

CEO Interview

“In today’s world, business performance cannot be decoupled from environmental and social ambitions.”

Elie Girard

Chief Executive Officer, Atos

What were Atos’s highlights in 2019?

2019 was the year of Atos repositioning as a pure digital player, with the acquisition of Syntel and the disengagement from Worldline, while enhancing shareholder return, in particular with the distribution of €2.3 billion of Worldline shares and by reimbursing the Group’s debt.

We also ended the year on a strong note, with an organic growth above +2% in the fourth quarter. These results were notably driven by an acceleration of our performance in cloud, and in big data and cybersecurity across the year.

From a financial perspective, we also improved our operational profitability in 2019 and delivered a solid free cash flow exceeding 600 million euros. I am proud of the dedication of the Atos teams in attaining such a performance.

I believe that this strong performance is a reflection of our particular ability, both as a company and as individuals, to associate technological excellence and industry-specific expertise, in order to deliver innovation to support our customers’ end-to-end digital transformation with a superior user experience.

It is precisely what demonstrated our 110,000 colleagues across the globe during the Covid-19 crisis by providing outstanding reaction to our clients’ challenges through the implementation of the “Always Ready” program which combines the Group’s solutions specifically geared to the current situation. As international leader in digital transformation, we have also mobilized our technological leadership, our skills and our innovation resources to participate to the global effort against Covid-19.

Today, our minds and efforts are focused towards the post-Covid period as we are actively preparing the “new normal” – this new era which will witness an acceleration of the specific needs for our clients, in particular Data Platforms, Cybersecurity, Cloud migration, Digital Workplace and Decarbonization, that we have embedded into our “Future Ready” portfolio of solutions.

In relation to 2020, how do you see the year ahead?

The Group is solidly positioned to navigate through the crisis thanks to longstanding relationships with its clients in all sectors, and also thanks to resilient activities and to a solid balance sheet which offers a strong financial flexibility. However, we will succeed mainly thanks to the enthusiasm and the aim of our teams to continue to take our Company to the next level.

With the launch of *Spring* transformation plan, the Group is moving to an Industry approach, developing and attracting the highest level of expertise in each Industry, reshaping its portfolio of offerings as well as its go-to-market to serve our clients even better.

To make this transformation a success, we invest in our people – we help our employees acquire new digital skills, to achieve relevant certifications for our clients, and elevate the “employee experience”. We invest in technologies, including bolt-on acquisitions targeted in key offerings of our portfolio. Last but not least, we invest in our multiple partnerships and alliances.

What will be the key trends of 2020 and beyond?

The first trends are adaptability and innovation: our clients’ needs evolve at a brisk pace and it will be amplified by the impacts off the Covid-19 crisis. They all need a partner with the capabilities and flexibility to anticipate and adapt.

This need for adaptability applies to every area of their business, from remote collaboration across the globe to smarter production sites.

Second trend: the company as a platform – the development of digital platforms has become a must-have in most industries. These platforms support the explosion of business-critical applications, many of which require local processing of data.

Both trends serve one common goal: being able to deliver a superior customer experience – the experience of their customers – which includes the ability to bring them innovation in real time.

Both trends share a common prerequisite: security, in the broadest possible sense. It encompasses cybersecurity and data privacy, but also data portability, assuring them that they do not depend on a single technology provider, particularly when it comes to the Cloud.

Finally, the tidal wave which is even more amplified by the current crisis is the wave of decarbonization. Our clients are increasingly eager to join forces with a partner who can support them on this path, and accelerate their journey towards being sustainable, carbon-neutral, even aiming at positive carbon impact.

Atos is ideally positioned to seize the opportunities brought by all those key trends and to enhance value creation for its clients and all its stakeholders.