

Terry Doyle looks back at 25 years with Research

by Communications Department — last modified 2009-08-21



Eindhoven, August 21 - Since Terry Doyle, Program Manager Technology, started at Philips 25 years ago, he has seen many changes in the world of Research. With experience of working in the Netherlands, Taiwan, France and the UK, what stands out about his career and Research's evolution in that time?

What were your ambitions when you joined Philips Research?

I'd been a university lecturer, but I wanted to do research that would land in the marketplace and truly impact people. What I found was considerable freedom in the research we did. Looking from the organization as it stands today, back then we were very distant from the Philips' businesses. Even in the TV video processing area where we worked more closely with the businesses, all research was funded by the Board and we didn't think much about customers – internal or external!

Is closeness to the business one of the biggest changes you've seen?

Definitely. That 'distance' between Research and Philips' businesses narrowed considerably in the early 1990s, when contract research was introduced. We quickly realized we had internal customers; what's more, in recent years we also discovered our customers' customers! The focus moved towards creating value options for the businesses – and providing business cases for what we do.

During the last few years, this closer alignment with corporate strategy, IP&S, incubation and the Sectors – within a new, open innovation setting – has totally revolutionized Research's way of working and business development.

On a personal level, what stands out for you in the last 25 years?

During my early years working on television I enjoyed participating in the European (HD)TV demonstrations – Brighton, Berlin and Lausanne – and taking part in the many attempts to develop novel flat TVs. In particular, the ZEUS project (a thin, flat CRT) is one of the first things that springs to mind when I think of 'winning spirit'.

Afterwards, I took a very different opportunity: setting up Philips' Innovation Center in Taiwan, Research's first entry into Asia. It was challenging – you realize it's a very different world outside Eindhoven! But we had fun and even some achievements. For instance, we won 1st place in a national competition for Chinese speech recognition technology. The current Research lab in Shanghai grew out of this activity, so I'm proud of being part of the start of Philips' Research in Asia.

Over the years, I have been involved in many other organizational transformations. When the Paris research lab closed, I was pleased I could help many researchers stay with Philips by creating a Philips Applied Technologies office there (it later became part of the new NXP organization). The disentanglement of the Philips-NXP research organization and the relocation of the research lab from Redhill to Cambridge also stick out in my mind.

Of course, the research programs are also dynamic, and defining the Technology Program Strategy at the end of 2007 was a major challenge and source of inspiration for me.

Any advice for researchers just starting out?

Keep an open mind, be willing to change, understand the business relevance of your work and enjoy it! There may be more constraints on research today, but we should maintain a balance so there's room for creativity and novel finds too.

What would you tell a Philips researcher considering an assignment abroad?

Go, if you can! It's good to get out of your comfort zone, meet new people and confront different situations. However, make sure your family is prepared; they often give up a lot to relocate abroad and their happiness is your success.

After all these years, what excites you about your job today?

The challenges in helping Philips find new opportunities in Clean Tech and supporting the Lighting Sector in making the transition to solid-state lighting are very exciting.

Also, I enjoy the business challenges – showing the value Research delivers for Philips, or managing supplier relationships now that Philips no longer produces components itself.

And I love to simply walk around on Friday afternoons (when I can!) to see what people are up to and share researchers' recent results. After all these years – Yes! I still enjoy the Research challenge, but the real excitement remains on the research floor.