

What is digital transformation?



CHRISTIAN GAVRILĂ,
GENERAL MANAGER
CRISoft

Everybody is speaking about digital transformation, most say they are doing it, but who can say what it really is? Can the implementation of some enterprise systems be considered digital transformation? Or if we have multiple applications already implemented, then the transformation must be their integration? The good news is that digital transformation is none of these: it's a cultural change. This hardly looks as good news, as culture is the hardest to change, but we are lucky because we are not alone in this quest. The digital world has already changed the life of almost everyone on this planet so the clients and the employees have already adapted to this. Also, what computers can really do better than us is repeating a pattern with great performance and accuracy, so it can help us with these qualities to speed up the culture change.

The target of digital transformation is the transformation of business which should be done in a fully digital way. We can look for models at the big IT companies that started only digitally like Amazon, eBay, Paypal. Digital can be reduced to binary, 0 or 1, so everything in the whole process in the enterprise must be based on numbers, codes or, options. But how is that different compared to what are we doing today? We have computers and applications which we use. The key is that now the target is to have the full process digital, including communication with customers and co-workers mainly and the decision-making process. Even if

we use, e-mail, messenger or digital phones, those are only communication devices, still a person is needed to extract the information from the flow of data in those and enter it into the system. The current technology allows us to do more: to have everyone operate directly with digital information and avoid the unstructured, analog, steps in the processes. We can look forward to a system where not only we have all applications connected using and Enterprise Software Bus, but we can operate the full value chain within those applications.

Why is this better? We all have already decided that it was better when we started to use hashtags in social media posts. It's the best example of digital coded information, compared to unstructured text or images. Tagging is a solution used first by programmers to identify their code or components and now was generalized and used by everyone. This is the cultural challenge: to think as a programmer the whole business not only an application and use of the available technology, even if this means changing the processes and collaboration between people.

When I founded CRISoft almost 25 years ago, I chose as a motto „Software that thinks” („Programe care gândesc” in original romanian language). I had many discussions about this, many objecting that people think, not computers. My opinion is that thinking is not only creativity, but also identification of patterns and application of rules, and for this repetitive thinking tasks the computers can help us. With this vision we did many complex projects with online integration between modules. This made the implementation difficult, because it implied business process change: where an email or an excel file was enough before, now we have to make the process work with structured data, automatically validated at every step by the system to meet the business rules, with no exceptions. The rewards were great for the companies that were willing to walk on this path and many of them are leaders on their market now. Even if, at first, it seems that we go after a target that can never be reached, soon we will find out that this is the way of progress, that does not have an end, but a way paved with benefits.

by Christian Gavrilă, General Manager, CRISoft

www.crisoft.ro

