, since they had to digitally transform their business in order to adjust to the "new normal". How did Softline perceive this impact?**

work, which is becoming a new "normal". After the rush in implementation of new solutions in 2020, in 2021 our clients started to build on the implemented solutions to optimize their processes and develop their business instead of "simply surviving" the pandemic situation.

Due to the increasing number of cybersecurity threats and attacks, more and more companies are focusing on enhancing their cybersecurity posture, protecting their most valuable assets: data and applications.

**5. What are the top digital transformation scenarios that your customers focus on?**  
The first and most widespread customer scenario is enhanced collaboration. Clients are implementing solutions for online meetings, easy and secure document sharing and transitioning to a digital integration and collaboration platform. Aside of the common solutions, we are bringing our own

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Among our customers we see growing acceptance of the Cloud solutions, hybrid cloud being the most compelling one. However, we also experience, that the rapid "digital transformation" was often forced by the COVID and did not happen as an organic business transformation. It results, in many companies as a project-based approach rather than a more strategical overall digitalization plan.

Tools and solutions, that were supporting remote work have been implemented in a rush, but adoption of these technologies, and the so called "new way of work" often challenge the companies. We see a strong need for adoption and change management support, as employees, the end users of the technology solutions need to use these tools confidently to fully leverage the benefits they can provide.

**4. 2021 was the year of recovery, although we are still under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. How do you perceive the market evolution in 2021 versus 2020?**

We see 2021 as the year of stabilization and "adoption". We are all getting used to the new way of

application as for example is the solution for IP telephony, named TotalVoice, that is built on Microsoft Teams and provides a wide range of functionalities simplifying communications with customers.

Business process optimization and automation is another top priority of the customers. Reducing costs and saving resources by improving processes with IT solutions - especially with low code-no code applications - is getting to be widely requested in the region. Internet of Things is another area, where we see significant growth in the customer needs. Industry specific IoT solutions can help businesses to significantly improve their operations.

**6. Most companies are facing new challenges caused by the hybrid work paradigm. What steps did you take to help your customers address these challenges?**

As an IT partner, we supported our customers to implement technology effectively and utilize most of the benefits available. Softline experts are actually extensions of our customers' IT department to help in implementations and provide support for their IT infrastructure.

We always assist our customers to choose the solutions that best fits their specific need, and we are available to implement the changes efficiently to enable our customers to get the most out of the technology they have chosen.

We can provide adoption and change management support to our customers in order to prepare their employees leveraging the technology that is available for them.

**7** ■ Besides the challenges brought by the current evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, companies feel the pressure from customers, partners, and regulators to invest in sustainability solutions and reduce their carbon footprint. How can IT help companies address these new challenges?

More and more companies are optimizing their processes and their environmental impact through IT projects. This enforces vendors to provide sustainable solutions, and most cloud providers are committed to support the reduction of their customers' carbon footprint. Using cloud solutions, and not having an on-premises server infrastructure supports carbon-neutral initiatives on top of other business benefits.

**8** ■ What advice do you have for Romanian managers in 2022?

As the hybrid work scenario will remain with us throughout 2022, one of the key focuses should be to encourage employee engagement through

communication and collaboration and reach out also to the disconnected employees.

Another tip is to provide guidance and autonomy to employees. Micromanaging is one of the main reasons employees quit their jobs. Good managers strike a balance between guiding their employees and offering the freedom needed to learn and grow. Grow your Team with actionable feedback. The most valuable people management skill is your ability to pay attention to each member of your team and introduce the right growth opportunities at the right time.

Protect work life balance - for yourselves and for your team members too. Yes, this means refraining from firing off those midnight emails! It also involves planning your meetings with intention, respecting your employees' time and schedule.

**9** ■ How do you expect the Romanian market to evolve in 2022?

The need for digitalization will remain a top priority for the companies: continuing with improved collaboration solutions and moving towards strengthening cybersecurity. Vertical solutions will become the next source for optimizing the operation and I believe IoT and Artificial Intelligence will bring a leap forward for the companies that will adopt it.

Finally, I see a need to integrate individual digital solutions in a common platform and to digitalize more services within the company by integrating them in already new deployed technologies.