

Tudor Ivanov Driven by Challenges

"If an IT project fails, nine times out of ten it's down to a lack of coordination," says Tudor Ivanov. To offer a better service, this Oracle alumnus founded Pulsar Consulting.



Tudor Ivanov fell into electronics as a child. "My mother, an electronics technician, used to take me along to the labs at the National Institute of Physics," he recalls. "We were a family of intellectuals, which in Romania guaranteed income a bit above average." That, and a place at the Polytechnic Institute. It was on the Bucharest campus that he discovered computing. "That's where I got the sense that IT was going to become essential in telecoms." At the time, Romanian graduates had nothing to worry about: based on their results, they were handed a list of firms to report to. That's how he began his career in maintenance at the national electricity grid operator, before joining its IT department shortly after. But then, in 1989, revolution swept the country. Ceausescu fell, and Tudor Ivanov took to the

streets, caught up in the heady sense of freedom in the air. He soon grew disillusioned, though. "The old guard very quickly took the movement over for itself," he says. Threatened at work, he was advised to put his activism on hold. These reasons, among others, pushed him and his wife to choose exile. He found himself in Prague, where he was relieved of his savings, then in Aachen, and finally in the Liège region, where he applied for political asylum. "In the space of a few months I did every job going: cook, mason, lumberjack, electrician, gardener, and so on. A rite of passage." Eventually, he landed a job closer to his skills at Innomatic, an electronic games manufacturer. He spent eighteen months developing prototypes,

as well as servicing and repairing machines in cafés. As luck would have it, he learned that Forem and Siemens were offering a five-month training programme to become a systems analyst. He jumped at the chance. He did an internship at Star Informatic, a company specialising in mapping and facility-management software. At the end of it, the Liège-based company decided to hire him. "But after three years, I felt stuck. My initiatives were being ignored, and there was talk of restructuring." One evening, he happened upon an article about Oracle. It was love at first sight, on both sides. The day after he applied, the world's leading database company called him, then opened its doors to him. "I spent sleepless nights getting up to speed, learning my new employer's expertise and my clients' business at the same time." His clients included UCB Pharma and Belgacom, where he spent two years. That's where the idea of founding Pulsar Consulting was born, together with Michel Goossens. "As a consultant, you're always missing certain strings to pull - client contacts, budgets, and so on. I saw many projects fall apart for lack of coordination. Our idea was to offer a better service by managing our projects ourselves, from end to end." That became a reality in 1998. While the crises that hit the sector didn't make for an easy take-off, Pulsar is now on a growth trajectory: €1.5 million in turnover, with sixteen staff and nine freelancers. And ambitious plans too, such as selling in-house-developed project-management software. "I launched this venture just as I was gaining the status I'd dreamed of when I arrived here," concludes this avid reader and occasional handyman. "It's a slightly crazy challenge, but rising to it is what drives me."

