Bio ━━━━━━━

Damian Bunyan has been Uniper's CIO since 2016. Previously, Bunyan served on the Management Board of E.ON Business Services, where he was responsible for the E.ON Group's IT infrastructure. The 50-year-old has lived in Germany since 2004 and studied business administration and politics at Aston University.

"Digitization needs people"

Uniper CIO Damian Bunyan in a conversation with Thomas Novotny, CTO Innovation Manager at T-Systems, on the transformation to new business models, workshops as collaboration boosters, and the benefits of the "madness" PechaKucha.

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Mr. Bunyan, the speed of communication and collaboration is critical to the competitiveness of your industry. How can the group IT take this into account?

I have to go back a ways to answer that. With our 2016 spin-off, we also lost access to E.ON's data center. It was a huge opportunity for us to clean up with a very confusing application landscape, but of course this also meant a lot of work. So far, we have quietly separated 30 percent of our applications from the data center to the cloud. That alone is a big step forward in terms of speed. We have really cut back the jungle, and things have been looking much nicer ever since. For the first time as a CIO, I know how many applications I have and what our customers actually use. In addition – and most importantly – our applications are even more secure in the cloud. Our main application for electricity trading as an example: we are one of the world's largest electricity traders and the first company to bring such a trading application to the cloud.

Why is that important to Uniper?

Electricity trading processes are really complicated and IT-intensive. The volume of this one trading system reaches 350 terabytes at the end of the day. And that's just one of more than ten systems we use. Gradually bringing everyone else to the cloud still presents a huge challenge. In the cloud we saw for the first time where the computers are sometimes operating at capacity in the highest phase. And if we need a faster machine, we can build a network of machines in the cloud to essentially create a supercomputer. This is huge progress. Because when I take action and when algorithms work for me and we're going 24/7, speed plays a big role. Or take the example of incidents. We recently had one in our old data centers that would never be acceptable for cloud providers. They have a different scale, a different professionalism. If I need resources today, I don't build a data center. I go straight to AWS, Microsoft, or the Open Telekom Cloud and do it there.

By the time Uniper was standing on its own, you had switched from Outlook to Office 365, among other things. Why?

When you take a chance on something new, you don't just copy and paste from the old method. Likewise, we're transitioning from Windows 7, a variant that was built specifically for E.ON, to Windows 10.

I can serve my users so much better. With Office 365, once I optimize my security rules, I can allow my employees to work in a completely different way: managed and secure, from any device in the world and at any time of day.

That would have to be project-related for your external employees, who must also have access to specific systems in record time. How do you solve the problem?

Slowly (laughs). I do not have all the solutions yet, but I've learned one thing: partnerships are important. If I constantly switched suppliers, I would have a problem. But specifically to your question: If any of my employees can work from any device, anytime, and anywhere, then I have to offer that to my supplier as well. That's why when separating from E.ON, it was important to me that my relationship with T-Systems remained intact. Very, very important! The fact that external employees also have temporary access to our applications is an example of this. We are already building express routes in the cloud for this purpose. I'm not saying that we have perfected it, but if I work with a trusted partner instead of a collection of different companies, it's reasonably easy and, above all, secure.

You confronted the requirement for "fast, safe connections" head-on at the T-Systems "Collaboration Booster" innovation workshop. What's your experience on this front?

The experience is that my business case can actually be solved. I have employed about 2,000 externals across the world. Some for only six weeks, others a bit longer. And they each have two computers – one from me, one from the company. Totally unnecessary! The comparison between Current Mode and Future Mode has to be imagined as follows: the onboarding process in our old world can make you cry. The technology is relatively simple, but our processes behind it are so difficult that it is almost impossible to provide an employee with new technology in three months. This is unacceptable! Today, I am able to offer three types of devices to each traveling user, all automated. In the near future they will be able to work from any device. This is the specific business case – no matter what hardware, as long as my software that I can manage and control is on it. And once their contract ends, access is switched off. Now that's fantastic!

I know engineers who get alarms from power plants at three o'clock in the morning and are the ones who have to respond to problems. They drive as far as 40 miles to the power plant to evaluate the situation. The results of our HDS19 (Hybrid Digital Service) workshop allow them to get up, turn on their device, and check the cause of the alarm from home. This is enabling, an example of how we save our employees a lot of time. In the workshop we demonstrated how quickly external employees can be connected today: once their identity and credentials are established, an email address and password are set up and all security requirements are met in just three minutes. This workshop brought about a solution that I fought for at E.ON six years ago.

With the spin-off two years ago, the transformation of your company has just begun. How far have you progressed?

The spin-off made Uniper more radical from day 1. In terms of transformation, you have to think differently. At E.ON, I was part of an internal services GmbH. At Uniper I'm not a service provider, but right in the middle of business. I reject all discussions of the kind: we have to talk to business or we have to talk to IT. They are linked. So on day 1, we changed the model of how we manage IT. Today, as a CIO, I position myself much differently than at E.ON, which enables us to move forward quite quickly. And – to the pleasure of my board of directors – to be much more efficient at the same time. IT costs are sinking simultaneously. A win-win! Sometimes I can finance certain things myself, because I have less data center costs and invest money elsewhere.

