

The Hindu, India: Cognizant CEO Brian Humphries Says Growth in Digital Business is Top Priority



“Brian Humphries took over as the Chief Executive Officer of Cognizant in April this year. He has taken charge at an interesting time, when new areas of business such as cloud and digital are become mainstream, while competition is increasing, even as trade protectionism around the world has come to stay. He says that his priorities are to do get growth rolling at the earliest and to accelerate company's digital play.

What is going to be your strategy for digital and how are you going to accelerate this piece of business?

The good news and bad news in digital are one and the same for us. The good news is we are actually growing in the digital arena, as an industry as a whole; of course, there are some companies that you could argue are faster in digital. But as a category, the digital market is growing 10 - 12%; we're growing 19%. The opportunity for us is to make that portion of our business bigger. It's about 30%, or slightly less than a third of our business, today. North America is 76% of our business and our international business is therefore only 24%; that needs to be bigger. Now I am not going to make it bigger by not growing North America, we have to grow North America faster than we have been growing in recent years. But we have to have outside growth in international markets as well.



But despite the gap, your growth seems faster than the rest of the industry, here.

We needed to evolve our sales compensation which will be addressed in the coming months. On top of that, while I still argue that the Cognizant brand is very strong, in North America and India, the brand attributes, in my mind, are not necessarily digital per se; we tend to think of Cognizant as something really strong on operations, in testing, in application development and maintenance. I actually hired a new CMO in the last two months, who can help me drive our digital brand attributes better and help us get ahead.

You have been vocal about M&A to push up digital. Will we see a few acquisitions soon?

M&A is not a strategy, it is an enabler. In the last few months, we spent a huge amount of time thinking where we are strategically, and that culminated last week with a Board of Directors presentation, which is a once-per-year session on our strategy. The presentation was very much along the lines of where we are in our legacy to our traditional businesses, how we ought to optimise and protect that. It includes sub-categories like growing more internationally, really being more aggressive and competitive, being more efficient and optimising delivery.

The second portion of our strategy was around the key digital battle grounds that we need to win. We have identified four areas in particular that are central to us: Internet of Things, I believe that 5G will unlock the power of IoT; the second is Cloud (consultancy and migration); Data; and Digital Engineering. I will do M&A in areas that supplement my strategic direction.”

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