NEW CEO APPOINTMENT FOR ALTECH KDN
Shahab Meshki appointed new CEO

ALTECH LONG SERVICE AWARDS
In recognition of 12 and 25 years’ service

ACCOLADES FOR ALTECH AT TT100
Altech dominant at the Technology Top 100 Awards

NEW PLANT FOR ALTECH WEST AFRICA
Altech opens new security card plant, Lagos, Nigeria

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVING
Arrow Altech Distribution hosts wellness day

ALTECH NETSTAR SUPPORTS SCIENCE CENTRE
Altech Netstar donates mobile lab to the ScienCentre
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FROM THE CEO’s DESK A message from Craig Venter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW CEO APPOINTED FOR ALTECH KDN Shahab Meshki appointed as CEO of Altech Kenya Data Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH LONG SERVICE AWARDS Acknowledging loyalty to the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE STRATEGIC UPDATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECH TALK Driving innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BRAND REFRESH Altech Swift Global gets a new brand identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRESH FINDINGS MAKE ALTECH THINK Altech Academy student presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A MOVE FOR ALTECH KENYA DATA NETWORKS New high-tech premises for Altech KDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW GROUP APPOINTMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH WINS AT TT100 Altech dominant at the Technology Top 100 Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLEET TRANSPORT IN AFRICA Altech Fleetcall ensures critical communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH WEST AFRICA OPENS NEW PLANT New security card plant opens in Lagos, Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH ACADEMY GRADUATES 118 employees graduate from the Altech Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH FLEETCALL AND BECKER GAUTRAIN JOURNEY Providing radio communications to the Gautrain project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTECH SIYABONGA AWARDS Acknowledging dedication to the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALTECH NETSTAR ANNUAL GOLF DAY

TAKING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY TO THE NEXT LEVEL
Arrow Altech Distribution in partnership with UJ

ALTECH AUTOPAGE CELLULAR MAKES ITS MARK

NEW MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

ALTECH NETSTAR RECOVERY IN IVORY COAST

ALTECH ISIS AND ALTECH AUTOPAGE CELLULAR PARTNERSHIP

SPECTRAMED GETS AID FROM ATC

PROMOTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
Arrow Altech Distribution hosts wellness day

AN INTERVIEW WITH NICO ELS

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING
Johan Klein attends Harvard Business School

PROMOTING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN KZN
Altech Netstar donates mobile lab to the ScienCentre

NEW BUSINESS UNIT
Arrow Altech Distribution opens new business unit

BROADCAST MEETS BROADBAND
Altech Multimedia at the IBC convention

PROMISES MADE
Simon Dingle reflects on 2011 and the path ahead

DISPUTED DEBIT ORDERS
Altech NuPay’s AEDO provides the solution

CHRISTMAS STOCKING FILLERS
Altech Autopage Cellular’s top gifts for 2011

ALTECH SAMEER EAST AFRICA DATA CENTRE
The Altech Sameer East Africa Data Centre is up and running

PROMISES MADE
Simon Dingle reflects on 2011 and the path ahead
As 2011 draws to a close, I would like to reflect on some of the highlights we have experienced over the past 12 months.

On the mergers and acquisitions front we saw a number of strategic acquisitions during 2011. These included Eyenza Mobile Money (Eyenza), a wallet-based system whereby a user registers, creates a wallet and then deposits money into a central pool, which is linked to his / her Mobile Station Integrated Services Digital Network (MSISDN) number. The user can then transact to the value of the funds in his / her wallet. The purchase of Eyenza follows on our view that we need to be involved in the rapidly growing mobile money payments market. Additionally, the acquisition is part of our strategic aim to capitalise on our existing businesses and grow market share through a range of value added services.

Eyenza’s offering is unique in that it is bank and mobile network operator agnostic. It offers vending services with no requirement for pre-registered bank accounts and no restriction on existing bank partners or cellular providers. This extends the market for its services substantially as it can be directly marketed to the unbanked population of South Africa and elsewhere.

The Eyenza transaction was followed by the purchase of SetOne GmbH, a German-based pioneer of innovative DVB-based products and solutions with strategic alliances with key players in Asia and Europe. SetOne has significant synergies with other Altech operations, in particular Altech Multimedia. The acquisition will enhance our ability to diversify Altech Multimedia’s income streams by growing its international business footprint and reducing its reliance on locally generated business.

And while on the subject of bringing new companies into the fold, the acquisition of Swisttech at the end of last year, saw the appointment of the Altech Group’s first woman Managing Director, Yanesh Ramiah. Yanesh is a respected business leader in the ICT industry and it was a pleasure welcoming her into the Group.

Swisttech is an Independent Software Vendor (ISV) that focuses on infrastructure and integration services, mobility services and software development. Its purchase unlocked significant synergies with some of our other operations, in particular Altech ISIS, where we can now move up the value chain by providing end-to-end solutions, particularly in the financial services and telecoms industries.

The year saw an important milestone in our history when Intel Capital announced a $5 million strategic investment in Altech. This is part of a strategic collaboration between Intel and Altech in the Telecommunications, Multi-media and Information Technology (TMT) sectors in order to accelerate the adoption of broadband services in Africa. With this investment, South Africa became the 50th country to attract Intel Capital investment. It was Intel Capital’s first investment in South Africa.
On the empowerment front, transformation and key empowerment transactions remained high on our agenda. We completed several important empowerment ownership transactions involving key operating subsidiaries. These included:

- **Altech Multimedia** - a consortium of BEE partners led by Power Matla acquired an effective 25% plus 1 share equity stake of the Altech UEC sub-group’s African operations.
- **Altech Wireless** - the Southern Palace Group of Companies acquired an effective 25% plus 1 share equity holding in Altech Wireless, consisting of the subgroups Altech Alcom Matomo, Altech Alcom Radio Distributors and Altech Fleetcall.
- **Altech IT** - in which we acquired the 25% plus 1 share equity shareholding of Pamodzi Investment Holdings (Pty) Ltd in Altech Information Technologies (Pty) Ltd, the holding company for Altech’s information technology sub-group.

At the same time, I was pleased to note that we were awarded a Level 3 B-BBEE contribution status at Group level. We also achieved 110% procurement recognition, 28.6% black ownership and 13.2% black female ownership, scoring maximum points in these areas.

Other highlights during the year included the opening of our new high-technology television Set-Top Box (STB) manufacturing facility in Mount Edgecombe, KwaZulu-Natal, a significant event as we scale up for the move to digital terrestrial television (DTT) technology.

The facility enables Altech UEC to increase production by a third, with additional space for expansion over the next five years. With a staff complement of 600, the facility has the capability for plastic moulding, painting, printing, surface mounted device (SMD) assembly, hand placements, testing and final integration. The facility currently utilises 1.5 billion components per day and spends R100 million on supplies each month. With the capacity to produce more than 300 000 STB units per month, the facility provides synergy for in-plant logistics with operational efficiencies and positions Altech UEC for quick expansion to support growth when required.

2011 saw the exit of our Chairman, Dr Hilton Davies, who stepped down after 14 years of dedicated service to the Group. He was succeeded by an equally respected colleague, Moss Leoka, who has served as an Altech director since 1998. To Dr Davies, I would like to say thank you for his guidance and loyalty over so many years, and to Moss I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Altech Board as we take Altech to the next level of market leadership and profitability.

During the year, we saw 85 staff members from across South Africa receive their 12 and 25 year Long Service Awards. The Altech Group and I congratulate them on this extraordinary milestone in their careers.

In other highlights during the past year, Altech was selected as the top JSE listed company in the Financial Mail Top 100 Companies 2011 survey. This annual survey is commissioned by the Financial Mail to measure the historical financial performance of South Africa’s top companies and provides a picture of the sustainability of an enterprise.

Altech was placed number seven in last year’s ranking but shot up to the top spot this year by virtue of a very high return on equity (RoE), combined with one of the highest qualitative scores of any company in the rankings this year. In other words, we had a very balanced scorecard.

Turning to more internal matters, it was with great pride that I noted that Altech won, for the third year in a row, the Altron Chairman’s Distinguished Merit Award. This year’s award went to Derek Chaplin, Managing Director of Altech Card Solutions. Prior to this, Johan Klein and Peter Curle were recipients of the award. It is significant that of all the Altron Group companies, only Altech has ever received this accolade for three consecutive years.

Added to this, we won two awards at the Technology Top 100 Awards event held in November. Technology Top 100 is a national program under the auspices of the Department of Science and Technology that acknowledges the success that South African organisations enjoy through their development and use of technology. Altech received the Minister’s Award for Sustainability, while Altech Multimedia and Altech Netstar received the Award for Excellence in the Management of Systems.

I am extremely proud and honoured for the Altech Group to have received these awards. It is truly meaningful of Altech’s advancements and contribution to the South African Telecommunications, Multi-media and Information Technology sectors. This is not only evidence of the success of our management of systems, people and processes, but also testament to our achievements to receive this level of industry recognition.

Lastly, I would like to comment on what we can expect in 2012. Many of you may be aware of the multi-year project that we have embarked upon to build on the vision, mission and strategic and human capital initiatives that are already embedded within the Altech Group. The aim of this project is to examine the current situation in which we find ourselves as a Group and to identify and implement future growth platforms so that we can continue to achieve our growth targets in a significantly more demanding business and technology environment.

More on this project will be communicated to you in the next few months and I appeal to all of you to embrace this initiative and give it your full support. It is only through strategic initiatives such as this that Altech will remain relevant to our customers and market conditions.

In closing, I wish you and your families a restful and happy break over the December period. May you be blessed to spend quality time together and I look forward to seeing you again in 2012 – a year which I believe will see some important and positive developments within the Altech Group.

**Craig Venter**

CEO - Altech Group
Shahab Meshki has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of Altech Kenya Data Networks (KDN)

Shahab, who will report to Altech group executive of converged services Tim Ellis, will be responsible for creating the vision, business architecture and go-to-market strategy for KDN.

With more than 20 years of working experience in the Information Technology and Telecommunications sector, Shahab possesses a wealth of global management experience and expertise in the convergence of IT and telecommunication services.

Shahab began his career with the Siemens AG (Germany) Automation Division in charge of software and hardware development and later marketing and sales of network analyzers. In 1995 he moved to Cisco where he held various channel and sales management positions, responsible for global accounts and business development. In 2002 he moved with his family to Kenya to establish Cisco’s presence in East Africa.

As General Manager for Cisco in East Africa until October 2011, Shahab ran the sales operation in Kenya, focusing on key accounts in the corporate, government and service provider markets of the East African region. During this time he achieved growth of approximately 1 000% for Cisco’s business of products and services and established East Africa as one of Cisco’s fastest growing regions on the continent.

According to Tim, Shahab’s skills and experience ideally match Altech’s objective of developing KDN as a key telecommunications infrastructure provider in the East Africa region.

“We are delighted to welcome Shahab to Altech and I am confident that his global management experience, his expertise in the convergence of IT and telecommunication services, his operational excellence and his skills in building high performance teams will position KDN as the key data communications carrier of carriers in the region,” said Tim.

