

Technology can revolutionize productivity and reduce risk

Interview with *Mariana Garstea*, General Manager, SIXENSE Romania



Q: What is your view for 2019 in your industry and what are your expectations for this year? As a CEO, what are the main challenges you perceive in your industry momentarily?

Mariana Garstea: Before I answer, I must make a brief introduction to the field of activity I am involved with and to the organization I belong to.

In structural engineering, safety is a huge factor, and this is where SIXENSE can help. The ultimate goal of SIXENSE is to provide information about the performance of structures in order to facilitate rational decision making with respect to their integrity management.

In doing so, our solutions offer comprises a very wide range of activities which, through different technologies, collect knowledge about the performance of structures over their life-cycle. On this basis, efficient remedial actions to counter deterioration, damage, extreme loads and unintended use may be timely identified and implemented so that an appropriate level of safety for personnel and qualities of the environment may be secured and life-cycle costs minimized.

In my opinion, this area is growing, but with great care and a lot of market education. It is a growth influenced by several factors that we must consider: the development of office, residential markets, road and rail infrastructure, the construction and refurbishment of dams, the awareness of structural and geotechnical risks by all those involved in design, construction and asset management processes; a very critical element - the budgeting of these works, the outdated legislation, etc.

Talking more in detail about the risks in construction,

we should mention that nowadays construction projects are initiated in complex and dynamic environments resulting in circumstances of high uncertainty and risk.

I believe that risk management in construction should be a topic of discussion in the events, that every construction project to go through a process of risk identification, assessment and undoubtedly that all risks should be monitored through specific methods. How a construction project team takes and manages risk can be the difference between a successful project and an unsuccessful one. I will refer only to some technical risks and I must say that no risk is inconceivable and therefore cannot be ignored: errors in completion of structural / geotechnical / foundation, late surveys that are incomplete or wrong, hazardous waste, miscalculated preliminary site investigation, change in seismic criteria, inadequate and incomplete design and the list is open. The risk assessment across a project's life cycle is vital and can be a powerful way of making it more resilient and ultimately more profitable for all the participants across the value chain.

Q: What has been your company's dynamic in 2019? What are the main engines of this growth? Is the growth coming more from the internal market or from the international market?

Mariana Garstea: The trend is positive, with solid projects opening new market segments. It is absolutely gratifying to see this.

There are several growth factors with a positive impact, namely: the intensification of verifications by

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the control authority - namely the ISC, the high level of understanding of the monitoring of the structural and geotechnical risks during the execution and exploitation phases of the constructions, the employment by the developers and by the public authorities of specialized teams who know the field and the right approach, the need for relevant information on the behavior of civil engineering and infrastructure, etc.

For SIXENSE Romania, at present, the growth is coming strictly from internal market, as SIXENSE is an international group, present in over 23 countries and each business unit is in charge of its own geographical market.

Q: What is your biggest achievement for 2019? How do you measure your achievements?

Mariana Garstea: I think that it's easy to measure financial success. You see a number in your bank account and compare it to others' bank accounts, but I will not point on this here.

For me, for SIXENSE, the greatest achievements in 2019, which are largely due to the sustained work of the entire team in 2018, are the opening of a new geographic market, namely Bulgaria with a huge potential for growth; the opening of new business lines in Romania, like dams and bridges; the development of my team - overall the whole organic growth of SIXENSE SEE.

Q: What is the impact of the digital revolution on your company, on your industry and in addressing your clients' needs?

Mariana Garstea: For my part, digital technology is the answer to improve both value and safety as the construction industry rises to meet the challenge of the market need for greater construction.

This is an extremely exciting time for SIXENSE GROUP, who is involved in using and developing construction technology. The construction data standards are now maturing and are proving that technology can revolutionize productivity and reduce risk by the right solutions in Engineering, Monitoring, Software and Digitization. SIXENSE has specialized solutions that cover the whole lifecycle of infrastructure from construction and maintenance to dismantling/demolition. Our development of digital asset management solutions and our experience in data management have made us world leaders in these technologies.

