

HITEC, even the sky is not the limit

The garage band goes to space

The key to success lies in the sky. At least that is the case for HITEC Luxembourg, a 100% owned Luxembourg company, which provides sophisticated ground stations for space satellites. After 27 years, the company can look back on a strong development and international recognition. Asked about the company's success story, Managing Partner and CEO Yves Elsen cannot help but laugh a little. "It sounds like a typical narrative of the American Dream", he says. "In the beginning, it was literally just three people working in a garage."

Building a company

The three men in the garage were Pierre Hirtt, Nicolas Comes and Marco Trauffer. In 1986, they decide to found HITEC Luxembourg, and start operating out of a small space at Carrosserie Comes & Cie. They focus on special-purpose solutions for the Luxembourgish industry and start developing and improving the testing procedures on carbon black. When the Individual Pellet Hardness Tester (IPHT) is introduced to the international market, it puts HITEC Luxembourg on the map and acquires the first international customer, Mahinda Intertrade from India. In the 1990s, the three founders slowly begin to broaden the company's portfolio. HITEC Luxembourg participates in the development of the CITA traffic management system, and begins to offer project management. Elsen, who joined the company in 2003 as a partner and Executive Vice President, says the first breakthrough for HITEC Luxembourg occurred when SES ASTRA began commissioning from the local industry. "That's when we started the satellite ground segment development with six limited motion TT&C uplink antennas for SES ASTRA."

Space operations begin

Luxembourg's decision to join ESA marks the next big step for HITEC Luxembourg's space business. Together with SES ASTRA TechCom, the company is commissioned in 2006 to build two large full motion TT&C antenna systems to track the Galileo satellite fleet from the ground. The Luxembourgish companies not only design and manufacture the antenna systems, they are in charge of the on-site installation and training of operators. Shortly after, the company develops limited motion antennas for Vietnam's first satellite system. HITEC Luxembourg attracts the attention of the DLR (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt), resulting in a contract for a complete In Orbit Testing Ground station. Space success culminates when the company is selected to provision four antenna systems for the European Data Relay System (EDRS) satellite network.

Diversity and Innovation for growth

Despite the big steps into space, the company keeps its feet firmly on the ground. HITEC Luxembourg's portfolio is



From left to right: **Pierre Hirtt**, Founder & CTO, **Nicolas Comes**, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board and **Yves Elsen**, Managing Partner & CEO

deliberately broad. Test equipment for quality control of rubber fillers, such as DABS or CVST, continues to be an integral part of the product range. Public safety systems like DISP grant access to sensor information, videos and pictures and localization information for rescue teams. NoSaCo is a satellite communication system which is based on Satellite IP connection and provides a complete ICT infrastructure. "You have to constantly adapt and be flexible. Things change rapidly on the free market," Elsen points out. "Sometimes business is thriving, sometimes it is not. Our product diversity is kind of a safety net. The strong areas support the smaller ones, and that guarantees a safe work place for our employees."

Research and development are an integral part of the company's philosophy. During the last 17 years, HITEC Luxembourg has focused on improving its products and developing new solutions for the ever-changing market.

According to Elsen, constant research and development as well as strong quality management distinguish HITEC Luxembourg from its competitors. Indeed, the company's efforts are widely recognized. In July 2012, the Deutsche Bank Luxembourg presented Elsen with the foundation's award for the "unique combination of technological, economic and entrepreneurial competencies which have fostered the German-Luxembourgish cooperation in research and development". The Luxembourg location contributes to the company's growth as well. "Luxembourg, as a multilingual country, attracts highly qualified people from the German and French speaking countries. All of our employees are multilingual. That way, we can communicate even better with our clients and, in the future, international research teams," Elsen points out.

HITEC Luxembourg keeps looking ahead. The company is ready to expand as it develops new solutions. Among other things,

Green Technologies are one of the probable future endeavors. "It takes courage, the risk of undertaking, and innovation, to grow" says Yves Elsen. "But you must never forget to also sit down and listen. Listening to ideas from your employees and reacting to the client feedback will ultimately help your company grow –and sustain."

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