Born in Iran and growing up in Germany, Shahab holds a Master’s degree in Electronic Engineering from the Technical University of Berlin, Germany, and a postgraduate degree from the University of Cambridge, UK, in public and private partnerships. Shahab speaks German, English and Farsi and lives in Nairobi, Kenya with his wife and two daughters.
Eighty-five staff members from 12 operating companies within the Altech Group received certificates and gifts in recognition of 12 and 25 years of unbroken employment within the group.

Together they represented 1,046 years of loyal service and commitment.

In his speech to the long service award recipients, Altech CEO Craig Venter said that recognition of commitment and performance was an essential aspect of Altech’s corporate culture as a company’s success was based on its employees.

He went on to say that retention of employees depended on a number of key factors: providing employees with the opportunity to grow and develop their careers and skills; providing a pleasant and safe working environment; and regular communication and engagement with employees.

He believed that Altech was performing well on all of these criteria.

In terms of career development and skills development, the Altech Academy had seen 330 Altech employees graduate with various university degrees and qualifications since its inception in 2007.

With respect to pleasant and professional working environments, Craig believed this was adequately demonstrated by the new Altech UEC electronic component manufacturing facility in Mt Edgecombe, Durban; the new offices for Altech Kenya Data Networks at the Sameer Business Park in Nairobi; the new Altech West Africa factory in Lagos, Nigeria; and the new offices for Altech Autopage Cellular and Altech Technology Concepts in Midrand, to name just a few.

When it came to engaging and communicating with employees, he said that he regularly engaged with his executive team and operational heads in order to ensure that the Group’s vision and strategy was communicated to all employees to ensure a common goal of success and market leadership.

Craig went on to thank all long service award recipients for their commitment to Altech. He mentioned that every year more and more Altech staff members received long service awards (in 2010, 70 staff members from 9 operating companies received awards).

“This is testament to the operating companies that the recipients work for. It is not often that employees work for a single company for so many years.”

Staff members who received certificates for 25 years of service were Noel Watermeyer (Altech Alcom Matomo) and Andrew Filmer (Altech ISIS).

Altech’s Long Service Awards event was held at the Killarney Country Club in Johannesburg.
In the article on the management of complexity in the previous Altech Talk, I referred to the fact that we have experienced more turbulence in the business environment in the last ten years than over the previous 40 years. Consequently, understanding and managing complexity will become a major competitive advantage. I quote some of the key outcomes:

“The consequence is to turn some management orthodoxy on its head (to name a few):

- Analysis loses its primacy
- Contingency (cause and effect) loses its meaning
- Long-term planning becomes uncertain
- Consensus and strong cultures become dangerous
- Statistical relationships become dubious.

The general lessons from complexity theory concern how learning can be fostered in organisations, how one should view instability, and the (negative) consequences of a common internal culture. The need for an emphasis on learning stems from the central finding of this theory – that the future is, in principle, uncertain and difficult to predict for systems of any complexity.”

Managing the ambiguity of this future state within the framework of existing models (sometimes already outdated) could lead to model confusion driven by futures confusion. The net interrelationship of these activities will drive a process of chaos where the result will be goal confusion, methods (process) confusion and individual role confusion (see diagram right):

Factual information of the reality of the above is frequently seen and has now extended beyond companies to countries, as is evidenced by some of the North African nations. These incidents are clear proof that the principle of perpetuating or reliving the past is doomed in the radicality of the new future.

The irony is that although the outcome can be a complex, chaotic situation, the fundamental questions driving the future position are well-known:

- How will our market, work and life environments change in the next five to ten years?
- How should we prepare for possible surprising events and developments in the future (stealth scenarios)?
- Which threats and opportunities for new markets, products, strategies, processes and structures will arise from these changes?
What does our company need to look like in five to ten years’
time in the sense of a strategic vision?

The response to these questions however, will have to be framed
differently with a requirement to clearly differentiate between imagined,
possible, plausible, surprising, creatable, desired and planned
futures. These alternatives can be created by using various tools to
create scenarios, but also to gather strategic intelligence. Suggested
methodologies include:

- **Scanning** – Continuous review of newsfeeds, articles, websites,
blogs and other information sources to identify trends that are
likely to have future significance.
- **Trend monitoring** – Ongoing monitoring of trends to identify
their driving forces, speed of development and potential
impacts. Plotting of numerical trends over time and hype cycles
can provide great insights.
- **Expert opinion** – Consultation with experts to obtain their
opinions about the future, online surveys, facilitated workshops
or brainstorming sessions. The results are consolidated and
synthesised.
- **Scenario development** – Definition of alternative futures,
based on selected driving forces. Different sets of outcomes
for the driving forces define a different future. Alternative
scenarios make decision makers aware of the potential
range of possibilities. Visual formatting of this intelligence can
dramatically aid decision making.
- **Design thinking** – Development of scenarios where current
trends are part of the problem, and the future needs to be
radically different from the past. Visioning with stakeholders
helps to define the desired future, and the process works
backwards to identify how this future might actually be achieved.
- **Stealth incidents** – Identification of unexpected and highly
improbable events that could have a significant impact. Stealth
incidents are major discontinuities in the way the future may
unfold – undermining trends and creating a radically different
future. Stealth incidents are often used to challenge the
assumptions that govern scenarios.

Strategic intelligence can be further enhanced by tracking, for example:

- scientific discoveries
- emerging technologies
- environmental trends
- social trends
- political and economic developments
- changing business models
- market dynamics
- competitor activities

Research has concluded that there is support for the above reasoning
in organisations that have adapted to the principles of complexity theory
and that despite working in very different conceptual frameworks, have
reached comparable conclusions. These convergences include:

- **Those organisations do not only adapt to their environments,
but help to create them.**
- **Organisational success can come from contradiction as well as
consistency.**
- **Success may stem from being part of a self-reinforcing cycle,
rather than from only an explicit ‘vision’.**
- **Revolutionary as well as incremental change may lie on the
route to organisational success.**
- **Collaboration, communities of expertise, knowledge
management and continuous learning are change proponents
that are crucial to success.**

The above are obviously not achievable in a non-connected world. The
future drives the demands for collaboration, knowledge management
and communities of expertise. This in turn requires systems and
processes that create a basis for sharing and evolution, enhancing
learning processes, speeding up decision making and allowing for
continuous and uninterrupted evolution. Evidence is again visible in
organisations that have embraced these processes and have achieved
“mobile office” environments for their knowledge workers. Not being
office/location bound changes productivity multi-fold and enhances the
competitive efficiency dramatically. Examples include Apple, CREA
and MindTree, and to a lesser extent Cisco and Boeing.

The demands to achieve the above are clear: ingrained but replicable
systems that will allow this flexibility in the organisation. There is a view
developing that high technology companies that do not have these
replicable systems should not attempt large acquisitions as they will
be doomed to failure.

Resolving this issue will assist in governing the methods and process
confusion but will not resolve the goal and role confusion. This cannot
be resolved by the technologists - it is the crucial role of leadership that
can live with this uncertainty and complexity. In the high technology
world with its rapidly changing product, market, technology and even
enterprise lifecycles (and this will shift on an exponential scale),
flexibility, yet clarity in goal definition and thus role definition, will drive
the success of future business.

Though much more complex, the future world is not unmanageable.
It will require different methodologies underpinned by solid interactive
processes. Walking the talk with an inclusive management style will be
crucial. Sorry, the seagull is dead!

Allow me to use this opportunity to wish all of you a joyful and blessed
holiday and festive season and a great start to the New Year.
The ICT industry is in the midst of seismic-like change. Major shifts are taking place that will leave the landscape fundamentally transformed. The disrupters of a few years ago are themselves now being disrupted. Take Google for instance. The business model that turned traditional advertising on its head is now up for disruption itself, courtesy of Facebook. Skype is another example – suddenly long-distance conversations don’t have to cost anything. Companies like Facebook and Skype are already the largest voice service providers in the world. It was reported in early 2001, that IP telephony and voice over IP had shaved $1 trillion off the income statements of worldwide voice service providers. This led to the demise of many traditional PABX vendors and their service provider customers. I foresee another wave of this as mobile operators begin to face the same challenges that traditional wire-line voice operators faced in 2001. The impact of smartphones on the income of mobile operators is yet to be understood properly as smartphones will utilise the data interface to carry free voice, free SMS and data at reduced, bundled rates (voice and SMS costs will be included in the data bundle).

BlackBerries and iPhones running iOS 5 already do that. Voice will just be one of the many applications used on the smartphone, without appearing to be voice. One can now call friends via Facebook, using Skype as the transport medium. In many countries, laws enforce net neutrality, which means that service providers, including mobile operators, are not allowed to treat or manage certain types of traffic to influence how consumers use the available bandwidth that they have paid for. What does this mean? It means that most mobile operators in Europe and the USA are not allowed to block a user from using Skype calls or any other type of voice communication flowing over the much cheaper data communication channel on the smartphone handset.

The actions and interactions that used to cost consumers money and drive high margin business revenues, in many cases for substandard services, now no longer do so.

The 5 shifts in the ICT industry
There are five major change drivers simultaneously at play in the industry at the moment.

1. From seeing to touching. The user experience of interacting with PCs, laptops and other interfaces such as intelligent cars, used to be a remote, graphical interface through a keyboard and a mouse. The move now is towards touchscreens and speech-based interfaces. You don’t have to punch in a number or find a name in your contact list anymore – you speak and your iPhone 4S or BMW interface will obey your command. The interface is becoming simpler; shielding the user from the complexity of technology.

Another shift is multiple interfaces. Increasingly we demand mobility and the ability to connect regardless of the device in our hands. We are also getting used to interacting on more than one screen at a time. Nobody manufactures a phone anymore that can only make and receive calls. Enter the age of the smartphone that is threatening Nokia with extinction. The same Nokia that sneered at Apple a few short years ago. If the multiple interfaces that you need to interface with are similar across various hardware platforms, the experience gets even better. Think MacBook, MacBook Air, Apple TV, iPhone, iPad and iTunes.

2. It’s in the cloud. IT delivery has changed completely to enable multiple interfaces and user-centric services. The servers and data
centres we used to know are all moving into the cloud. These could be private, public or hybrid cloud services. Cloud services and delivery have many benefits, such as elasticity to accommodate fast growth, scaling up or down. Arguably its greatest benefit, however, is the fact that users can access services immediately and directly through self-provisioning. Many IT administration functions are becoming obsolete. Facebook only has about four IT administrators to support a few hundred million customers.

All you need is a browser that opens the door into a virtual application store in the cloud. You buy the applications and services you want, and they are delivered to your device in almost the same time as it takes to process the transaction. The delivery model for applications has moved completely to an interactive, easy to accomplish format and away from being only for mobile devices. Even corporate IT support departments use application stores to maintain software versions.

This delivery model is scalable and turns IT into the fourth utility. It is also a powerful business growth area as it is driven by consumer demand. This is what users want.

3. **Sharing is more than caring.** The third shift relates to how information is shared and how people communicate. The main driver here is time. In the past, five hours to receive a reply to an email was considered a reasonable response time. Not anymore. Nowadays, people demand instant gratification. At work, it is no longer necessary to call a separate meeting to obtain input from others. Through social media platforms we can pull a third party into a meeting for a quick discussion and make a decision immediately. It truly is the age of speed and transparency.

