Pim Kat, CEO and Founder of Technobis, Receives EPIC Phoenix Award 2015 that Recognizes Entrepreneurship in Photonics

Today Technobis Group is a solid and versatile group of companies, all with the same mission to combine technologies recognized by many large OEM customers in the field of High-Tech Systems, Aeronautics & Space, Medical, Pharmaceutical markets for their unique capabilities.

Pim Kat (left), CEO and Founder of Technobis, receives the EPIC Phoenix Award 2015 from Benno Oderkerk (right), member of the board of directors of EPIC. The award was presented on 9 April at EPIC's annual meeting in Paris, France.

"I'm really proud to receive this EPIC Phoenix award. It's particularly rewarding for me to have been recognized and acknowledged in such a remarkable group of entrepreneurs in photonics. Thanks to these ambitious people and innovative companies we've made great progress in photonics as an enabling technology." says Pim Kat, CEO and Founder of Technobis, after being presented with the prestigious award.

The story of Technobis actually starts some years earlier than the start of the company itself. The first two people at Technobis (Pim Kat and Bram Kruk) worked as Researcher and Research assistant at Hoogovens steel plant. In 1994 it was a hard time at Hoogovens and the larger research projects stopped. They were asked to help, outside the gate of Hoogovens plant, at companies, somehow linked to Hoogovens, where development projects for new instruments or equipment got completely stuck and people (mechanical, electrical, software etc.) starting to blame each other. They did four of these projects in about one year time and all developments finished successfully. Much to his surprise, at the last project and company, Pim was asked to be the successor of the director of the company and from that time on they started to think about becoming entrepreneurs.

After some discussions with the mother company they decided to start the company. The first of April 1996 was the first official day in the new founded company. The building used to be an empty winter storage for caravans. There was no heating, no water, no electricity, it all went wrong because of being a new start-up with no financial history and they had to pay off in cash to get things arranged. The work regarded building and supplying of machines they developed in the last project, while having a backlog in deliveries of about 50 machines. So they worked 12 hours a day, and becoming good friends with the local cafeteria owner. The company grew to about 9 people and soon the decision was taken to build a new facility in Uitgeest.

In 2005 Pim, Bram, Alex and John (the two group leaders in the company) did a buy-out from the mother company. From that moment on they could decide what to do and focus on their own ambitions. They started new business, Technobis Optronics in Eindhoven and one year later Technobis Fibre Optic Sensing. After making losses in those companies for some years, they closed down Optronics and moved TFT-FOS to Uitgeest. Bram Kruk retired and Pieter Dijkman (financial director) joined the company. The fibre optic sensing business already proved very promising but it was burning money faster than could be earned at Technobis Mechatronics. Even having the best FBG interrogator in the world did not help much.

New investors entered the company and some years of struggling with financials followed. The turnaround came when ASML asked Technobis to develop an interrogator with the incredible wavelength resolution of 0,1 femtometer. This required the drastic technology switch to integrated photonics. Pim already had some experience with that in a European project (Jeppix / Paradigm) with the group of Meint Smit (TUe). While developing the integrated photonics chip (and low noise electronics and low noise control electronics for the lasers and special ultra-narrow bandwidth FBG's) they put their standard interrogator chip designs on the same runs, resulting in a family of chip designs with incredible speed, resolution, multiplexing capacities. The company was growing to around 35 people. Soon it became impossible to measure during daytime because of vibrations from traffic and neighbours. In 2014 Technobis had a new facility build in Alkmaar with dedicated vibration isolated labs and office space for 50 employees. They moved over 1st of May 2014. Finding no partner for packaging optical chips for sensing applications in series, Technobis was more or less forced to set up their own production and started Technobis IPPS (integrated photonics packaging services) in January 2014. This company offers service to all starters in Integrated Optics and designs and supply packaged chips for all platforms (InP, SOI and TriPleXTM). In the meantime Technobis Mechatronics focused on instrument development for OEM customers using Precision mechanics, Photonics and Thermal stability resulting in a group of customers, mainly focused on microscopes, analyzers, laboratory instruments etc. building up a very sound business. January 2015 Technobis Group acquired Avantium Pharmatech which was renamed Technobis Crystallization Systems.

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"The story of Technobis 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 Pim Kat!" says *Benno Oderkerk*, CEO of Avantes, member of the board of directors of EPIC.

ABOUT EPIC

EPIC is the industry association that promotes the sustainable development of organisations working in the field of photonics in Europe. We foster a vibrant photonics ecosystem by maintaining a strong network and acting as a catalyst and facilitator for technological and commercial advancement. EPIC publishes market and technology reports, organizes technical workshops and B2B roundtables, coordinates EU funding proposals, advocacy and lobbying, education and training activities, standards and roadmaps, pavilions at exhibitions. www.epic-assoc.com