



# Interview

with Gerrit Boskaljon, Technetix

By Melissa Cogavin, Managing Editor, SCTE®

Technical director at Technetix and industry veteran Gerrit Boskaljon has recently retired and *Broadband Journal* persuaded him to take time out from scuba diving and meddling with computers to talk us through his impressive career.

## ***You have had a long and successful career in this field. How did you get started?***

Well my background was technical. I had a technical education and studied electronics. At that time we had to enlist in the army and I spent 4 years in the Royal Dutch Air Force as a radio engineer. I repaired radio navigation kit for aeroplanes. I really liked it. Then a friend who was working in an installing company told me a small company called Tratec had started and was looking for engineers, which was later bought by Technetix. There were maybe 6-7 people working there at the time and they wanted a technical R&D person, someone in production basically. I applied and got the job.

## ***What happened at Tratec?***

It was nice working there, I was mostly making FM and video head-end equipment, passive splitters and all kinds of RF solutions for customers. I worked there until Technetix took over Tratec in 2005, for 40 years!



## ***You didn't!***

I did! It was really nice working in a small company, doing development work and all other jobs necessary. You purchase your components and materials, build the PCB's and produced the product. I learned a lot, tried to grow the company and moved around the departments a lot. In 2005 we were bought by Technetix, which was owned by Paul Broadhurst.

### ***What was that experience like? Must have been quite an adjustment.***

Well it was a good fit really. There was maybe a €10-15m turnover for both companies at the time, both with different strengths. Technetix was really good at sales and logistics, Tratec was better technically. However, merging a Dutch company and an English company – there were some cultural differences.

### ***Really? How so?***

Tratec had offices in Denmark, Finland, Spain and Poland. It had a lot of international focus. Technetix was the same – its main office was in the UK but also growing European wide. The two companies produced a lot of the same products because essentially they were competitors at the time. It takes some time to evolve from rivals to friends, but we did get there and it was the best of both worlds.

In the beginning you have to get acquainted with your new colleagues and the different company culture, but soon we had mutual respect and we worked successfully as a team.

### ***How did your role change after the merger?***

I was doing commercial and technical work. I worked for a number of years on the technical side of things, but I was focused on developing products. I also studied management and marketing to broaden my horizons and develop myself. That led to roles in Sales, and then product management and the CTO team.

### ***Tell me more about that division.***

It was led by Jan Ariesen, who is the CTO, where we tried to investigate the future to see what technology would be interesting for Technetix in 5 years. Also, engineers in the CTO office do research on this and develop these technologies to find out how we can use this in our market. It was a good company to work for. There were a lot of opportunities to progress within the company and it helped to have the technical background once I moved into sales and marketing. Ultimately that broad experience helped get me to that position.

### ***What are you most proud of?***

I would have to say it's about the relationships I've had. I have had great relationships with our customers over the years and we worked together on a lot of systems and products for them.

Companies like UPC, Virgin Media, and Telenet – we developed a lot of products and provided a lot of solutions for them over the years.

Also I feel that understanding the problems customers have and then working with the R&D guys in order to come up with a solution, that was a great experience. I am proud of that. I enjoyed working with the technical guys and then liaising with the customers. In my role, you are an intermediate. I used both sides of the brain. I found that more often technically trained people can move into sales, but it doesn't really happen the other way round.

### ***Nobody was prepared for COVID-19 - it is probably the most successful disruptor in modern times. What do you think is on the horizon that we can try and prepare for in advance?***

COVID changed the world. No more travelling, all our work was by Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype. There was so much less contact with colleagues. In my work I can do a lot from home, but I have always liked to work closely with the engineers. I enjoy the process of discussion, checking. I like to challenge them and challenge myself.

And like everyone else, I missed the social contact - if you're working in the office and you meet at the coffee machine, walk in your lunch break and you learn a lot of things. I missed that. Before all this I spent five days at the office, lots of customer visits and a few days working at home. Technetix was very helpful – it was very nice, very organised. It was really a very nice company to work for.

### ***You'll miss it won't you.***

Definitely.

### ***Who has been your most important role model in your working life and why?***

I don't have a specific person - during your whole career you learn a lot from your boss, your colleagues, customers, suppliers. If you're open to it, you can learn from everybody.

I would say, if pushed, the founder of Tratec had a profound influence on me. He taught me business etiquette. He taught me the importance of living up to your word, about integrity. Don't mess around, don't lie, you will always get caught, play

it fair and honest. If you can't do it, just say so. Technetix has the same attitude; you maintain good relationships with your customers that way. People buy from people, if you can't trust them, you won't be successful in business.

***What will you miss in your day job and what will you be doing in retirement?***

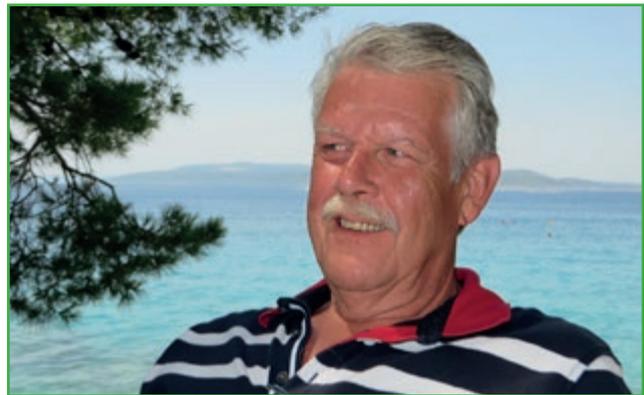
I will really miss my colleagues, our customers, I will really miss the work, but I am willing to give it a try.

***I'm sure you will be useful to them even in retirement.***

I hope so. I have 40 years' experience, I have lots of areas I can advise in. I am always willing to help.

***How will you be spending your retirement?***

I'm pretty busy! I have hobbies – I like working with electronics, messing around with computers. I never had the time before. I've just bought a new training course on computer programming too, so I plan on studying again. And I go scuba diving a lot,



it's a real passion of mine. I'm off to the Maldives shortly on a 11-day dive. You stay on board a boat in the Indian Ocean and do 2-3 dives a day.

***Sounds horrendous. I feel for you.***

Yes I know! I will try and make the best of it!



Wishing you a long, happy and healthy retirement with gratitude from your friends, colleagues and former colleagues at Technetix and the SCTE

Gerrit Boskaljon, we thank you for your outstanding contribution to the broadband industry



**technetix**