

Gerard Vos

makes 'Knowledge Management' a reality

From the editors

More than ever, we need to know about current competitor products, and the trends in technology. Providing such knowledge should be a key part of 'Knowledge Management'. This topic has attracted a lot of hype, but it often concerned the 'management' element rather than the 'knowledge' itself. In the Nat.Lab., however, there is someone who makes knowledge accessible in a most practical way, and to the entire Philips community. This person is Gerard Vos of the Library & Documentation department. You can find the information collected and processed by him at: www.research.philips.com/natlab/hvetech/



Gerard's work covers those technologies and products of the electronics industry that are important to Philips. He wants the aforementioned website to reflect the latest state of affairs. Currently, the site is visited each day by some hundred users. Based on his many years of experience in various product and technology sectors, he is also a kind of oracle himself, as he can mention many details by heart. His favourite subjects are Displays, Connectivity and Storage, which is very appropriate as these are the technology focus areas ('pillars') of Philips. He also regularly makes an active contribution to research studies on Storage, such as on portable memories, probe storage, and replicated read-only memories.

Background

Gerard started his Philips career in 1970, in the Nat. Lab. projects centre at Geldrop. His first task was to design the computer for the Dutch satellite ANS, a model of which is still on display above the main entrance door in building

WB. By the end of the seventies, the projects centre saw a project dedicated to what is now known as the PC, and he was the project leader. Since that time, Gerard has regarded the PC as the main 'driver' for electronic innovation.

Knowledge Management

In 1982, he joined the CE division, where he held various development management positions in areas such as digital TV and optical storage. He always kept a keen interest in 'benchmarking': What are the trends in the market, what is the performance of the latest products? Our knowledge of competitor products, and the companies that made them, often was quite limited. Occasionally, those with many contacts to other companies were designated to serve as a 'company watcher', but mostly this was short-lived. By the early nineties, Sony was developing itself from an interesting smaller company into a major competitor. Gerard decided to make a study of that company, and produced a book that met a strong interest. From that time, he focused on Knowledge Management for CE. Gradually, the reports that used to be his main publishing channel were replaced by an own site on the Philips Intranet.

Knowledge Management in Research

Since the middle of 2001, Gerard is continuing his Knowledge Management task in Research. It now also includes the 'Expert-Consult' service that was formerly provided by Michiel Marres, who retired last year. This is the intermediary service which puts Philips employees, who struggle with a technical issue, in touch with an expert for their subject. If you have a question or problem and you do not know who might help, please use Gerard's extensive network by contacting him (tel. 45454). Furthermore, he is an obvious 'gatekeeper' for questions to Research that arrive via 'Yellow Pages'.

Information sources

For many developments, a good view can already be built from sources that are low-cost or free. In the past, this involved magazines, catalogs, visits to trade fairs, and visitor reports. Today, the Internet is the prime source. Also important are reports from market research companies, like Dataquest. The Library & Documentation department has contracted them, and all employees can use this facility, via Ton Barten (Library) on WY1035. In the meantime, Gerard does not have the illusion that he

knows everything. Those who want to point at errors, or to contribute information, are very welcome.

Trade fairs

Though it is true that a view of developments in the market can be built from behind the desk, that view from time to time must be 'calibrated' by observing the products in real life. This holds in particular for items such as displays and handheld products. For this reason, Gerard is a regular visitor of the CeBIT and other trade fairs. Processing the information gathered there, may take more than a month.

Final question

Is the information of Gerard's web site objective? He thinks that this is sufficiently the case. But he also points out that he wants to emphasize items which deserve more attention. One example is miniaturization, a topic for which he makes a plea supported by showing various handheld competitor products.

'Knowledge Management' op het Nat.Lab.

Kennis over producten van concurrenten en de ontwikkeling van technologieën is belangrijk, meer dan ooit. Op het Nat.Lab. is er iemand die op een uitermate praktische manier deze kennis toegankelijk maakt voor heel Philips. Dit is Gerard Vos, medewerker van de afdeling library & Documentation. De door hem verzamelde en bewerkte informatie is te vinden op: www.research.philips.com/natlab/hvetech/

Gerard biedt ook de 'Expert-Consult'-bemiddelingsdienst, waarbij Philips-medewerkers die een technische vraag of probleem hebben, in contact worden gebracht met een specialist voor dat onderwerp. Neem in zo'n geval contact op met Gerard (tel. 45454).