This changing relationship with information is a significant issue when it comes to integrating different generations into one workforce. On the one extreme, the traditionalists generally regard knowledge as power and sometimes have difficulty using the new social media platforms to share in real time or to share information at all. The Generation Y worker, on the other hand, grew up with accessible information, complete transparency and has no issues with sharing. Younger people react faster and can be perceived as a threat exactly because they know how to use the new media. Their ability to instantaneously access almost any knowledge is the new power. The question is how to cater for both extremes?

Another question is how to harness the power of social media without falling victim to its dark side. Canon, for instance, designed its 7D camera based on user requirements solicited through social media. This best-selling digital SLR camera of all time truly was “designed by you, manufactured by Canon” as its payoff line claims. Glassdoor.com, on the other hand, is a website that allows employees to report anonymously on what goes on behind closed company doors. The potential for abuse and mischief is obvious and almost limitless.

4. **Innovation in the consumer’s hands.** Innovation used to be the preserve of the enterprise. People used to receive their technology at the office and take it home. Laptops are a good example. These days, employees acquire technology targeted at consumers, and bring it into the office. This brings with it a host of issues as security is potentially compromised every time someone downloads emails onto their iPhone and leaves the workplace.

The focus of IT innovation has shifted from enterprise to consumer. Microsoft was the previous generation’s king; modern consumers bow down to Apple. Consumer technology rules the roost, thanks to innovators like Apple that understand how to give consumers what they want (music, books, features, functions), and how they want it (through application stores and an ecology of partners). The power of this consumer-centeredness lies in its resonance with the new generation’s view of themselves as social beings first, and employees second.

5. **Eating the data elephant.** How to structure and organise the sheer volume of data is the last change driver. Web1.0 was a single medium through which users consumed content and it was mainly one directional, known as the “read-only” web. Web 2.0 consists of multiple channels and media and every consumer can be a broadcaster through services such as CNN’s iReport, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook and many more. Every consumer of data can now also be a publisher. This is also known as the “read-write” web.

As a result, the amount of data grows exponentially. Previously, the majority of data was contained and structured within an enterprise. That is no longer possible. It is a known fact that almost 90% of the data on the web today was produced and published in the last two years. Structured databases are no longer the answer because the structure of data is no longer fixed and predictable. Data and how it is structured is more dynamic, published through languages such as XML and others, making it easier to integrate and extract data. To cater for the growth in data volumes, Google now needs to run some ten million servers to provide a search service that is paid for with advertising revenue.

The more the volume of data grows, the greater the opportunity for search engines that can mine that data. Enterprises also have an opportunity to use the data to gain a proper understanding of their customers and to proactively offer relevant services and products to them. Business analytics and understanding the knowledge available about customers will be a key driver of success for companies in future.
How technology is changing industries

These five shifts are forcing entire industries to change. The telecommunications industry, for example, is facing the demise of voice calls as a revenue earner. As all communications migrate towards free data services, communication will eventually cost the consumer nothing. Consumers will pay for the services they consume, not for the transport of it. One only has to think about the model for electricity. When last did you pay for the transport of the electricity to your home?

In my view, five industries find themselves at the cutting edge of change:

1. **Retail** is rushing to embrace a combination of social media and intelligent advertising. Imagine signing in, through your mobile device, when you arrive at the mall. You say what you want and the mall responds with a list of outlets, special offers and directions to your preferred shop. The mall furthermore informs you about which of your friends are also there. This scenario is closer to reality than to science fiction. The Asian countries lead this trend. Next to train stations, for instance, are walls with images of food. Commuters simply aim their phones at the image of the product they want, click and submit their orders. Their groceries are delivered and waiting on the kitchen counter when they get home.

2. In **media and publishing**, internet sites have already replaced newspaper classifieds, closing down almost 90% of newspapers in countries like France. Who still buys a newspaper made of paper when you can have publications from all over the world digitally delivered to your smartphone?

   In the same vein, digital video can be delivered on any platform, allowing you to watch TV everywhere and, conversely, to check your email on your TV screen. Digital content can be consumed from and published on any device. In Italy, Fast Web subscribers can select the programmes they want to watch and create their own TV schedule through an interface in the cloud. The consumer individualises his viewing and chooses how to pay for the service – it is free if he opts to watch advertisements; paid-for if he prefers no advertising. Through this model, advertising space regains its lost long value.

3. The **automotive industry** is seeing the advent of the intelligent car. Imagine the convenience of printing an automated logbook off your car’s system and submitting it to the South African Revenue Service directly. Or when your car is stolen, you can track it remotely and cut the engine at the press of a button when safe to do so. Imagine being in an accident and having the “black-box” in your car submit an accident report to your insurance company, open a file with the police to report the accident, inform the towing-company of your choice of operator, arrange a rental car and a taxi pick-up at the scene of the accident, all automatically. Experiencing delays in traffic will also become an inconvenience of the past as you will have all the information you need in real-time to avoid traffic jams.

4. The **healthcare industry** depends on patient records. IBM is currently developing a system that runs a daily check-up through your bathroom visits. The results are uploaded into a system to which your doctor has access. All abnormalities are flagged, allowing data-driven preventative care based on very early diagnosis.

5. Matching supply and demand is the holy grail of the **energy industry**. At the moment, predictions are based on past patterns. An intelligent grid, however, can change all that. Imagine switching the lights on remotely when you approach your house after dark. Or receiving a breakdown of electricity usage per room or every appliance in your house. What about a system that can manage your power usage to fit into your budget for the month? Aligned to this is the fact that consumers in the USA and some European countries can already inject unused power into the electricity supply grid and become active participants in the supply of electricity instead of passive consumers.

Shifts in technology create tremendous opportunities for changes in industry. The analysis above highlights opportunities for Altech specifically: one of only a few companies positioned to take advantage of developments in almost all of these industries.

- There are almost 5 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide, serviced by 900 carriers.
- 750 million users are using Facebook to communicate and collaborate.
- 90% of the world’s data was created in the past two years.
- 80% of all new software will be delivered as a service in the cloud.
Altech Swift Global (ASG) is a company that embraces change in technology and work dynamics. This is seen in the diverse client needs that the company meets and is portrayed in its dynamic and young at heart image.

ASG’s creative and niche branding sets out to identify not only with existing clients, but also to attract and interact with potential new clients. It also positions the company in the wider market as a key service provider, particularly in Kenya and the East Africa region.

**BRAND REFRESH PREPARATION**

Development of the new corporate brand positioning:
The ASG marketing team challenged the current positioning of the Swift Global Kenya (SGK) brand and found that the company needed to position itself as the ultimate service provider when it came to Internet Service Provider (ISP) services and managed IT solutions.

Added to this was the requirement to be seen as reliable, trustworthy and efficient, and as a company that partnered with clients in order to fulfil their ICT requirements. The positioning also had to portray a company that was young at heart and flexible, and one that embraced new technologies, trends and ideas in order to grow, expand and develop.

From this “as is” assessment and insight into the fact that a company positioning statement constitutes a promise to stakeholders, the following positioning statement was proposed by the brand refresh team: “Steadfast Seamless Service”.

The statement highlights the fact that the company believes in breaking new ground, doing the best with what it has, adapting to stay ahead of the competition, not being afraid to operate “outside the box”, taking on challenges and offering exceptional service.

After establishing the corporate brand position, the team then looked into customer profiling and placed the brand in the hands of the consumer to determine how they would interact with it.

The next step was to create a brand feel and here the team defined the colours, image, style and typography.

**Design Challenges**
The key design challenge was merging the Altech brand and logo with the Swift Global brand. The two brands had been designed in isolation, with their own rigid brand structures.

However, a successful merging of the two logos was achieved, resulting in the creation of a new brand based on how the Kenyan and East African markets react to brands in terms of look and feel.

All in all, the re-brand preparation exercise was extremely successful. The project is now at the implementation phase in terms of applying the new look across all brand communication touch points, such as signage, stationery, brand manual and office branding.

Considerations in refreshing the brand:
The team examined a number of factors directly affecting the previous Swift Global Kenya brand and established key touch points to build upon when refreshing the company brand.

The team was tasked to:
- Establish a proper brand architecture.
- Build a consistent identity (in terms of logo, tag line, slogans, themes and product sub-brands).
- Build the relationship between the sub-brands and the ASG mother brand.
- Create a strategy outlining when to associate the ASG mother brand to its sub-brands (architecture).
- Design a comprehensive set of rules governing the outdoor and indoor signage; manage branding of the new office space and company stationery; design branding that informs the representation of the brand - both at head office in Nairobi and the branches in Mombasa and Kisumu cities (corporate identity guidelines); and formalise website development guidelines.
- Develop a marketing communication plan, including details of the launch of the new brand.
- Develop an internal communication plan for staff to identify with the company brand refresh.

A new look Altech Swift Global is in the process of being introduced into the East African market and is set to reinforce the company’s position as the leading Data Communication and Internet Access Services Provider (Tier-1) in the region.

“A brand that captures your mind gains behaviour. A brand that captures your heart gains commitment.” - Scott Talgo, international brand strategist
With a 33% growth in this year’s intake of students, the Altech Academy is well on its way to even greater success. Since its inception in 2007, a total of 330 students have completed their studies and graduated with a variety of university degrees and certificates.

This year’s annual student presentations were held at the Michelangelo Hotel on 8 November and featured some of Altech’s top learners. Their presentations were judged by a panel that named Jay Naidoo the Best Student of the Year for his presentation on management of technology. The student group from Altech UEC, comprising of Avinash Ganga, Jayendra Rachpall, Rowan Potgieter, Johan Kohler and Pranesh Singh, were adjudged the overall winners of the Best Team of the Year in the Group Award.

All the courses run by the Academy are specifically focused on innovation and technology. As a result, says Craig Venter, Altech CEO and Academy Patron, “Altech has learnt that there are aspects of the business where we can improve, adjust and create based on the findings of individual and group studies of our operations. The Academy process creates an investigative feedback cycle that reaches deep within our operational veins.”

With a commitment from Johan Klein, Group Executive HR and IR, to provide students with the necessary future support and guidance in their career paths, the Altech Academy is destined to grow from strength to strength and serve as a tool for attracting and retaining employees with specialised skills.
Altech Kenya Data Networks’ (KDN) move at the beginning of October to new state-of-the-art premises at the Sameer Business Park and Altech Sameer East Africa Data Centre went off without a hitch due to some careful pre-planning and project management.

One of the primary reasons behind the move was to consolidate the various KDN offices spread around Nairobi into a single location in order to reduce costs, facilitate better communication between staff, improve productivity and customer service and ensure more efficient management of facilities. The relocation plan included moving all KDN staff from the Parkside 7th and 9th floor offices as well as the KDN Citadel Offices in Westlands, Nairobi.

The relocation was divided into two phases to ensure minimal disruption to employees and productivity levels:

1. The renovation and set up of the new offices at the Sameer Business Park and the Data Centre ground floor offices.
2. The actual move of employees from the three existing KDN office locations to the new premises.

