

Intelligent products: more than just technology ...

The importance of software is increasing continuously. Without doubt, many are acquainted with office and process automation. Often hard to accomplish, but crucial for the company involved.

But also in machines, apparatus and instruments the amount of software increases. Economy, flexibility, extra functionality and better service are often used as arguments.

What does it bring ?

In 2003, the regional investment banks BOM (www.bom.nl) and LIOF (www.liof.nl) informed more than 60 SMEs how to incorporate intelligence in products. Discussions took place, workshops were organized and entrepreneurs participated in business assessments.

The importance of software in products is generally distinguished. Implementation however is definitely not that easy. Ignorance of technology in combination with organizational and commercial aspects makes the ROI of incorporating software hard to define. 'What's in for me?' is a recurrent question.

A model project



Anatech BV in Sittard (The Netherlands) is a company with 22 employees that develops instruments for laboratories. For that purpose the firmware developers write their own software. Their self-developed software platform and matching development tools however encountered their technological boundaries. A technology assessment resulted in a migration project, describing how the company should continue its software development.

To see is to believe

Apart from support by information, workshops and assessments, entrepreneurs appear to need a wider platform to have discussions with other entrepreneurs, using concrete practical examples. That's why BOM and LIOF are currently developing, together with the Horizon program (www.programmahorizon.nl) and the Embedded Systems Institute (www.embeddedsystems.nl), a platform for industrial SMEs in the region. To initiate activities, a steering committee of entrepreneurs, technology institutes and branche organizations has been formed.

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