



On a path to growth: Gabriel Valet and his medical imaging company Scan Expert.

# Slice by Slice to Success in Romania

In less than five years, Scan Expert has become a top player in the Romanian medical imaging market. However, as the company grew, so did a pressing challenge: Finding medical experts in the country's underfinanced public healthcare system. Scan Expert's owner Gabriel Valet decided to tackle this challenge by reaching out to the company producing his radiology equipment.

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**G**abriel Valet, 49, does not consider himself a businessman – a fact he even expresses in his casual outfits.

Valet started working in public healthcare in the 1990s, as a radiology technologist at a hospital in eastern Romania. In his spare time, he worked as manager of a construction company. In 2012, Valet took over Scan Expert. At that time, the company was working with just one hospital. By 2017, it had branched out into four other regions – and Valet wants it to continue to grow.

## Catching up in a competitive market

In small cities like Pânceni, which has a population slightly above 30,000, Scan Expert provides the only CT scanner available. It is located in the emergency hospital. However, the hospital did not have enough personnel to cover the 24-hour shifts needed for the CT services. So Valet established a system in which an expert from another city connects to the Pânceni scanner and performs the examinations remotely in real time.

When he took over the company in 2012, Valet decided to rise above the competition by investing in better systems and better personnel. He had both the medical skills to understand the domain (thanks to his job as a radiology technologist) and commercial expertise (gained while managing the construction business).

In 2014, he went through a period of uncertainty when one of his early systems, an old 4-slice CT scanner, broke down. Valet decided not to buy a new one. During a trip to western Romania, he visited a clinic that specialized in radiology. "When I saw a beating heart being scanned, I was truly impressed," recalls Valet. He decided on the spot that he wanted the machine that made such images possible: The SOMATOM Sensation 64-slice CT scanner from Siemens Healthineers.

Basically, CT scans allow doctors to see cross-sectional images of the body, called "slices." More slices mean more information about the particular organ or tissue.

While the heart can be reached with a catheter during coronary angiography, there is no such possibility where the brain is concerned. Here, radiology is crucial for diagnosis and surgery using CT scans.

"I find comfort in order, attention to detail, and excellence – and perhaps this is also what made me choose the 'Made in Germany' brand," says Valet.

### Healthcare expenditure in Romania

Romania has the lowest healthcare expenditure – 5.1% of GDP – in the EU, according to Eurostat. This is compared to over 10% in countries such as Germany, France, and Sweden.[3] Since 2007, over 43,000 doctors have left Romania to work in Western European countries. Many state that low salaries and poor working conditions within the public health system were their reasons for relocating.[4]



The Transylvanian city of Brasov, one of the Scan Expert locations, is known for its picturesque Old Town.



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## With the aid of a machine

A SOMATOM Sensation 64 eco CT scanner now sits in the Scan Expert clinic in Brasov, a city in Transylvania. The clinic also has a 1.5 T MRI system – a MAGNETOM Avanto with Tim+Dot from Siemens Healthineers – making it a leading medical imaging clinic in the region, says Valet.

Valet invites us to witness an MRI examination performed by Andrei Crăescu, a medical operator specializing in CT and MRI scans who has been an important member of the Scan Expert team for five years. He explains that newer technology also means less radiation for patients, as it calculates dose according to each patient’s body mass.

“Not all MRI systems can provide orthopedic examinations like this, but I chose to have all the options included for this MRI,” says Valet. The clinic’s MAGNETOM Avanto provides a dramatic reduction in acoustic noise, greater image consistency, and whole-body coverage with no need for repositioning, which makes scanning faster.

The clinic’s SOMATOM Sensation 64 eco scanner is used for a variety of examinations. Valet stresses its ability to conduct cardiac examinations, which not all CT scanners can perform.

This is important, because cardiovascular diseases are a known threat to the well-being of the

Romanian population. They account for 60% of all deaths – whereas the average in the EU is 37%.<sup>[1,2]</sup>

Valet is considering starting a public awareness campaign on the importance of preemptive heart tests, and offering discounts at his clinic. Apart from cardiac investigations, Scan Expert also performs imaging of the brain, lungs, thorax, abdomen, pelvis, and extremities.

## Refurbished with the latest software

The CT scanner bought by Scan Expert is a refurbished system. When Siemens Healthineers refurbishes a system, it takes a used scanner, makes sure that all its components function properly, replaces any that are not at their maximum efficiency, and installs the latest software.

It made the most sense to choose a refurbished SOMATOM Sensation 64 eco, says Valet. Even if a clinic in Romania has about the same number of patients as one in Western Europe, the prices for scans are three times lower, explains Valet. So the return on investment is much slower in the Romanian medical market.

Valet is keen to point out, however, that “refurbished” does not mean old or outdated, especially since refurbished systems have the latest software on the released hardware and therefore perform as if they were new.

According to Valet, technology is developing at such a fast pace that innovations are released every three to five years, with automation also on the rise.

## Automation: Not the end of jobs for radiologists

However, Valet does not think that radiologists will be obsolete in the future because of machines taking their place. He sees the challenge in finding the experts to make the most of these machines.

Valet believes Romania offers very limited scope for training experts in the field of radiology, so he thinks his best option is to collaborate with a major company such as Siemens Healthineers, from whom he buys his equipment.

His business relationship with Siemens Healthineers has grown closer during recent years, as

the two companies are in constant contact. This is not only because Scan Expert has access to the 24-hour service line in case of disturbances, but also because the companies share plans, needs, and expectations. Valet is therefore confident that they will find a way of addressing any other challenges together. ●

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### References

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[2] <http://www.ehnheart.org/cvd-statistics.html>

[3] [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Current\\_healthcare\\_expenditure,\\_2014\\_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Current_healthcare_expenditure,_2014_YB17.png)

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The statements by Siemens Healthineer’s customers described herein are based on results that were achieved in the customer’s unique setting. Since there is no “typical” hospital and many variables exist (e.g., hospital size, case mix, level of IT adoption) there can be no guarantee that other customers will achieve the same results.

According to Andrei Crăescu (left), a CT and MRI specialist, newer technology means less radiation for patients.