On the day of the move, the IT department worked tirelessly to ensure that all LAN points and personal computers were set up and in working order, while employees from the various offices began packing up their personal belongings and office equipment. It was evident throughout the process that teamwork and effective communication ensured a smooth and hassle-free move as everyone knew exactly what they were expected to do in order to ensure a seamless transition between offices.

KDN’s offices at Block A at the new, ultra-modern Sameer Business Park cover the ground and mezzanine floors of units 1 to 6 - a total area of 2 560m². The amenities offered in this spectacular new office environment include a cafeteria, which lends itself to outside catering, and indoor and outdoor pause areas. It also offers a sixteen seater executive boardroom, six meeting rooms, two filing rooms and ample basement parking.

The architecture and unique working space of the new offices provide KDN employees with open plan seating arrangements. The low space dividers enhance creativity, innovation, spontaneity and collaboration. Aligned to this, the executive offices boast glass walls to foster transparency and idea sharing. With floor-to-ceiling windows facing the busy Mombasa Road, it is hard to pass through Nairobi without noticing KDN’s exceptional new location.

The new offices provide KDN employees with open plan seating arrangements with low space dividers in order to enhance creativity, innovation, spontaneity and collaboration.

The amenities offered in the new office include a cafeteria, which lends itself to outside catering, and indoor and outdoor pause areas.

Naushad Merali, Group Executive Chairman of the Sameer Group and Tim Ellis, Altech Group Executive: Converged Services, at the opening of the new KDN offices in Nairobi.
Teresa Badenhorst brings new focus to Human Resources role

Altech Autopage Cellular’s new HR executive, Teresa Badenhorst, has been in the hot seat for only a short while, but she is brimming with ideas for building the strategic role of HR in the business.

“We need to make sure that we have the right people in the right positions and that they live customer service,” she says.

Teresa believes that learning is a key capability that needs to be developed.

“The pace of change in this industry is phenomenal and our people need to be competent and abreast of changes at all times,” she explains. “They have to learn, unlearn and relearn endlessly. We have to provide them with the tools and mental attitude to do that.”

Another important goal for Teresa is to build Altech Autopage Cellular into a strong employer brand – a company everyone aspires to work for and one that inspires employees to be true brand ambassadors.

She’s also determined to concentrate on talent management.

“People need to understand how their performance is measured and they must be given the tools to help them improve,” she says. “This will also help them to set and reach their own career goals. If good people cannot progress, you lose them.”

Other focus areas for Teresa include building leadership and management skills through focused programs that are tailor-made for the company. She also wants to develop broad-based black economic empowerment initiatives to improve the company’s rating, thus positioning it to gain more business and make more of an impact on the national transformation agenda.

Married and with three treasured spaniels, Teresa spends her spare time cooking and entertaining friends. She and her husband are lovers of wildlife.

Leon Watkins has been appointed as Senior Manager: Application Development at Altech ISIS

Leon’s primary role will be to manage the Altech ISIS team of more than 50 developers, drive innovation within the organisation and grow existing and new client groups.

Altech ISIS is particularly pleased to have on board a senior executive such as Leon who has over 25 years executive and management experience with a range of blue chip companies.

Leon is an experienced, entrepreneurial and proactive business executive who has always realised that technology plays a critical role in increasing business value and operational excellence. He has held the roles of CIO and COO and been part of executive decision making at board level for many years. His extensive experience was gained in the aviation, insurance and media industries, in addition to retail and education.

During his career Leon has been in charge of technical and application development teams in companies such as South African Airways. His senior management experience included CEO or CIO positions at Sanlam, the Professional Provident Society and International Colleges Group.

His ability to translate IT functionality into business requirements will undoubtedly add value to Altech ISIS and its customers.

Leon holds a BSc (Computer Science) degree from the University of Port Elizabeth and BSc Honours (Computer Science) and BA (Industrial Psychology) degrees from UNISA. He has also completed a number of executive training courses.
Altech was dominant at the Technology Top 100 Awards held on Thursday 24th November, an annual event hosted by the Da Vinci Institute for the Management of Technology and Innovation under the auspices of the Department of Science and Technology.

The Technology Top 100 (TT100) Awards are recognised as the premier business excellence awards in South Africa and a celebration of South African innovation.

Altech received the TT100 2011 Minister’s Award for Sustainability, while Altech Multimedia and Altech Netstar walked away with the TT100 Minister’s Award for Excellence in the Management of Systems.

Representatives of Altech’s executive management received the awards, as well as acknowledgement for their achievements from the Minister of Science and Technology, Ms Naledi Pandor.

The TT100 2011 Minister’s Award for Sustainability is presented to those companies that consistently and progressively demonstrate a unique ability to manage core elements of the business, including technology, innovation, people and systems.

The Excellence in the Management of Systems Award is presented to candidates that not only demonstrate the consistent and successful management of resources, but also have a proven track record in the transfer of lasting value through effective and reliable service delivery within the framework of technology integration and management.

According to the Minister, the TT100 Awards programme helps identify South African role models, who through innovation, tenacity and a passionate belief in people, have been able to take their organisations to new levels of competitiveness.

“It is these role models that inspire the next generation of innovators and technology developers and the TT100 awards are an important catalyst in developing a culture of entrepreneurship. TT100 winners are those enterprises that optimise technology to maximise profits, gain market share, create niche markets and add value for their stakeholders,” she said.

Altech CEO, Craig Venter had the following to say about the awards received by the Altech Group.

"I am extremely proud and honoured for the Altech Group to have received these awards. It is truly meaningful of Altech's advancements and contribution to the South African Telecommunications, Multi-media and Information Technology sectors. This is not only evidence of the success of our management of systems, people and processes, but also testament to our achievements to receive this level of industry recognition. We remain committed to the development of technology and innovation, both in South Africa and globally, in order to cement our position of market leadership."

Technology Top 100 is a national programme that acknowledges the success that South African organisations enjoy through their development and use of technology. More importantly, it encourages, measures and honours these organisations for the value their use of technology brings to the South African economy.
Supply chains are becoming increasingly global. With a large number of South African products being exported across the oceans and north into the continent, logistics companies play a vital role in ensuring that these goods reach their final destination. While high levels of competition continue to drive the efficiency of operations within South Africa’s borders, very few of the country’s transport and logistics providers have succeeded in the rest of Africa. This is, in part, due to a lack of reliable communications infrastructure which restricts visibility of assets and real-time control. Even though cellphone technology has improved the continent’s ability to communicate, it is yet to achieve the required levels of guaranteed, real-time communication. As such, fleet operators need to explore other technologies and find alternate means of accessing their own virtual private networks.

The past decade has seen a number of revolutionary developments in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) space. With many of these solutions having strong business propositions, their implementation has transformed many industries, introducing new economies of scale in many instances.

“This is something we’ve seen in the freight and logistics sector, with radio frequency identification (RFID), advanced track and trace solutions, electronic proof of delivery (ePOD) solutions and various warehouse management programmes all driving far greater efficiencies from a cost and delivery perspective,” says Nico Els, General Manager of Altech Fleetcall.

“As such, they have improved both productivity and customer care, and set new industry benchmarks.”

While most of these technologies are maturing at a rapid pace, sophisticated technology is only ever as good as the infrastructure on offer, especially when it comes to communication.

“Although cellphone, GSM, GPS and GPRS technologies allow for far more than checking-in with the driver en route, in order to monitor vehicles in a fleet and collect key data (including details relating to areas such as health and safety, and fuel efficiency) one has to have infrastructure in place that supports this technology,” says Els.

“This has significant consequences for logistics and fleet operations wishing to extend their routes in South Africa as well as into Africa.”

While cellphone technology in particular has allowed for data collection by vehicle tracking devices and enabled drivers to communicate in real-time, numerous external factors still impact on the ability to communicate directly with one’s fleet.

“Network strength and signal availability for example, can prevent an operator from getting in touch with a driver at a critical moment,” says Els.

“Relying on cellphone technology alone cannot, therefore, guarantee that communication will always be possible, especially in remote areas. This is a challenge that extends across the continent – starting in South Africa, where users continue to be inconvenienced by too many dropped calls and a lack of network availability.”
In order to guarantee the real-time communication required by fleet operations, owners need to tap into a virtual private network, within the national grid where they operate. This is one of the benefits of radio trunking – which is readily available in South Africa.

“Because trunking involves the automatic and dynamic allocation of a small number of radio channels to a large number of users, it’s a technique that makes communication with one’s fleet not only easier, but a lot more effective and cost-efficient.”

Els adds that, unlike traditional radio communication systems where different users operate on separate radio frequencies or channels, radio trunking controls and guides users to a free channel.

“This eliminates the problem of users exceeding the number of channels provided. In this way, it enables a dispatcher to be in instant contact with vehicles (or a specific vehicle) in a fleet. Its design, which caters for multiple calls of short duration, is therefore ideal for fleet management purposes across Africa.”

In the case of Altech Fleetcall, which has network infrastructure that extends throughout South Africa, the system can also “trunk” multiple radio frequencies, eliminating the long queues waiting for single frequencies.

Furthermore, radio trunking eliminates many of the hidden costs often associated with cellphone technology – from implementing hands-free sets in the cab to cellphone abuse by individuals.

“A system from Altech Fleetcall can also be very effectively integrated with a sister tracking product like Altech Netstar’s Vigil Pro for example, improving efficiencies in the fleet management equation.”

This means that feedback about driver behaviour can be directly communicated in real-time, translating into greater fuel efficiency and improved occupational safety.

With real-time communication a non-negotiable for fleet operations, management needs to make use of tried and trusted technologies that guarantee visibility and control of their vehicles.

“The radio trunking technology already available in South Africa provides suppliers with a viable alternative,” says Els. “By tapping into this system, they will enjoy benefits beyond mere communication – boosting overall efficiency, reducing costs and, most importantly, increasing their operation’s profitability.”

Can you afford not to be in touch?
Get unlimited voice communication on Altech Fleetcall’s national network for less than R399* per month.
On 1 November 2011, Altech West Africa opened its high technology plastic security card plant in Lagos, Nigeria.

The state-of-the-art factory reaffirms Altech’s confidence in West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular as a growth market worthy of large-scale investment.

According to Johan Gellatly, Altech Group Executive: Information Technology, who spoke at the opening, the new factory is symbolic of Altech’s goal to become a truly global organisation.

“Altech’s decision to diversify its South African operations into the rest of Africa was based on its belief that in an age of globalisation and an increasingly small world, Africa can no longer be ignored. One-tenth of the world’s population is African. There have been significant economic, political and social developments to dispel the label associated with Africa. There is tremendous potential in Africa – opportunities abound for growth powered by natural and human resources,” he said.

He went on to say that Altech West Africa was proud to have contributed to the economy of Nigeria by creating several hundred jobs and to have played a role in building confidence in Nigeria’s telecommunications, banking and financial services through the provision of world-class security cards.