Keyword "Plant Health," the fitness of your well over 100 Uniper power plants: What role do predictive analytics play in managing your plants?

A major role. It's the only reason we can handle maintenance resources much smarter today. We have been using advanced condition monitoring, as we call it, for the last ten years. Planned maintenance, where we bring together the most important technological information and use our IT to map a digital version of each system. This helps enormously to be smarter with the "little money" that we have and above all to reduce our capex to the essentials. The important point with regard to the transformation that you have asked for, however, goes much further: with our know-how, we manage to operate power plants in a fairly optimal way. With all modesty, we are world class in this regard. And the ability to use predictive maintenance from the cloud to analyze plant and machinery information so we can help power plant managers use less capex is what we are now turning into a business model. We are currently discussing this with customers in Pakistan, India, Australia, Japan, and the Americas – in particular, using a specially developed "made in Germany" software. And believe me: This is a giant brand. We have to be very careful with the term transformation. But developing a business model from "I run power plants myself" to "I'm the advanced condition monitor for everyone else" is a transformation.

Thomas Novotny, CTO Innovation Manager T-Systems

What do you expect in this context from your IT service providers?

First and foremost, a clear commitment to curiosity about what digitization will make possible in our industry. When it comes to basics, a term which T-Systems has shaped itself describes my expectations very well: "zero outage". That is, if you want to help me with my digital transformation, then the bread and butter must work. Because that provides a basis on which I can build upon the technology and with which I gain credibility and trust in the user. This is very important and I think it's feasible. The next point turns out to be much more complicated: as a supplier, to understand our day-to-day and all the new opportunities of our business. This is not easy. And if you "just" have a so-called key account team, the likelihood that anyone in this team understands the whole is clearly limited. Without fail, it only works when you involve experts. This means: All service providers are concerned with high client attention.

Where is your ideal?

I'm not just imagining it, I've been practicing it for a long time. I already have 50 IT people from other companies in this building on the second floor. They are also in the gym and doing the same Pilates class as my other staff. They smoke cigarettes together or I see them in the cafeteria. They talk to each other. And that's good. IT means people business. The world of digitization needs people! This creates ideas and things that may be easy to develop with new technologies. And then colleagues come to me with a proof of concept and say we have worked that out.

FACTS & FIGURES

With the spin-off of the E.ON Group in 2016, Uniper took over the core business of power generation in Europe and Russia as well as global energy trading, especially with gas. Power is primarily generated from conventional energy sources like hydro, coal, and gas. In 2017, Uniper SE generated sales of 72.2 billion euros with 14,000 employees in 40 countries.

T-Systems has everything in the drawer, everything! For digitization and transformations. If I want to operate both as an IT manager at the same time, and I have to, I am always latently in the emergency room. And then, as a CIO in the hospital, I just want to go to the head physician and explain my complaints. Most suppliers have not mastered this.

Maybe because they did not understand?

Maybe. But it works like this: As chief physician in the hospital, I cannot do all the surgeries myself, but I know the people who can. That's no easy task, because technology has developed so rapidly. Who can use the cloud, IoT, SaaS, machine learning, and algorithms at the same time? T-Systems can form such surgical teams. I'll reword the question for myself: how can I get the best from all suppliers? Not by making a tender with procurement every time and winning the one that is the cheapest. I need a small number of partners with whom I speak regularly. I want to have them near me. And I can do that.

If necessary, there is the presentation technique PechaKucha, which at that time was something completely new. We practiced intensively for two weeks, came here, and had an extremely positive experience because we brought in our personality. I think that was exactly what you wanted to do: with a clear roadmap along your strategy and knowing which partner to follow.

Absolutely. A little like casting. 15 slides, only pictures, no text. Each presented in 20 seconds. However, the preparation is utter insanity, because you have to perfectly reproduce what you want to say in 20 seconds, and that is a skill. What we also saw: at that moment, we had all the suppliers in the room and most of them found it really uncomfortable – to roll out ideas, concepts, and concrete directions in front of competitors. But competitors must find ways to work together. It will never be the case that I give everything to one supplier. That is not reality. All account teams are greedy and want to win. There's a lot of emotion involved that makes us all inefficient. And PechaKucha in this format brings the momentum we need. As a result, we were able to quickly select one of the most convincing suppliers to specifically integrate the T-Systems ideas and solutions into our innovation strategy for the coming years.

In September 2016, German magazine "Die Zeit" ran an article with a title that translates as "E.ON brings its grubby kid to the stock market." Since then, the grubby kid's stock price has risen by almost 150 percent. What does your IT have to do with this development?

When I virtually took over Uniper's IT department at E.ON, the annual budget was more than 300 million euros. This year we will get along with 30 percent less and the performance will remain the same. The stock price of Uniper has risen, because you can see that profit is generated sustainably. I now give back € 114 million EBIT to the Group and thus to the shareholders. Which the share price reflects. We are also very proud of IT. The relationship between business and IT has changed completely compared to that time. The motivation in my unit today is the highest I've ever had. Because we see, we have a different relationship. And that is not far from perfect.

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