

Covid-19 exposes lack of a digital roadmap

Senior representatives from Dell Technologies and Pirelli attending the Global Manufacturing and Industrialisation Summit (#GMIS2020) Digital Series agrees that the acceleration of digital transformation is necessary to prepare for future disruptions.



While companies that embarked on digital transformation programmes years ago are now reaping the rewards and successfully navigating the disruption caused by the pandemic, those that didn't will fall further behind unless they invest in technology.

The panellists agreed that while the Covid-19 pandemic has been harsh on many, businesses will learn valuable lessons from the crisis that should encourage them to future-proof their organisations by investing in advanced technologies, particularly those driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI). It was also agreed that stronger collaboration between governments and multinationals is essential in order to prevent the digital divide from widening and leaving behind developing countries in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Dr. John O'Shea, Proactive Business Intelligence and Transformation, Dell Technologies, said the disruption caused by the pandemic has highlighted the growing importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and its ability to optimise business processes.

"You have to gather more insights using AI, machine learning, and deep learning, so you can better prepare yourself for the future," he said.

Pier Paolo Tamma, senior vice president and chief digital officer of Pirelli, said the company's digital transformation programme had provided it with the data and insights to adapt the capacity of its manufacturing plants and adjust its supply chains to future demand trends.

"We are working with artificial intelligence in order to optimise production, planning, and ultimately the efficiency and effectiveness of our sales force in order to address where demand will be generated," he said.

Though Dell Technologies and Pirelli are major global corporations, Dr O'Shea and Tamma agreed that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) could also learn valuable lessons from the pandemic that would help them to adapt to the new reality.

Pier Paolo Tamma said AI has proved incredibly successful at delivering insights and that smaller companies should look to invest in the technology.

"Thanks to our industrial IoT solution we are progressively connecting all the machinery that we have in the plants and applying real-time data analysis with machine learning technology. The impact on the quality and the effectiveness of the production is very high. So there is a good business case to invest in this area."

Learning the lessons of the pandemic

Dr. O'Shea highlighted the role that connectivity has played in allowing businesses to maintain operations during the pandemic and that the continued rollout of 5G would be crucial in supporting businesses with digital transformation programmes.

He added that investment in critical infrastructure would be essential in the wake of the pandemic, especially for developing countries. However, he warned against the dangers of a widening digital divide if the spread of technology is uneven and that governments and multilateral organisations must co-ordinate with entrepreneurs and innovators to create best practices that would help move society forward.

"Having the balance level infrastructure of the networks is very important so 5G is going to be crucial moving forward. But you have approximately 46% of the global population that has no internet connection," he said.

"I think the pandemic has opened our eyes more and given us more empathy in relation to how we come together as humanity. I would say we need more collaboration in relation to governments coming together and discussing economics."

Tamma said Pirelli could leverage valuable lessons from the pandemic to deal with another crisis in the future or even to help manage the risks of a potential second wave of Covid-19.

"What we've learned this year from applying digital technology in the industrial and manufacturing process is that we can leverage the power of data more and more to make better decisions," he said.

"Having the possibility to understand what is happening in each part of your company in real-time and make the right decisions, this is a very big game changer and I think this is the way to enhance your business and adapt to what is happening in the market."

Hosted by journalist and news anchor Laura Buckwell, the virtual panel discussion on Industry Innovations titled 'Back to the Future: Digital Restoration' is the second session of the #GMIS2020 Digital Series that will lead up to the Virtual Summit in September 2020.

The session is available to watch on-demand at <https://bit.ly/2YHVHyY>

Interested participants can register to watch the [GMIS Virtual Summit and Digital Series](#).

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