



INTERVIEW

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CAN HELP ORGANIZATIONS NOT ONLY TO SURVIVE, BUT TO DEVELOP AND THRIVE

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1 ■ **You've been managing Canon's business in Romania and Bulgaria for more than 10 years? What are the top 3 learnings from your tenure?**

I would rather call them challenges:

a. Lifelong learning and adaptation; maybe now, more than ever, it's a constant challenge to keep up with market trends, customer requirements, the needs of the team, to be flexible and adapt to changes

b. Competences and motivation determine performance; competencies can be acquired through various means - organized training, self-training, daily practice, etc., but maintaining motivation is the major challenge; and here "one size does not fit all", we must find those personalized

keys with which each of us opens the door of joy to start a new day of work

c. It is very important for the team to have a common Vision and to collaborate - why we are here, what do we pursue, what is the role of each one of us and how we can contribute to the common success; as in team sports, we can be, individually, very competent, but the big plus is the efficient cooperation in the team, towards the same goals.

2 ■ **Many companies offering IT hardware and solutions were positively impacted by the current evolution of the pandemic, since their customers had to digitally transform their business in order to adjust to the "new normal". How did Canon perceive this impact?**

Most organizations have been forced by the

pandemic to find new ways of working, in a world where people work in a hybrid environment, individually or together, from the office, from home or even from the car and need to connect, to collaborate and solve various tasks in a secure and efficient way. Digital technology, if used correctly, can provide solutions to these challenges, but adapting work processes (digital transformation) is a long and often difficult journey. Digital transformation involves the gradual transition from analog (information and processes that use paper, unstructured), to digitization (transformation of information on paper into digital, structured information), automation (creation of workflows, collaboration), to advanced optimization (Artificial Intelligence, Robotization).

Prior to the pandemic, the average of those who worked from home in the EU was 5% versus 0.4% in Romania (Romania being the penultimate country in this ranking). The European average was 5.2% - a study done in 2018 by ejobs). Certainly, this percentage is growing rapidly now. Work from home, social distancing, limited interactions push organizations towards online communication, towards Cloud, towards automation and work processes optimization. Romania benefits from high speed internet, an educated workforce and does not have a very old technological heritage, which offers the premises for a quick adaptation.

3. How can Canon help customers through their digital transformation journey?

■ Canon has been at the forefront of IT and imaging research and innovation for over 80 years. We invest in innovation approx. 8% of the annual turnover and, for over 25 years, we are constantly in the first 5 places regarding the new patents registered in the USA. We have created an ecosystem of technologies that work in harmony with each other, combining hardware with software solutions and professional services, all these elements working together and helping our business partners to cooperate efficiently and safely, anytime and from anywhere. Regardless of the size of the organization, we can create, together with our Technology Partners, a customized plan for optimizing the work environment, from the perspective of digital transformation, referring to several main directions:

■ Secure solutions for document and information management (on paper or electronic): the main

solution here is the imageRUNNER Advance DX multifunctional devices range, which manages the input (scan) and output (print) of documents in the organization, connected in the cloud through the uniFLOW Online output management platform, in a simple, secure way and without additional servers

■ Managed Print Services (MPS): the ecosystem of multifunctional office equipment and the uniFLOW platform, designed to manage all printing and scanning processes in an organization, from home or office, along with the services offered by Canon partners; we access a wide range of applications, from simple A4 documents, up to A0 + large formats engineering documents

■ Process Automation solutions: the information management and process automation platform Therefore offers the possibility to digitize internal processes for any type of organization. This solution is available both on-premises and in the cloud. Examples of applications that we frequently encounter are invoice processing, contract management, human resources management.

Organizations that use Canon solutions include Uber, Ferrero, BBC, Volkswagen, Continental, Deloitte, Beiersdorf, Legoland and many more.

4. Most companies are facing new challenges caused by the hybrid work paradigm. How can Canon help them address these challenges?

Take, for example, the challenge of process automation. According to recent studies, it is estimated that approximately 50% of the workload in Romania can be automated, especially in areas such as agriculture, production, trade, construction and transportation. A simple example of a process that can be automated in any field, is invoice (issued or received) processing. An activity that is now largely done manually, with potential errors, loss of documents, lack of tax compliance (risk of potential fines), a.o. This activity can be automated, by capturing information and processing on automatic workflows, then approving and archiving, for simple future search. The implementation of Canon technology in thousands of organizations around the world, respectively the information management platform Therefore, shows that savings of over 40% can be reached, processing capacity can be increased several times, obtaining, in addition, improving the relationship with customers and suppliers.

5. 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?

The evolution of the market this year was still marked by the pandemic, but most organizations have found ways to adapt in the short term and have come out of the “protection and survival” mode that was somehow imposed by year 2020. The second half of this year, however, brought additional challenges. Inflation, rising raw materials and energy costs, lack of skilled people in many areas, political instability. The saying “change is the only constant in life” was, in 2021, probably more valid than ever. On the other hand, there are more and more organizations that adapt, that see in these challenges and opportunities, not just threats.

6. 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?

IT companies are at the forefront of technological innovation, and digital solutions help reduce costs - for example, a hybrid work environment supported by digital collaborative solutions reduces the need for transportation, due to work-from-home. Reducing paper consumption and controlling waste can be achieved by implementing digital work processes; reducing errors in any work process, transformed from analog to digital, means reducing redundancies and scrap; adopting the cloud strategy, in itself, means optimizing the use of resources at the macro level, by syndicating them.

Canon has aligned its internal sustainability policy with UN objectives, and the company's efforts have been recognized by the EcoVadis Gold Award, received by Canon each year since 2013; this international recognition is granted only to a percentage of 5% of global organizations, evaluated

from the perspective of the production impact on the environment, employees' rights protection, ethics and sustainable policies of selecting products and services suppliers.

7. What advice do you have for Romanian managers in 2022?

In 2016, the digital economy in Romania accounted for 6.9% of GDP (above the EU average of 6.5). If we refer to a McKinsey study conducted before the crisis, our country has a great potential to accelerate its digitization. According to this study, accelerated digitization could bring the percentage of 6% to 25% of GDP by 2025. In other words, we are talking about a potential of up to 40 billion Euros in Romania, from the perspective of digital transformation. And this is pre-pandemic data, now, probably, the impact would be even greater.

I believe that many organizations in Romania can use the opportunities offered by digital transformation, to secure information, to work more efficiently, more productively and to develop further. I believe that any organization, in any domain, should consider creating (if not having one already) a digital transformation strategy and an implementation plan.

8. How do you expect the Romanian market to evolve in 2022?

I think 2022 will continue to be difficult and volatile. Probably the 2021 challenges will continue. Both social and health ones, due to the pandemic evolution, and economic one, brought by inflation and rising costs. Resilience and adapting to new realities will be basic needs of organizations. The digital transformation train, which has already left the station, will continue to strongly accelerate. I believe that it has already embarked organizations that not only want to survive, but to develop and see opportunities, even in difficult times. The good part is that the number of tickets on this train is unlimited and I think that we, Canon, are a suitable partner for any organization that wants to travel this road, of digital transformation.