“It is important that African countries sustain and grow the reputation and sophistication of their professional services. By so doing, more investors will be likely to trust that their investments are safe and worth the return. Altech West Africa is happy to have been able to transfer knowledge and to build up a competitive advantage for Nigeria – as it is doing in so many other African countries,” he added.

Coupled to the opening of the new facility is Altech West Africa’s commitment to the Central Bank of Nigeria’s (CBN) policy of creating a cashless economy through the use of smart card technology.

To discourage the use of cash as a means of payment in Nigeria, the CBN is taking steps to promote the use of e-payments across all available channels. As such, local banks and payment card schemes are expected to issue several million smart cards to Nigerians to power cashless operations.

“This is where Altech West Africa’s smart card factory has become a veritable partner,” says Louis Blom, Managing Director of Altech West Africa.

According to Blom, the local production of smart cards is important to the successful operation of the cashless scheme.

“Our facility will not only lower the cost of the card per unit, it will also radically reduce the go-to-market time for the production of cards. Presently, it takes a minimum of five weeks to order smart cards from factories in Europe and Asia.”

Altech’s presence in Nigeria dates back to September 2005 when a paper factory was commissioned by Altech NamITech West Africa. A name change was effected in June 2009 to Altech West Africa with additional business values, products and a different outlook.

Altech West Africa has since established itself as the dominant manufacturer of prepaid cellular vouchers for major telecommunications operators in the region, producing over 65 million prepaid air time vouchers per month.
Mr. Michael Ajukwu, Chairman of Altech West Africa, said that Altech West Africa was working with the Central Bank of Nigeria to ensure a cashless environment in Nigeria.

Now, with the capability to supply initialised and personalised chip-card products to Nigerian telecommunications network operators and financial service providers, the company’s product lines have been further expanded.

The 6 500m² cutting edge manufacturing facility, which has more than 300 workers and operates 24 hours a day, has the capacity to print and deliver over one million plastic cards per month to both private and corporate clients.

The plastic card plant can manufacture and personalise various types of cards including smart cards with contact, contactless and magstripe. These cards can be used in various applications such as banking cards with chip and pin, loyalty cards, identity cards, gift cards, health cards, membership cards, discount cards, hotel keys, promotional cards and marketing cards.

Furthermore, the company has the capability to personalise variable data during card production including hologram and security ink imprinting, picture imprinting, biometrics ID encoding as well as drop on demand technology (DoD) and embossing.

MasterCard, VISA, and Verve card powered by Interswitch, have certified the plant. Genesis issued by eTranzact, Freedom card powered by 3Line and Mediterranean Smart Card Company (MSCC), the largest payment card processor in Africa, have done the same.

Current clients include all the major telecommunications companies in Nigeria; and a number of the major banks in Nigeria; including First Bank, UBA, and Access Bank.
Data loss happens, as the painful experiences of many end-users or IT departments can confirm.

At any given moment, you are a hard drive crash or a spilt drink away from losing vital information - a loss that may prove detrimental to the future of your organisation. Traditional backup solutions can be expensive and may take weeks to implement, all the while leaving your business vulnerable. To add insult to injury, CIOs and COOs are now personally responsible for safeguarding their organisation's data. King III makes executives who don’t enforce the new regulations liable to pay a large fine, or worse, face prison time.

With an ever-growing mobile workforce that replaces desktops with mobile devices as the system of choice, data loss becomes an even greater risk.

Fortunately, Altech Technology Concepts (ATC) has introduced ATC Online Backups powered by eVault, a division of Storvault. ATC Online Backups is a self-service, worry-free, state-of-the-art backup solution that provides an efficient backup solution for any organisation – small or large.

The solution offers a wealth of features and functionality, including the continuous backup of selected directories and files to ATC’s backup vaults in the cloud to protect data without disrupting the user. Added to this, ATC Online Backups allows remote data deletion, port access control, device tracing and state-of-the-art encryption – features that are especially valuable when a device is lost or stolen.

Ultimately, ATC Online Backups means having more oversight with fewer overheads and is of great benefit to any IT department. Organisations can now safeguard their IT resources with a desktop/notebook backup solution that uses centralised, policy-based administration and globally deduplicated, compressed data transfer.

“ATC Online Backups allows users to do more with less,” says Wayne de Nobrega, CEO of ATC.

“This comprehensive backup solution was designed with the consumer in mind, replacing the features you don’t need with those you do – a backup solution that is tailored to suit any business need.”
The Altech Academy opened its doors in November 2007 with the aim of developing educated minds for Altech specifically and the ICT industry in general.

Altech employees are able to enrol for programmes varying from short courses to post-graduate degrees. The Academy also offers continuous development programmes for executives and manages Altech’s leadership development programme.

The training and development philosophy of the Altech Academy is built on three pillars:

a. Capacity building of core skills
b. Leadership development to create a pipeline for future leaders
c. Learnerships and bursaries aimed at attracting and retaining exceptional individuals

Through these three pillars, the Altech Academy aims to not only satisfy its own need for competent, skilled and high-performing staff, but also for Altech to play a positive role in the South African government’s skills development programme.

Now in its fourth year of operation, the Altech Academy has gone from strength to strength as we see an increasing number of student enrolments and graduates.

Three hundred Altech employees are currently studying through the Academy, representing 8% of Altech’s workforce. This representivity is one of the strengths of the Altech Academy as it creates a platform where students from across the Altech group meet and interact, often for the first time. They share their experiences and their learning and maintain contact once they go their separate ways. In this way a powerful network is built across the group that creates a "big picture" view of the Group and its mission and goals, thereby benefiting both individuals and Altech’s operations.

In addition to this, the Altech Academy has forged partnerships with leading local institutions, such as the University of Stellenbosch and the Da Vinci Institute, and recently established links with the Harvard Business School in Boston and INSEAD in Europe, two of the world’s leading and largest graduate business schools. These new partners will be key providers for the executive programmes that the Academy is developing.

At the 2011 graduation ceremony on Friday 25th November, 118 employees were presented with their graduation certificates. Of these, nine qualified with master’s degrees of which seven were Cum Laude.

In his speech to the graduates, invited guests and Altech employees, Craig Venter, Altech CEO and Patron of the Academy, had the following to say:

“Our mission is to help our employees develop the ability to cultivate new ideas and then transform them into innovative business models, products and services. This not only benefits our company and the ICT industry, but the national economy as a whole.

“The goal of the Altech Academy is to develop Altech employees so that they can add further value to the group as a whole, in addition to empowering and developing themselves and their long-term career paths. With this goal in mind, I am proud of the philosophy and achievements of the Altech Academy. It is a privilege to celebrate the graduation of Altech employees who have emerged from their training better equipped to contribute to Altech and South Africa. I know that they will employ their innovative thinking skills to sustain Altech’s competitiveness and South Africa’s economic growth.”

Keynote speaker at the event was Mr Dan Hanson from the USA. Dan is currently a principal with the Technology Innovation Group, Inc. (TIG), which he co-founded in 2002. His message to the students was: “Stay at the edge of innovation and become forward thinking strategisers as those are the most important minds in business today.”

Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications, Eric Kholwane, attended the graduation ceremony. Here is he is flanked by Craig Venter, Altech CEO and Altech Academy Patron on the left, and Joe Makhafola, Altech Group Executive: Corporate Affairs, Government Liaison and Regulatory Affairs on the right. Speaking to the Academy’s students, Mr Kholwane reminded them of the importance of education in the business environment and how one’s knowledge could spark a revolution.

Charity Anzazi Bungule, left, and Mary Nduta Mwangi, right, who completed their Project Management Programmes with the Altech Academy this year. In the middle is Anthony Nzau who completed his Systems Engineering Programme. All three students are from Altech’s Kenya operations.
The Altech Fleetcall and Becker Electronics Gautrain technical journey began in 2006 soon after the Best and Final Offer (BAFO) was accepted for the implementation of the Gautrain Communications Network. As the selected communication specialists, Altech Fleetcall and Becker Electronics were contracted to provide the radio communications system for the Gautrain.

The delivery of the project was scheduled over 54 months with extremely strict project milestones.

The initial part of the project entailed the drafting of a communications system design to demonstrate to the client how the system would work and how it would interconnect with other supplier equipment – in what is known as a Factory Accepted Test (FAT).

In the FAT stage, the complete radio system, radio stations and tunnel communication equipment were demonstrated to the client and operator.

Following FAT acceptance it became a race against time and weather, as two relatively small technical teams from Altech Fleetcall and Becker Electronics were allocated to the Gautrain project.

The next step in the process was to create a “mock-up” of the radio system at all ten Gautrain stations. The purpose of the mock-up was to identify any interface problems and to rectify any issues while all equipment and interfaces from the various suppliers were under one roof.

Following the successful mock-up, the first system was installed at the Gautrain depot. During the depot installation, installation of radio equipment in the tunnel from the Marlboro Portal also began. This was no easy task as the total tunnel length is 15km. The first 5km is a double tunnel, each with two communication lines for redundancy and cable mounting brackets placed at 500mm intervals across the total tunnel length.

The next stations ready for installation were OR Tambo, Rhodesfield, Marlboro and Sandton, and they had to be ready for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in July 2010.

Although this was not part of the initial requirement specification, it subsequently became quite a rush to get this section of the project operational by July 2010. Thanks to a massive effort from all parties concerned, the bus depot was completed and the required 60 of the 125 busses had radio systems installed and ready, with all the applicable bus routes’ coverage checked. The first passenger train was ready for commercial use on 8 June 2010, with all communications ready and emergency back-up in place.

From there, it became another race against time. The next installation phase was the Midrand, Centurion, Pretoria and Hatfield stations; the Modderfontein, Samrand and Snake Valley radio stations; the tunnel towards Rosebank and Park stations; and both Rosebank and Park stations.
As system changes and interfaces were implemented, coverage was continuously re-checked to ensure that any communication gaps were eliminated.

The Gautrain has now been active for a few months and the one millionth passenger milestone has already been surpassed. Gautrain is one of South Africa’s largest infrastructure projects and every person involved in bringing it to fruition can be proud of his or her input.

A remarkable milestone, the way of transport for the future……and Altech Fleetcall is ready, should there be a next phase!

Corrie Kruger - Project Manager,
Altech Fleetcall/Becker Electronics

The document trail
Running parallel to the actual installation of the communication system, was the paperwork. This amounted to more than 880 documents and CAD drawings during the course of the project.

The Technical Requirement Description (TRD) was the rule book for the installation of the radio system. The System Specification, First Article Inspection, Factory Acceptance Tests, Interface Control Documents, Post Installation Check Out, Site Acceptance Test, System Integration Test, Method Statements, Risk Assessments, Reliability Analysis, Site and System Drawings, Coverage Tests and Technical Interfaces were all part of the pre-requirements for installation, testing and handover of each site to the client as they were completed.

Meeting Social Responsibility requirements
During the course of the project and in alignment with Socio Economic Development (SED) requirements, a number of trainees were taken through a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) approved Administration and Technical course over two, six month sessions, making it a one year course from which they graduated with either an administration or technical qualification. The purpose of these courses was to up-skill trainees with practical experience while studying in order to better prepare them for work in the South African market. Altech Fleetcall and Becker trained a total of eight trainees who are now employed within the industry.

Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) standards were high during the entire project and Altech Fleetcall and Becker managed to achieve a figure of almost 200 000 accident free hours. No mean feat considering the size of the project!

And, in line with government policy, the procurement objective of the project was to also procure as much local content and services as possible, which was achieved to the satisfaction of the client.
The Altech Siyabonga Awards are presented to employees within the Altech Group to acknowledge dedication, delivery above and beyond the call of duty, and consistent, professional conduct for others to aspire to.

The individuals that Altech would like to honour and thank are…

**OCTOBER 2011**

**HENDRIK VISAGIE:** LCR TECHNICIAN – ALTECH AUTOPAGE CELLULAR

Hendrik was seconded, from LCR technical support, to the new projects development team early in 2011. This was to assist with the VoIP service development which Altech Autopage Cellular will soon be offering to the market.

Due to his extensive knowledge in the IP and PABX arena’s, and with his understanding of Altech Autopage’s requirements, he soon became an integral part of the team. He contributed to the testing and acceptance of a number of gateways and IP PABX’s which are now utilised by Altech Autopage Cellular.

Due to a delay in implementing the VoIP service, he was moved to investigate the streamlining of the APN application process between Business Sales and Sales.

This has been very successful and the completed process has been documented and implemented within these two environments.

Essentially this was due to Hendrik’s single-handed solution which will be contributing to improved efficiencies within Altech Autopage Cellular.

**NOVEMBER 2011**

**SIBONGILE (“SIBS”) TEMBO:** ASSET MANAGER – ARROW ALTECH DISTRIBUTION

Sibs Tembo is responsible for inventory procurement from a multitude of international suppliers of electronic and electromechanical components. Sibs has been with Arrow Altech Distribution for 16 years and has excelled in her position in managing Arrow Altech Distribution’s procurement strategy and inventory levels.

She is extremely enthusiastic about her work and is very professional in the way she conducts business with internal customers and international suppliers alike. Sibs is an exceptional team player with a great personality and is well liked by her colleagues.

She continuously strives to improve her skills and knowledge and successfully completed her BCom degree through Unisa in 2010.
Whoever you are and whatever your communication needs, our voice and data services...

...are the perfect fit. You dream it. We make it happen.

An industry leader for over 12 years, Altech Technology Concepts creates the perfect solution to meet your unique communication needs. Whether it’s a secure VPN environment in which to conduct business or a managed cloud service like virtualisation, our next-generation network guarantees a high-quality, always-on solution. Clients can choose from a variety of services, including fixed and wireless links, capped and uncapped Internet access, security, back-ups, VoIP and e-mail. Client needs may vary but our quality, flexibility and reliability remain constant.

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2011 was a year of commitments made and goals defined in the ICT industry. Big bandwidth projects came to fruition and vital political initiatives were reiterated. In many ways the year has prepared us for a 2012 of getting down to work with a clear direction in terms of where we’re headed.

Simon Dingle - Independent technology journalist

The old cliché of time flying was certainly appropriate in 2011 - a whirlwind year that saw a flurry of activity in the ICT industry. The politics of the sector was disrupted by changes in leadership, international bandwidth projects came to fruition and telecommunications operators made strides in deploying and upgrading networks. It has been a crazy year in many ways and has prepared us for a promising, but demanding, 2012.

Many commitments were made in 2011. Big projects were undertaken and common goals for the industry were defined. Promises were made in terms of bandwidth provisioning and leading players in the market agreed to partnerships and deadlines. Fulfilling these goals is likely to be the focus of the next eight years.

Playing musical ministers

The year saw a transition in ministerial leadership of the department of communications. Radhakrishna L. Padayachie was appointed at the helm of the ministry during a cabinet reshuffle in October last year. Less than 12 months later he was replaced by Dina Pule, former deputy minister of the department, with Tembisa Stella Ndabeni as her second in command.

Padayachie may not have spent very long in office but sparked several important conversations while he was. There was little time for taking action, but he made strides in terms of defining objectives.

One of the more significant projects he undertook was to meet with the top 30 leaders of the ICT industry, including Altech CEO Craig Venter and Vodacom CEO Pieter Uys, to establish a vision for the sector and get major players on the same page.

This roundtable meeting led to several key undertakings, not least of which was the commitment to provide broadband Internet connectivity to all of South Africa by 2020. This was a clear desire of the minister’s and something that was wholeheartedly agreed upon by the 30 captains of industry he met with.

It’s no small order, however. Achieving this objective will mean massive infrastructure rollout, partnerships and decisive strategy for telecommunications companies to extend their networks to the most rural areas of our geographically large country.

Padayachie also expressed his desire for greater public-private participation in achieving goals such as broadband proliferation and prioritised his focus on settling the vital issues of local loop unbundling and the allocation of radio spectrum to telecoms providers.

Spectrum allocation is yet to start and the best way of achieving that is yet to be resolved. The department said it wanted to use the sale of radio frequency spectrum in “high-demand bands” to facilitate the introduction of new infrastructure competitors in the local telecommunications industry.

Robert Nkuna, special adviser to the minister, said that it would be important to provision frequencies to licensees that don’t currently have spectrum so they can compete with incumbent operators. Those operators have kicked back against his assertion, however, saying that they are the only companies equipped to take advantage of new frequencies and that it isn’t viable to expect smaller companies to roll out new networks at great cost and over long periods of time.

Local loop unbundling is the process of opening up Telkom’s incumbent copper network and making it available to third parties. This is seen on one hand as a boon for smaller Internet service providers that cannot deploy their own national networks. On the other hand, many consider it a pointless undertaking now that most large network providers have rolled out their own infrastructure and the market is beginning to consolidate.

Whether or not unbundling the local loop will be beneficial to the sector, it is not likely to happen any time soon now that the minister has once again been replaced.
Let there be light

In April this year the largest international bandwidth project relevant to South Africa achieved a milestone. The West African Cable System, or ‘WACS’, landed at Yzerfontein in the Western Cape.

At a total cost estimated to be around $600 million, WACS will deliver an additional 5.12 terabits of international bandwidth to the SA market. It is another step in the journey of super-connecting our country to the rest of the world.

WACS was the second privately-owned cable system to hit South Africa following the launch of the SEACOM cable in 2009. The industry has already seen the impact of alternative bandwidth with costs steadily decreasing over the last two years. This was certainly true in 2011, and that was before we saw the impact of WACS. Next year we are likely to see the trend accelerate as new domestic networks come online and the bandwidth from WACS begins to impact the market, along with that of EASSy. The latter is another bandwidth project that, like SEACOM, connects to the east coast of the continent and, like WACS, reached its infrastructural completion point this year.

While the impact of these projects is big for the SA market, they have even been more significant elsewhere in Africa.

In Kenya, for example, SEACOM was the first undersea cable to provide direct international connectivity. And it changed everything.

A combination of political will and green-fields infrastructure projects in Kenya catapulted the country into the top three of the continent in terms of consumer bandwidth provisioning, according to statistics maintained by Ookla.

Kenya launched Africa’s first fibre-to-the-home services in 2011 and is showing signs of leapfrogging South Africa to take the lead on the continent in terms of connectivity.

Similarly, Ghana on the west coast and Rwanda in central Africa made great progress in connecting consumers throughout 2011, presenting new opportunities for ICT companies.

Price war rages on

New networks result in increased competition and ultimately lower prices. A battle in this regard slowly got going in 2010 in the fixed line space where South Africa’s first uncapped ADSL connections were introduced. In 2011 the fight went cellular.

Cell C introduced the first truly disruptive prices for mobile broadband in 2010 as part of its drive to launch a new network, redefine its brand and really take the fight to MTN and Vodacom. Cell C’s moves were bold but they were nothing compared to Telkom’s fledgling cellular network 8ta.

Earlier this year, 8ta launched a 10GB per month broadband package at a cost of only R200 per month. Subscribers were also given 10GB of additional data for late night usage over the same period for R100 per month.

Compared to competitive rates at the time, this meant that 8ta was making mobile broadband available at more than 85% cheaper than other operators.

MTN was first to respond to this challenge with a reduction in the prices of its uncapped data offerings. Its ‘Uncapped Lite’ product, for example, was reduced from R750 per month to R300.

But the biggest reduction from competitors came months after 8ta’s announcement when, in November, Vodacom launched its MyGig 20 promotion that sold prepaid 20GB data bundles at a cost of R500.

The promotion will only run for three months, but is indicative of the trend to price slashing that seems ripe to underpin the market in 2012.

The world of bandwidth has its own version of Moore’s Law that applies to computer processors getting consistently more powerful over time.

Butter’s law says that, “The amount of data coming out of an optical fibre is doubling every nine months. Thus, the cost of transmitting a bit over an optical network decreases by half every nine months.”

This presents many challenges for African operators and it’ll be entertaining to watch them deal with it all - and each other - in 2012.

The other price imperative

While bandwidth prices tumble down, the price of mobile computing devices has also come down drastically - which is vital to opening up new markets in the developing world.

Perhaps the most significant testament to this trend was the launch of the Aakash tablet - a joint initiative by the government of India and a device manufacturer called Ubislate. The latter has produced an android tablet computer that is expected to go on sale in India for less than $100 - the current price has been suggested at somewhere between $35 and $60.

The combination of human-centric computer devices such as tablet computers and a market that is driving prices down is one of the most significant turning points, not only of the ICT industry, but of society as a whole. It will have massive and far-reaching effects on education, healthcare and socioeconomics.

In 2012 we will see these trends continue and strengthen, providing both big challenges and exciting opportunities for everyone involved in ICT. Some of it will be disruptive, but the positive possibilities will outweigh the negative consequences for those who keep up with the times.

It’s bound to be an interesting year filled with surprises.
Ever since the inception of the Early Debit Order Payment stream, the incidence of disputing (reversing successfully processed transactions) has become an all too common practice.

It is very easy for a consumer to dispute or reverse any Non Authenticated Early Debit Order (NAEDO Transaction) appearing on their bank account. The number of disputed transactions in this payment stream has increased over the last 15 months from 80 000 to over 171 000 in September 2011.

More and more consumers are disputing NAEDO transactions in order to “improve” their cash flow. Whether the consumer has a valid reason to dispute the transaction or not, the bank is obliged to process the disputed request during the first 40 days after the transaction was successfully processed as the banks do not have any facility to verify the reason for the dispute offered by the consumer. Thus the consumer’s cash flow is restored temporarily.

The dispute process is not being challenged, only the apparent misuse of the system by some consumers.

Disputing a legitimate NAEDO debit is to the detriment of both the consumer and the beneficiary. Interest is added to the consumer’s outstanding debt and the beneficiary’s cash flow is severely impacted. This in turn increases the risk of lending which is making it even more difficult for the consumer to obtain credit.

The Consumer Protection Act has come into effect and only time will tell what attitude the consumer will adopt relative to the disputed payment trend.

The Reserve Bank, in its vision 2010 document, proposed a move toward consumer initiated payments, but this is still not possible. The only current alternative is the Authenticated Early Debit Order payment stream (AEDO transactions).

