

Benno Oderkerk, CEO and Co-Founder of Avantes, Receives EPIC Phoenix Award 2014 that Recognizes Entrepreneurship in Photonics

Avantes is the innovative worldwide supplier in miniaturized fiber optic spectrometers.



Benno Oderkerk, CEO and Co-Founder of Avantes receives the EPIC Phoenix Award 2014 from Carlos Lee, Director General of EPIC (European Photonics Industry Consortium). The award was presented at Avantes' headquarters in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands.

The story of Avantes starts in April 1994 with Luitzen Roosma and Benno Oderkerk in a shed in Eerbeek, The Netherlands. Not unusual for start-ups and entrepreneurs, in the evening hours both founders would modernize and decorate the shed as a company office. In the beginning they would sell a number of products from suppliers abroad in Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. No profit was made the first years and the founders had to live from savings money. Benno and Luitzen started to add value to their product lines by developing software and producing fiber optics.

In 1996 they were asked to organize all sales of one of their suppliers in Europe with the target to structure and expand the growth of their spectrometers business. They were quite successful to do so and introduced a full product range and many own developed accessories. In the year 2000, the company decided to continue as "Avantes" and bought a small spectrometer company in Amsterdam. That was the start of the development and production of the AvaSpec spectrometers. Then the most challenging period started. Avantes opened a US sales office and in 2002 they introduced their own designed spectrometers to the market. Competition was intense and the Euro was getting stronger and stronger, endangering the market success in the US. In 2002 Avantes consolidated the company from Amsterdam in Eerbeek, staff had to be laid-off, and the private property of the owners was put on the line to guarantee bank loans. This situation lasted from 2002-2004 until sales improved and the company was able to become profitable again. Since 2005, Avantes started to grow again, sales quadrupled, and the company has been profitable ever since. In 2007 and 2012, the company expanded by opening an office in China and the United Kingdom. In 2011 the headquarters relocated to a new 3000 sqm sustainable facility in Apeldoorn, which is completely energy efficient. Today Avantes is one of the largest worldwide suppliers in miniaturized spectrometers.

"The story of Avantes is an example that success is no accident, it is hard work, determination, perseverance. The EPIC Phoenix award is a symbol of the challenging realities that entrepreneurs face and the journey that this entails, I am honoured to present the award to Benno Oderkerk!" says Carlos Lee, Director General of EPIC.