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Fernando Silva

“Responsibility, innovation and excellence are key to the transformation of companies and society.”

Fernando Silva | President and CEO of Siemens Spain

Fernando Silva became president of Siemens Spain in December 2024. He is Portuguese and has a degree in electronic engineering from the Lisbon School of Engineering (ISEL). He has more than twenty-five years’ experience at the company where he began his career in the energy sector in 1999. He was general manager for Spain and Portugal in Energy Management, managing the portfolio of transport, distribution and energy supply infrastructure companies. Between October 2011 and September 2014 he held the post of general manager of the Low- and Medium-Voltage Power Distribution and Smart Grid divisions of the Infrastructure and Cities sector.

How do you define your leadership style?

My style is very open, very transparent, characterised by communication and permanent listening because I like to think that all our colleagues and partners can contribute something to the company’s strategy and when we have a strategy, they are committed to it because they have been listened to. Dedicating a lot of time to customers, partners and the workforce is my style, it is how I like to do things and, obviously, there are responsibilities to the shareholders, but the focus is totally on customers, partners and the people I lead..

“Responsibility is the main value and what I recommend to all young people, and to everyone, is to always maintain your personal and business ethics”

What are the values that should guide a leader?

Responsibility, and what I recommend to all young people and to everyone is to always maintain your personal and business ethics and keep them at the heart of your decision-making process, and always respect everyone because respect is essential - mutual respect so that you can be recognised, and to generate trust. And, obviously, there are another two important areas: increasingly, innovation, as technology evolves rapidly and innovation is essential. Also, excellence means doing things well and not just doing them for the sake of it and, therefore, I would say responsibility, innovation and excellence are the three essential areas.

"I would like to think that I could also help Spain become an absolute leader in Europe"

What does international experience bring to the strategic vision?

C I think you learn a lot from getting to know the cultures and realities of different countries and it prepares you much better for facing the challenges of leading a company, or a team or department in different situations and, therefore, I think multiculturalism is a very important area when it comes to your leadership and management competencies.

What are the major challenges facing companies and society?

First, they must have an internal digitalisation strategy, they have to support their employees to use personal productivity tools, they have to redesign their processes to make them more efficient and potentially more able to be digitalised. And, lastly, when you have worked on your area of responsibility, you have worked on your processes so that you can present a customer support strategy to the market and assist customers with digitalisation, which involves connectivity, AI and cybersecurity as the three cornerstones.

What is your greatest challenge at the head of Siemens Spain?

We develop technology with a purpose. When I finish my term of office here in Spain, I hope I will be able to say that I contributed to the country's de-carbonisation and sustainability strategy, that I was able to generate employment; it is very important to me to think that 4,000-5,000 people are involved in our day-to-day work and we support their families to have a better life.

And I also think it is very important - and this is a challenge for me - for Spain to become a leader in Europe. It does not make sense that we always think of Germany and France as the leaders in Europe and that Spain is not at the same level. Therefore, I would like to think that I could also help Spain become an absolute leader in Europe.

I think that Spain has a very specific nature in that it has a regional set-up by which I mean that the regions in Spain are, intrinsically, a very powerful ecosystem and so what we do at Siemens is we have a strategy of maintaining a regional set-up, a regional organisation. We have ten regional offices and in each region we identify which are the most important customers. We identify who the customers are, what industries have a competitive advantage in each region. We identify who can contribute local execution capacity and a local service capacity. And this is a strategy I think is very interesting and works very well in Spain, because obviously we have a very powerful country, but each region has its main areas and its competitive advantages. So, then you have to adapt your strategy to a regional strategy as well.

What levers could position Spain as a leader?

With regard to resources, renewables are an essential area because what we have now is the de-carbonisation and electrification of the economy and I would start with renewables because I think energy is essential for the electrification of the economy, renewables are a unique resource we have in Spain which, in addition, helps us with de-carbonisation, but also competitiveness since they are very competitive. After that, I think there are a couple of sectors where we can be leaders. The area of green hydrogen, which is going to be vital for energy but also essential for making many products green, like steel for example and other products that we want, such as chemical products and so hydrogen is another area in which we can be leaders. Lastly, data centres. We should not forget that data centres are essential to the digital economy, and increasingly software and AI need data centres and we also have what we need to lead in the area of data centres.

How should a leader act in a collaborative environment?

I think you need to identify the ecosystem in which you want to work, you have to identify who can complement your capabilities, your market offering and by that we mean universities, R&D centres, certain government and administration situations, having partners who complement your own offering. So, identifying the ecosystem, who can contribute and complement your capabilities is very important. Why? Because technology evolves very quickly and there is no company that can solve all its problems without having support. Therefore, creating an ecosystem and thinking that today we are partners, tomorrow we are competitors and the day after that we are suppliers and do that very openly.

What skills do the new generations need?

I think you need to combine your capabilities, your technical training, with who you are. If you are an engineer, mathematician or physicist, or whatever you are, you have to combine your technical capabilities which must be solid with soft skills, the behavioural competencies you also need to bring. Why is this? Because, in the end, the ability to communicate, continuous learning, working in multidisciplinary teams, understanding different cultures are as important as the technical side.

"No company can resolve everything on its own: we need to build open ecosystems"

And we should not forget an area which I think we can still improve on in Spain which is languages, by which I mean, learning English and speaking English as well as you speak Spanish, Catalan or Galician is very important because you need to find an international career and then, perhaps, return to Spain but you are going to come back stronger, more capable and you are going to be able to reach another level in terms of functions.

I think that engineering, mathematics and physics degrees are very important and we need talent at a university level but we also need many people with technical studies, meaning, we need to invest in dual training to prepare technicians because the prospects for a good mechanic and electrician or welder are excellent, so you can have just as great a career without needing to have a university degree.

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