The AEDO payment stream supports the Consumer Protection Act because it will bring the consumer and the merchant together, face-to-face, and allows the consumer to commit to an open and transparent agreement where he/she can agree to the contract re-payment schedule by creating an electronic mandate using his/her card and PIN. In the process the member banks agree to honour the transaction and to afford it a non-disputability status.
Christmas is a time for giving, but what gift will really leave an impression? Everybody loves a gadget and Altech Autopage Cellular has come up with a list of our favourite gadgets so you can choose the one that’s perfect for your loved ones.

BlackBerry Bold 9900

The BlackBerry Bold 9900 is one of the thinnest and slickest devices yet from Research in Motion (RIM), the makers of BlackBerry phones. A mere 10.5mm thick and offering the perfect combination of keyboard and touch display, this cutting-edge phone is perfect for both business and personal use. This is one of the first BlackBerry devices in South Africa to feature the new BlackBerry® 7 operating system, which introduces a next generation BlackBerry browser with a fast, fluid web browsing experience that is among the best in the industry. The next generation BlackBerry browser also boasts optimised zooming and panning for smoother web navigation and stellar HTML5 performance for incredible gaming and video experiences. Cutting edge technologies, such as built-in support for NFC (near field communications), round off this great package.

Samsung GALAXY S II

Samsung has emerged as one of the world’s smartphone powerhouse, thanks to amazing devices such as the Android-powered Samsung GALAXY S II. This phone is just 8.49mm thick, but packs lightning quick dual-core performance into its slim form. The Samsung GALAXY S II uses Android™ 2.3 Gingerbread, the latest version of the world’s fastest-growing mobile operating system. The next generation smartphone includes access to Samsung’s four new content and entertainment hubs, seamlessly integrated to provide instant access to music, games, e-reading and social networking services. The Samsung GALAXY S II is equipped with an 8 megapixel, high-profile camera and camcorder with 1080p full HD recording and playback.

Apple iPad 2

Despite growing competition in the tablet market, Apple’s iPad 2 is still king of the hill and with good reason. It makes browsing the web, reading and sending email, enjoying photos, watching videos, listening to music, playing games, reading e-books and much more, a simple and joyful experiences wherever you are. The iPad 2 features an entirely new design that is 33% thinner and up to 15% lighter than the original iPad, while maintaining the same stunning 9.7-inch LED-backlit LCD screen. The iPad 2 features Apple's new dual-core A5 processor for quick performance and stunning graphics and now includes two cameras, a front-facing VGA camera for FaceTime and Photo Booth and a rear-facing camera that captures 720p HD video. With 3G/Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi only models available in a range of configurations, there is an iPad 2 for every user.

Apple iPhone 4

Wouldn’t you like to find the new Apple iPhone 4 under your Christmas tree? With its combination of effective new hardware, an amazing display and upgraded cameras, not to mention major improvements to the operating system, it really is the perfect gift. The screen is radically sharper than previous versions, the battery is larger and lasts longer and Apple has fitted a faster processor into a body that is 24% thinner. Moreover, it promises users the option of FaceTime video chat, allowing you to gaze into your loved one’s eyes while talking to them, as well as high-definition video recording. And the phone is robust enough to take some hard knocks, as its glass is chemically strengthened to be 20 times stiffer and 30 times harder than plastic.
ALTECH SAMEER EAST AFRICA DATA CENTRE UP AND RUNNING

The Altech Sameer East Africa Data Centre is operational and already hosts a number of key customer tenants.

The data centre building consists of a basement and three floors, each of which provides an average of 500m² of physical data centre space.

In today’s “shrinking technology” era where less space is used to physically install servers due to the influence of cloud computing, it is difficult to estimate the total number of servers that can be housed in the data centre. However, the data centre is of such size and magnitude that Altech Kenya Data Networks (KDN) is confident that it will be able to meet future customer demand, particularly in light of the fact that servers will in future require less storage space as more customers move to the cloud.

Other features of the data centre include two uninterrupted power supply (UPS) units. With a capacity of 600 KVA each (soon to be upgraded), they feed power to the servers in the event of a power outage. The data centre also contains built-in, closed controlled air conditioner units in the service corridors. These are more efficient than traditional chillers used in some data centres.

From a security perspective, the data centre has been designed to prevent physical threats through an elaborate CCTV and access control system. Integration of the two systems into a single platform enables the data centre security team to pro-actively identify threats in addition to storing critical information for reference in case of a breach of any kind to the physical integrity of the facility.

Additionally, all general areas within the data centre have proximity card access control systems. The higher security areas boast robust, double authentication systems utilising biometric access tools.

The data centre’s offering includes collocation services. This entails the rental of server room space to customers on a wholesale basis. KDN has opted to limit this service to rental of the physical space, along with power and cooling facilities. This is a strategy aimed at ensuring that the company will generate a return on the initial investment in the facility. The product offering will, however, morph with time to ensure that KDN retains market leadership through innovation. Of note in this regard is the planned introduction of cloud computing services to add to other managed services such as disaster and data recovery solutions, and web hosting.

The eye catching entrance to the Altech Sameer East Africa Data Centre.

The data centre features include uninterrupted power supply measures and air conditioner units to ensure maximum efficiency of servers within the facility.

The data centre’s offering includes the rental of server room space to customers.
Dina Deliwe Pule has been appointed Minister of Communications, replacing Roy Padayachie who has been redeployed as Minister of Public Service and Administration. Ms Pule was appointed as part of a larger cabinet reshuffle by President Jacob Zuma on 24 October 2011 that saw a number of redeployments and new ministerial appointments.

Ms Pule was previously the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. Prior to this she was the Deputy Minister of Communications between May 2009 and November 2010 under Minister Siphiwe Nyanda, who himself was replaced by Roy Padayachie.

Tembisa Stella Ndabeni will become the Deputy Minister of Communications, replacing Obed Bapela who has been appointed as Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. Ms Ndabeni was previously a member of Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Communications.

According to news reports, Minister Pule has set her sights on ensuring that South Africa meets its digital broadcasting obligations in the next three years, despite funding challenges to finalising the project. The Minister has indicated that she will be meeting with all stakeholders in the broadcasting industry, including the SABC, to ensure that all work concerning the migration is prioritised.

Minister Pule holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and is completing a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Communication.

Altech Autopage Cellular (AAPC) is firmly making its presence felt in Gauteng, and South Africa as a whole, with four brand new store openings in the province.

All of these state-of-the-art retail outlets opened for business during September and October 2011 and are testimony to the hard work and dedication of AAPC to maintain its position as the country’s leading independent communications service provider. Significantly, one of the new stores is the company’s first entry into South Africa’s most historic and famous township - Soweto.

AAPC opened its Soweto outlet in Maponya Mall on 15 October and in the same month continued its investment in the Johannesburg CBD with the launch of the Jeppe Street store. The Glen Shopping Centre in Oakdene also boasts a new AAPC outlet while the Colony Shopping Centre store in Craighall Park opened its doors on 22 September.

Interacting electronically with customers is a convenient and fast method of communication. However, with the plethora of voice and data communication options available in the market today, many current and potential customers appreciate the opportunity to receive face-to-face advice from an AAPC employee rather than over the telephone or via email.

Boyd Chislett, AAPC Managing Director is thrilled about the new stores: “This expansion of our retail footprint in the important Gauteng market will improve the experience of our existing customers and provide a compelling reason for people to switch to Altech Autopage Cellular.”

Congratulations to the AAPC retail team for making this happen!
Altech Netstar’s newest licenced operator, in the Ivory Coast, recently successfully completed its first vehicle recovery operation. The vehicle, which was stolen in a suburb of Abidjan on 12 October, was recovered within 80 minutes in collaboration with local police services. The recovery was the culmination of an often difficult and challenging process of rolling out Altech Netstar’s services into the African market with its many challenges.

On the African continent, Altech Netstar currently has licensed and franchised operations in Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ghana, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia. Operating internationally presents both systems and recovery challenges. Recoveries are effected largely by ground crews who work directly with the police/law enforcement officials in each territory. Most African countries mandate that the police (and/or the military) must be involved in any recovery operation, hence the private recovery model that works in South Africa, is not applicable in all territories. Despite this, there is an increasing demand for Stolen Vehicle Recovery (SVR) products as African countries are beginning to experience vehicle hijacking and theft statistics similar to those seen in South Africa in the early 90’s.

A number of South African, European and American companies are venturing into the fleet management and SVR market in Africa. In addition to legislative issues, the challenges of competing in the African economy include language differences, the lack of technical skills, infrastructure restraints (poor GPRS coverage and speeds), volatile foreign exchange rates and taxes, and political hegemony. While different countries also have different vehicle distribution and penetration patterns, a positive factor is that detailed mapping and navigation solutions of these territories are now more readily available.

Insurance telematics is also finding its way into these markets. Altech Netstar’s recent appointment as Octo Telematics’ partner in Africa highlights unique growth opportunities.
Partnership

SpectraMed is a specialist medical aid service provider with over 50 years of experience in the South African market. It recently engaged with its long-term communications partner Altech Technology Concepts (ATC) to launch an online advertising campaign. The original idea behind the campaign was to create brand awareness for the medical aid supplier among Internet users, but true to its nature, ATC added much more value to the online campaign. With ATC’s expert guidance, an awareness drive evolved into a lead-generation campaign.

“There is no blueprint for creating a great search advertising campaign,” says Wayne de Nobrega, CEO of ATC. “Businesses of all sizes create campaigns that include relevant phrases and words, only to find that click-through rates are low, or that they simply don’t convert into sales. At ATC, we don’t just provide a solution, we analyse our customer’s needs and try to add value wherever we can.”

ATC conceptualised and designed a two-pronged campaign strategy. The first element of the campaign was search engine optimisation (SEO) to target consumers browsing for medical aid related content. The second component was a targeted approach involving the placement of a range of banner adverts on high-traffic sites that fell within the scope of SpectraMed’s target customer demographic.

To tie these two elements together, ATC added a call-to-action component, that requested the customer’s contact details, and designed a lead management system. The call-to-action proved to make quite a difference when it came to lead generation.

“The results have been phenomenal,” says Chrizelda de Vos, marketing manager at SpectraMed. “We launched this campaign on 10 October and we’re averaging over 200 tangible leads per week. I don’t think we would’ve achieved this without the expert assistance of Altech Technology Concepts.”

“It has been great working with ATC, they are my one-stop online shop. Whenever I ask them for advice, they come back with solutions that we can use. We’re definitely seeing results from working with ATC,” concluded de Vos.

As a certified Google partner, ATC has a wealth of experience when it comes to running online campaigns, from the effective use of pay-per-click (PPC), to SEO. The key to a successful PPC campaign is its management. Through intelligent management and monitoring, a PPC campaign can achieve the optimum use of any advertising budget, delivering on the promise of value for money and a good return on investment. ATC’s certified consultants have an in-depth understanding of how important conversion is, and that it is the difference between profit and loss.

