

[ CEO Luc Defieuw from Alcatel-Lucent Bell ]

## 'The A in ADSL stands for Antwerp'

Alcatel-Lucent makes something you use every day, probably without knowing it: communication networks. 'Leading by innovation' is the slogan of this Franco-American multinational. And the 27,600 patents the company has to its name are sufficient proof of that.

Alcatel-Lucent Bell's spacious foyer at its brand new office at Kievitplein in Antwerp resonates with all manner of foreign languages. It is lunchtime and the employees are stepping out for their break. 'Around 1800 people work here, 900 of whom are engineers. There are 37 different nationalities in all,' explains Luc Defieuw, CEO of Alcatel-Lucent Bell and Vice President Benelux.

Alcatel-Lucent's global headquarters are located in Paris. However, Antwerp remains an important base for the multinational. Alcatel-Lucent Bell is the largest ICT investor in Belgium with a budget of EUR 150 million in 2009. More than 900 people, primarily engineers, are active in Research & Development in Antwerp. 150 top scientists and researchers work at Bell Labs Antwerp, devoted exclusively to fundamental research. Few people are aware that Alcatel-Lucent employees have won a total of 7 Nobel prizes with the technological innovations they have developed.

### Technology in Antwerp

'We support every technical aspect of communication, ranging from voice to data and video communication services, for fixed and mobile telecommunications. We supply equipment but also services. For example, we make broadband networks for all the major operators in the world, including here in Belgium,' says Luc Defieuw. 'Our IP network and hosting solutions ensure a smooth-running internet and we develop applications for anything from video-on-demand to televoting and mobile payments. We also invented the technology behind the Pay & Go prepaid mobile phone cards. Another concrete example is that we developed a loyalty and discount card for the City of Antwerp.'

### Building the future together

The Antwerp division of the multinational was formed from the historic Bell Telephone company. However, you

have to search pretty hard to find a link in the company to Alexander Graham Bell, the man who took out the first patent on the telephone. 'We are not doing ourselves any great favours by looking back to that grandiose past,' says CEO Luc Defieuw in reply. 'Nowadays, we have virtually nothing more to do with what we were doing ten years ago. That is how fast things evolve in our sector. Indeed, we must get out of bed every day and ask ourselves the question, 'where do we want to go?' It is all about the future here, not the past.'

Technological innovation is a spearhead for Alcatel-Lucent Bell. 'ADSL, for example, was born here.' The Asymmetric

Alcatel-Lucent employees have won 7 Nobel prizes to date.

Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) is the cornerstone of powerful data communications such as faster internet connections. 'There are those who say the A in ADSL stands for Antwerp,' Luc Defieuw says with a smile. 'A lot of the technology was developed here in Antwerp. 40% of the worldwide market share for broadband comes from here.'

Alcatel-Lucent is active in 130 countries. The vision of a company that is helping to build for the future is nowhere clearer than in a room where a number of new communication prototypes are on display. CEO Luc Defieuw introduces a 3D television, offering depth of field without the need for special 3D glasses, all kinds of multimedia and home automation systems, the principles behind mobile advertising and more. He also demonstrates how our mobile phones will soon serve as electronic wallets. 'When you buy something, you just hold your mobile phone over a scanner, the *Touchatag* system, enter a code and you've paid.'

On top of this there are technologies such as *green DSL* and *smart grids*, in which intelligent networks are made energy efficient. These are all communication systems designed to make life easier in contemporary society.

### Influx of talent is a major plus

Via Bell Telephone, the telecom giant has strong historic ties with Antwerp but it could just as easily have left the port city back in 2003 when relocating its offices. Back then, the management nevertheless decided to stay in the city on the Scheldt. 'We worked out that all our employees lived in the Ghent-Brussels-Antwerp triangle and we wanted to ensure our people would follow us after the relocation. The City of Antwerp was very active in helping us relocate to this new office district. They were also looking for space for their personnel and they were able to use our old buildings. Regardless of the outcome of subsequent local council elections, we have always been able to arrive at advantageous agreements with the mayor and councillors.'

## '40% of the worldwide market share for broadband comes from Antwerp.'

Alcatel-Lucent Bell's employees are in any case very satisfied with the new location. 'Half of our people come to work by train. We give them the choice between a reserved parking space – we have 750 bays – or free use of public transport. Many regard the location as ideal next to the Central Station. With the Thalys high speed train we are also within easy reach of the head office in Paris,' says Luc Defieuw.

Antwerp has many aces up its sleeve, according to Luc Defieuw. 'Belgians are multicultural, both customer- and result-oriented, and they adapt quickly to change. Belgium is a small country and it comes as second nature to the people here to look beyond their borders.'

The influx of new talent is also a major plus: 'Naturally, we recruit a lot of engineers. People with a passion for electronics do not have many alternatives in Belgium. We therefore enjoy a very privileged relationship with our universities.'

'Antwerp is an attractive location for foreigners because of the high standard of living,' says Luc Defieuw. 'The cost of living, however, is lower than large European cities in neighbouring countries. The infrastructure is good, as is healthcare. There are international schools and you can easily get by with English. And when it comes to the social, cultural and culinary scene, there is never any shortage of things to do in Antwerp.'

'Antwerp is an attractive location for foreigners because of the high standard of living.'

Luc Defieuw

Investment budget R&D in Belgium: EUR 150 million

Employees worldwide: 77,000

Nationalities at the company: 37

Active in Antwerp since: 1882

How is the entrepreneurial climate in Antwerp:  
'Everybody looks beyond their borders here.'

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