We offer a comprehensive and complete range of

services, combining our specialties, in order to address our clients in their need to control their sites, assets and the surrounding environment. We undertake surveying, diagnosis and modelling to understand asset and infrastructure performance and optimize their management.

Q: As a CEO, you must also lead the transformation process. How do you do it in your company?

Mariana Garstea: By making the transformation meaningful for my team and for our clients. Everyone has a role to play in this transformation process, with priority being emphasized on fruitful completion of this endeavor. Employees need faster feedback on a continuous basis, an agile approach, ongoing reassessment; also our clients, through all the innovative construction technologies provided by SIXENSE within the projects.

In my opinion, digital transformation is not just about disruption or technology; human element is vital on all levels: in the stages of transformation as such (collaboration, ecosystems, skills, culture, empowerment etc.) and obviously in the goals of digital transformation.

The main objectives of the digital transformation are change and digital innovation. And here, SIXENSE is a pioneer. The group has developed and is developing a lot of innovative solutions for the construction market, from digitizing the structures to providing tools for project management, risk management and asset management.

Q: Going personal now, how do you prepare yourself to become better as a leader? How do you get out of your comfort zone? How do you find the right work-life balance?

Mariana Garstea: I would start by mentioning that I am a leader with an atypical style of management, a transformational leader, who empowers and develops followers.

I really want to emphasize that I have a genuine passion and enthusiasm for my work. Due to the optimism and the massive invested energy, I managed to change mentalities, behaviors, well-grounded practices in my field of activity.

How do I get better? I am an autodidact and self-critical person with a daily analysis of what could be done better and with a continuous identification and development of the qualities and competencies of my team members.

If you follow my career evolution, you can easily see

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that the comfort zone does not exist. I have continuously been challenged to grow up. I set goals that seemed untouchable, but they just gave me the rhythm of growth, the way of organizing my daily activity.

I'm not the best example for a person with a right work-life balance. I'm aware and I take it as much as I can. I try to make the most of my moments with my family, even if there are not as many as I would like.

Q: What's your "Be careful at..." advice for 2019?

Mariana Garstea: My advice for 2019 is "Be Careful What You Say Yes To And To Whom".

With this advice, I want to draw the attention to the construction market, the big players, the great infrastructure managers, to the quality of services provided by some pseudo-specialists who minimize the importance of safety of construction and mislead the market.

I pay a huge respect to the real professionals, but I will always be against opportunism and superficiality when it comes to the safety of human life.

There are a few basic elements that should be considered during the selection process of the service provider: similar projects, financial standing, the team of specialists involved in the project, the communication process with the supplier, a visit to its premises is welcome, a clarification meeting the same, the technical analysis of the offer is mandatory, the way of analyzing the offers (compare apples with apples).

By clarifying each of these elements, we can avoid those cases when developers or main contractors, being at the start of the execution phase, will face the critical situation when the service provider cannot

deliver the necessary equipment, does not have the specialized team, does not understand the phenomena which they have to monitor or even worse.

My call is not to just look at what is below the line (and here I refer to the "summary price") without a minimum analysis of the constitutive elements of the offer.

I would not have thought that we must constantly remember why a quality service is so important:

- Builds trust with our Clients;
- Fuels Word of Mouth & Social Media Recommendations;
- Produces Less Customer Complaints & Returns;
- Produce a Higher ROI.

In addition to those mentioned above, which is specific to SIXENSE activity domain, quality service equates to peace of mind, convenience and significant cost savings proving to be a valuable tool during the construction process. Through a quality structural monitoring we can help you predict certain problems, prevent situations from becoming critical and reduce time, costs and risk in the process.

Q: These are all our questions. Please share with us if you have something else to add for our readers.

Mariana Garstea: Returning to the key message of SIXENSE to the market: innovation is in our DNA. The worlds of construction and industry are in a continuous state of transformation since the arrival of digital management tools.

SIXENSE is specialized in digital solutions for the construction and infrastructure management sectors; we are a strategic partner for all organizations and companies seeking to initiate their digital transition.



SIXENSE Romania
21A-23 Hagi Ghita St., Bucharest 1
Phone: +40 758 015 833
<https://www.sixense-group.com/ro/>

