



CONFEDERACIÓN
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Leading in positive

Interview with Francisco Marín

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“The most complete leaders I have met had commitment, honesty and knowledge in common”



Francisco Marín | General Director of the Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI)

In Francisco Marín's opinion, the digital revolution entails, in addition to a technological change, a change in mentality. It forces companies to transform their business models and requires leaders to be able to adapt. According to the General Manager of the CDTI, today's executives must be able to manage diverse teams and have very heterogeneous knowledge. They must also be honest, committed and know what they are talking about.

What role does technology play in companies' competitive strategies?

Today competitiveness essentially equals technology, because competitiveness is no longer gained on the basis of costs. We can only improve our competitive position in the world if we are able to produce innovations that improve our position in the value chain.

Do you notice new trends from Spanish companies when they request financing for R&D&i projects?

We observe a positive response that responds to Spanish companies' better understanding of the world. They have understood that internationalisation is a fact and that, as a result, new ways of carrying on business

are necessary in order to meet the demands of more global markets. This translates, for example, into Spanish companies' improved position in the Horizon 2020 programme, where Spain is the leader of some of the most paradigmatic examples, such as the SME initiative, and is the leading European country, with a level of participation of more than 16%.

Let's take a brief look at the future. In the next decade, what structural changes could Spanish companies undergo?

Spanish companies will undergo lots of structural changes, such as those arising from the digital revolution, which relate fundamentally to two things. On the one hand, the changes are related to

“Technology entrepreneurs have to love risk and endeavour, in addition to having a magnificent knowledge base”

integrating technologies which are levers, such as globalised communications, automation, robotics or the incorporation of intelligence through advanced algorithms and new programming languages. On the other, companies have to understand that the digital revolution forces them to change their way of understanding the business.

In your opinion, what are the most noteworthy characteristics of technology entrepreneurs?

Basically, a technology entrepreneur has to love risk. If they don't love risk, they will certainly fail. Then, they have to have a magnificent knowledge base. Technology entrepreneurship is related to knowledge and to work. Therefore, from my point of view, a great love for endeavour is also necessary.

You have significant ties to the business world and you have combined your private activity with intense dedication to associative bodies.

I am a businessman who has great respect for the public sector, and I feel obliged to work for my company, but also for the society where I work. In one way or another, it is like the public-private undertakings that are so in vogue at present.

How do you think the figure of the leader has evolved? What do you need now that you did not need before?

Things are more complicated for the leader. Knowledge has become diversified, it has become completely heterogeneous and today it is impossible for anyone to understand a reality in its entirety. The leader has to be able to combine the knowledge and skills of the members of the team and capitalise on the advantages arising from combining diverse knowledge that might stem from different cultures, technologies and geographical areas. Therefore, today's leader has to be global, and have tremendously high people-management skills.

Moving on now to training, at present what are leaders' main training needs?

To the most traditional vertical training we must add a large amount of fundamental transversal knowledge, such as languages. Today, if you want to have an international presence, you must be able to communicate with third parties using common languages. Technology-based knowledge is also essential, such as knowledge of social networks, advanced IT or data analysis and processing mechanisms.

And, continuing in this vein, if you could create an ideal leader or executive, what three qualities would you choose?

For me, the main quality of a leader is honesty. And honesty is related to commitment. The most complete leaders who I have met over the course of my career had in common a very intense commitment, bombproof honesty and lastly, lots of knowledge. You can't try to be a leader if you don't know what you're talking about. Knowledge, honesty and commitment.

And now to finish off, regarding your organisation, the CDTI, what characterises the institution?

The CDTI celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. It is an institution that has gone through different stages since its creation and today it is very clear as regards what it has to do. Its mission is simple: it has to help companies based in Spain to improve their competitiveness through the intensive inclusion of technology when defining their portfolio of products and services. And how does it go about this? On the basis of three lines of action: advising these companies, financing their innovative activities and internationalisation. To fulfil these objectives, the CDTI's modern organisation is based on a matrix structure. Nowadays, we are present in 28 countries; today it is practically impossible to get on a plane and not bump into a colleague from the CDTI on the plane with you.

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