

**“We’re a high-tech firm, so I want people to work in a creative environment. Apart from the sculpture park, we also have many works by young artists on display in the building.”**

#### **Made to measure**

Around Anatech’s premises is a sculpture park featuring works by various artists. Director Archi Leenaers sees a link between the park and his own philosophy of how to run a business. “We’re a high-tech firm, so I want people to work in a creative environment. Apart from the sculpture park, we also have many works by young artists on display in the building. And right now I’m turning the garden into a fruit garden. I feel that people’s ideas are more likely to bear fruit in a setting full of fruit-bearing plants. It’s one way to inspire people. Most of all I want our staff to enjoy working here, because that’s when they’ll really perform. And if you want to take people seriously, you can’t afford to ignore nature or the environment. So it makes sense to us to separate all our waste. We’re a bit more fanatical about this than many companies, but we do it because it seems the obvious thing to do - it’s not just a matter of policy.”

#### **Striking the right balance**



Leenaers doesn’t consider the Anatech building particularly attractive, but has tried to make it look more acceptable by having trees and shrubs planted around it. “However,” he says, “in the end I’m running a company that has to make a profit. On the other hand, if we needed a new building, that would be a different matter. In that case I’d invite an artist or an architect to design it.” There are plenty of paintings and photographs on display in the building. Leenaers wants to strike the right balance between art (as a means of encouraging

creativity) and the running of a business, which is why he welcomes the idea of dialogue between Anatech and artists.

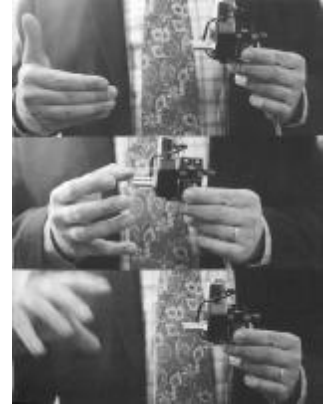
Anatech is not only innovative, but highly exclusive – not just in the development of its instruments, but also in the attention it pays to the appearance of its building and its surroundings. Its global success is proof that its unusual management strategy has borne fruit in terms of original, creative instrument development.

#### **A brief review**

Anatech was first set up in 1987 by Gosse van der Plaats, a DSM employee who used instruments of this type every day and eventually thought to himself “I can do this better.” He started developing new instruments in his garden shed in Susteren. In 1990 the company moved to its present premises in Sittard, and the current director has no intention of leaving for the time being. “We really like it here. We’ve got the motorway close by, and many of our staff are local.”

## Unique of its kind

Anatech develops and produces measuring instruments for analytical laboratories (laboratories that measure and analyse materials). These are usually linked to production facilities. For example, instruments developed by Anatech are used to test the quality of chemicals during production in order to minimise waste. Anatech is an original equipment manufacturer (OEM). According to Leenaers there are very few companies in a similar position, and in fact Anatech is the only one in its field. Anatech's high-tech instruments have a high level of built-in intelligence (embedded software), so that even users who have no detailed knowledge of the instrument can obtain reliable measurements.



## Innovation

Anatech is an extremely knowledge-intensive company: one in three of its staff are engaged in research into the development of new instruments. Says Leenaers: "Most firms are delighted if they can put as much as 10% of their turnover into research, but we do far better than this." Anatech's development processes can be summed up as 'innovative', 'original', 'problem solving' and 'progressive', and its inventions are regularly patented. The instruments are produced in accordance with a quality manual based on the ISO 9000 quality management system. "We have our own quality management system, since we believe there's always room for improvement," says Leenaers. Anatech's analytical laboratory, Analyte, also carries out various kinds of measurement and analysis for other firms.

Anatech develops and produces instruments but does not sell them directly to users. "We sell our products to large multinational companies which resell them to users all over the world. Like us, these companies specialise in instrument manufacture, but they don't have the specific knowledge to produce certain instruments that they would like to have in their range. It can take companies five to seven years to acquire that knowledge, and it often isn't worth their while to invest a lot in doing so, as the markets for such instruments are relatively small. Anatech can make a living out of this and always works for such companies on an exclusive basis," says Leenaers.

## Analyte

Anatech works not only with other companies, but also with local knowledge centres and bodies such as the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO). In partnership with the University of Maastricht, the company recently developed a new product that allows donor kidneys to be preserved longer. Anatech has its own instrument development policy, but is often asked by customers to develop something specific. The striking thing here is that Anatech bears the full risk for every product it develops. Since it is not in direct contact with its users, it also has its own laboratory (Analyte) to help it keep in touch with

the market and obtain user feedback. Anatech staff use the instruments in the laboratory and test them on behalf of local companies.

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Photos: Romy Finke*

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