



## SPECIAL REPORT

## There's No Digital Company Without **Software**

It has been at the center of attention, proof enough of the crucial position software now holds in terms of industrial manufacturing. The first edition of the Forum Software Industriale, promoted by ANIE Automazione, took place on February 6<sup>th</sup> in Milan. Investment in software solutions, currently helped by state tax incentives for 2019, are fundamental for real digitalization of production.

**"I**ndustrial software is central to digital transformation". With these words, Fabio Massimo Marchetti, head of ANIE Automazione Industrial Software group, launched the Forum on February 6<sup>th</sup>. This sentence can be considered the fulcrum of a day which, as well as presenting the latest solutions available from producers, also focused on an inescapable question for manufacturers today: "Digital transformation is not just an opportunity but a necessity, companies not following this evolution will simply find themselves cut off from the market", added Marchetti. This is a concept crossing the market from multi-nationals to SMEs.

To get to grips with all of this, follow the many presentations made during the day and visit the specially designed exhibition area, there

were more than 800 people, coming together in the spectacular surroundings of the Sala Cavallerizza at the National science and technology museum in Milan. The Forum format was the tried and tested system used by Messe Frankfurt Italia: an open session to kick off, followed by the chance to get hands on with the various technologies on display, split across the morning and afternoon sessions, on this occasion dedicated to smart manufacturing, industrial cyber security and virtual manufacturing. A round table discussion closed proceedings focusing on future challenges.

### Creating culture to foster a shared system

"Why should an industrial software forum exist?" asked Fabrizio Scovenna, president of ANIE Automazione. "It helps to create the

4.0 culture that the digital revolution rightly imposes: to reach the vast world of SMEs that have not yet set their digital future up completely, but also to widen the skills required to make this much more efficient production method possible". This is taking place in an Italian market where automation grew by +8.3% in 2018, and should continue this trajectory in 2019.

Moving on to the need to create a system rather than working in single, isolated cases, Alessandro Mattinzoli, councillor for Economic development in Lombardy had this to say: "As a region, we are convinced that digitalization and automation are the levers leading to positive change".

### Change is also about factory management

"We have been trying to shake the country awake from the slumber it had fallen into, and I am delighted to see so many of the community here today to discuss industrial software", said Elio Catania, president of the Industrial

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federation's digital arm. "We must understand that there is a direct link between quantity of innovation and economic growth".

According to Catania, there are three pillars to the digital transformation: the ability, thanks to the power of technological growth, to pick up information from the plant, processing it into highly useful "big data", a process that doesn't have exorbitant costs for companies. "Rather than the technological model, it is the way factories are managed that must change: Italy is full of digitalized and robotics based factories, but this can only have a relatively small effect if there is no integration between them, improving the value chain".

Since 2015, political institutions have been doing their part, creating incentive plans and founding applied research centers aiding companies to make the switch, the Competence Center and Digital Innovation Hub to name

but two. The state budget for 2019 in this sector, with certain small modifications, has remained largely unchanged, confirming the most important measures undertaken in the past. The danger to avoid at all costs, is that of a nation split in two where one part fully embraces the digital transformation and (already now) is garnering the rewards coming from this, while another lags behind, risking losing competitiveness, meaning serious risk to employment. It is crucial to achieve a production system with the widest possible reach, involving all players, even the smallest companies".

### Focus on ROI

"The incentives introduced by the Industry 4.0 plan, added Fabio Massimo Marchetti, certainly regard software too - but they cannot represent a motor for investment. The key element is ROI. It is no coincidence that together with

the University of Florence and Pisa and the Sant'Anna high school in Pisa, the ANIE Automazione industrial software working group has created a highly evolved ROI modelling system". A system that was presented during the Forum.

"The route towards digitalization is a gradual one, one of continuous improvement that is founded on disruptive technology", said Marchetti. There are some fundamental points guiding digital transformation: from data management to skill sets; from incentives to the increasing convergence between OT and IT.

Speaking of skills, a study conducted by the Politecnico University in Milan, involving 72 companies has shown the digital pathway leading to an increase in labor costs of around 10% with each employee enjoying added professional value of 25%. ●

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