SPECTRAMED GETS THE AID IT NEEDS FROM ALTECH TECHNOLOGY CONCEPTS

Altech ISIS and Altech Autopage Cellular (AAPC) have signed an agreement to collaborate on streamlining practices within the finance department at AAPC. This is an exciting project for Altech ISIS personnel as they again work with AAPC to optimise key financial business processes. This will not only add value to AAPC, but also assist in safeguarding the profitability of the Altech Group as AAPC is a key contributor to Altech’s bottom line.

The Altech ISIS Business Analysis team will be based on site at AAPC’s offices in Midrand, Johannesburg, for the duration of the project, which is led by Danie van Graan, the business analysis and quality assurance manager. He will receive specialist support from Margie Pekelaar, an Altech ISIS senior business consultant.

“Altech ISIS has successfully worked with Altech Autopage Cellular in the past. Being selected for this new project is testimony to our professionalism and standards of delivery. For Altech ISIS it is fantastic to work with the highly professional team that Peter Wattrus and Clifford Adamson have assembled at Altech Autopage Cellular and also to work with fellow members of the Altech Group as part of a project that will benefit Altech as a whole,” says Danie.
In 2010, a small team of final year students at the faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) won the university's annual Solar Car Challenge. The car they designed was a solar-electric hybrid, named Bar One, and it inspired them to start a car project of their own and take the challenge of alternative energy to the next level.

Arrow Altech Distribution's journey with UJ began in 2011 when they were approached by the students, now in their Master's year, to partner and mentor them in their endeavours to research and build alternative fuel solution automobiles. Involving the disciplines of Mechanical Engineering, Industrial Design and IT, the students' project was tailored to also include third year Electrical and Electronic students, as the Master's students worked to explore PowerPoint tracking, solar cell encapsulation and energy management.

Professor Johan Meyer, head of UJ's Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering Science, had the following to say about the project: “The University of Johannesburg felt it a valuable real-world exercise, where students get to see the practical application of their designs on a working vehicle. The research into alternative fuel sources has become an important agenda for many companies and this positions our students to better align themselves with the industry and what is expected of them as professional engineers.”

Kegan Smith, the students’ project leader, stated that on a project of this scale things could have easily got out of hand organisationally. “We therefore decided to have the third year students form different companies, with managers, researchers and engineers under the banners of energy companies, safety and standards, wiring, telemetry and so on. These different companies reported to three teams of company heads and mentors, who are fourth year students and Master’s degree scholars.”

According to Smith, some of the key lessons learnt by the students were:
1. Plan and then plan some more.
2. Unforeseen circumstances are always a possibility.
3. A real-world experience that comes with the excitement and anticipation of planning and constructing a magnificent engineering feat in a record time instills an awareness and commitment to build a better and sustainable future for South Africa.

The University of Johannesburg, according to Professor Meyer, was grateful for the exceptional support they received from Arrow Altech Distribution (AAD) as the company sponsored many of the electrical systems on the cars, from microprocessors and computers to actual wiring and telemetry systems.

According to Kobus Botes, Technical Marketing Manager at AAD, all the field applications engineers from AAD were involved in providing support and components to the UJ team.

“Investing in the industry at grass roots level and getting involved with the university students sparked a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with UJ. AAD is currently negotiating with suppliers to equip a laboratory with electronic development systems at the university,” said Botes.

As a result of Altech’s involvement with UJ, one of the laboratories has been named The Arrow Altech Distribution Studio.
Emerson Embedded Computing Products

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With the Embedded Computing business of Emerson Network Power you get leading-edge motherboard and Computer-on-Module (COM) products for a broad range of industries including medical, retail, automation, test and measurement, transportation and renewable energy. And with Emerson as your partner, you get to market first with reliable products that last. Gain the advantage of innovative, proven technology, all backed by global service from a trusted partner. See the difference for yourself at EmersonNetworkPower.com/EmbeddedComputing

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Computer-on-Modules (COMs) are highly integrated single-board computers that provide the core functionality of a system, allowing application-specific features to be designed onto a carrier board creating a semi-custom embedded PC solution. Emerson COM products feature the latest Freescale QorIQ™ and Intel® Atom™ and Core™ processors.

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An Emerson Network Power Embedded Computer is based around an x86 Intel® Architecture embedded motherboard with processor and memory plus a disk. These are integrated into an application-specific enclosure that is designed for long-life applications with very little or no maintenance. Typical uses include medical clinical instruments, digital security and surveillance, industrial control, and digital signage.

Emerson is offering two classes of Embedded Computers that are ideal for digital signage applications:

- Fanless, small, metal solutions that are designed to be mounted to a screen or instrument. These are noiseless, maintenance-free embedded computers that are available to suit a variety of operating temperature environments. They are easy to use and offer capability to fit a wireless module.
- Small, low cost embedded computers with some expansion capability. These are typically supplied in a plastic enclosure with mounting options, operate in an environment of 0°C to 35°C and are air cooled.
Altech Netstar’s Annual Golf Day was held on 22 September at Pecanwood Golf & Country Club in Hartbeespoort. Some high profile national and local government officials joined Altech Netstar clients from the insurance, motor, corporate, transport and logistics industries for a successful day of golf and networking.

From left: Ockert Kanis, Director of Logistics at Hernic Ferrochrome; General Bantu Holomisa, leader of the United Democratic Movement and Member of Parliament; Hansie Schutte, Altech Group Legal and Commercial Manager; and Martin Banner, CEO National Airways Corporation.

From left: Thami Sokutu, Director of African Bank; Rene Otto, Managing Director of MiWay Insurance; Lieutenant General Mzwandile Petros, the Gauteng Provincial Commissioner of Police; and Harry Louw, Managing Director of Altech Netstar.

The directors of STARS, Altech Netstar’s private ground recovery service provider, received a plaque at the golf day prize giving acknowledging more than 31 500 vehicle recoveries. The Gauteng Provincial Commissioner of Police, Lieutenant General Mzwandile Petros (centre), presented the plaque to Dale Michler (left) and Hardy Snyman from STARS.
Arrow Altech Distribution (AAD), in conjunction with Discovery Health, hosted its first wellness day on 20 October and took wellness to another level.

The event was extremely successful with 100% participation by AAD staff, inclusive of Tridonic and Altech payroll employees. The programme kicked off at 09:00 and closed at 15:00 with a variety of activities. These included health risk assessments, onsite health screening, health coaching, blood pressure testing, voluntary HIV testing, testing of cholesterol and glucose levels and eye tests with an onsite optometrist.

Employees could experience a variety of wellness activities throughout the day. Each participant received a fruit pack and water bottle, along with other goodies.

The day concluded with a raffle that included some great prizes. Zeenat Methar and Mike Lee were the lucky winners of Discovery Health sponsored Pick ’n Pay vouchers, while Joseph Masilela won a Woolworths gift card. Jenny Britton and Kobus Botes won Altech Netstar hampers.

Health promotion in the workplace benefits not only the company but all employees. Additionally, there is a distinct trickle-down effect as the benefits are transferred from employee to family members. Health promotion in the workplace creates conditions that support and teach employees how to stay in the best possible health. This gives employees a sense of ownership and they learn to work together to improve not only their own wellbeing, but that of their colleagues as well.

AAD would like to thank the following sponsors for their assistance in making the day a success: Avis, Bytes People Solutions, Altech Autopage Cellular and Altech Netstar.

What employees had to say about the AAD Health Day:

You don’t always get an opportunity to go to the doctor, so this was helpful to know your sugar and cholesterol levels. (M Jooste)

It was fun and good to have onsite testing at our workplace as it’s time consuming to go for screening at a pharmacy or GP. I managed to earn enough Vitality points to reach bronze status and if it wasn’t for this event, it would have taken some time to get to that level. (P Tshabalala)

Everything went well on the day. I wish it was twice a year. Knowing your health status is worth it! (M Molotsane)
Motor sport enthusiasts will tell you that winning a motor race of any kind depends on the composition of the entire package, including, but not limited to the driver, the vehicle and the quality of the support infrastructure. The best racing car will not move an inch without a driver. I see the role of the modern manager as that of a driver, i.e. someone who has the ability and competency to get tasks done, with people and through people. I will always quote the following when asked about leadership: “A good leader inspires men to have confidence in him; a great leader inspires men to have confidence in themselves.” - Anonymous.

What gets you out of bed in the morning?
The alarm reminding me that I have to drop my children off at school within an hour! On a more serious note, I believe we all have an obligation to create a legacy for our children and for others. In doing so, we not only justify our existence but also achieve long-term sustainability for the organisation we work for and for the planet. It is disappointing and sad that so many people are, or choose to be, oblivious of the consequences their actions have on the lives of other people.

I am inspired by the tenacity of mankind to rise above challenges thrown at it. I believe participating in sport teaches individuals how to handle the ups and downs of life. Sport provides people with one of the most essential elements in life: balance.

What do you want to focus on as a first project in your new position at Altech Fleetcall?
Altech Fleetcall has quite a unique business model and I believe the most important aspect to master is a sound understanding of the business. An anonymous writer once stated that it isn’t the business you get that counts, it’s the business you hold. This is very true in an annuity-based business like Altech Fleetcall. It seems to me as if people in the radio communication business were born...
with a radio in one hand and it is quite common to meet individuals with more than 30 years’ experience in this industry. One simply does not acquire the background and knowledge required in a few months and some hard work lies ahead.

The project we will most likely tackle first is to expand our current network by deploying a digital network.

6 How do you feel about teamwork?

Teamwork is an extremely important part of business, and life. We tend to think about teamwork in terms of management jargon but it has actually been practised by mankind for centuries. Harnessing the different strengths of individuals in an organisation assists with the creation of teams that work together to achieve organisational goals.

It is very useful to remind people from time to time that there is no “I” in the word teamwork. One of the best acronyms I have seen for the word TEAM is:

T – Together
E – Everyone
A – Achieves
M – More

Somehow, this stuck with me. Working as a team ensures that trust, commitment and accountability prevail. This in turn ensures effective communication, better time management and adaptability to change.

7 How do you manage feedback?

With feedback, there are always two aspects to consider – giving it and receiving it.

I try to give feedback honestly and in a balanced manner, as you often do not achieve what you set out to do if you are too positive or too negative. I believe feedback should build confidence and reinforce the “good” behaviour we would like to see more of. Feedback is also a way to clarify organisational expectations and negative feedback must be done factually. I strongly believe negative feedback has to be accompanied with suggestions for improvement.

Receiving feedback is slightly different. I try to acknowledge all feedback (positive or negative), decide on an action plan based on the feedback metrics and implement it in line with organisational goals.

8 Do you believe change is good for a business?

Yes. A popular quote in modern business is that the only constant in business is CHANGE – an anomaly in itself. Jack Welch summarised the concept of change well when he stated that one should change before you have to. The concept of change is part of the rhythm of life and business. One of the biggest drivers of change is undoubtedly the extraordinary speed at which technology changes. Who would have thought that those first microchips would evolve to the current generation of electronic processors used in smartphones, tablets and personal computers? An apt comparison between the first and current generation microchips is the five meters per hour speed of a snail compared to the 100 meters in 9.4 seconds sprint of world record holder Usain Bolt.

It is, however, true that not all change is necessarily good. Technology has enabled many organisations to produce “similar” products to those of their competitors. People will choose what they perceive to be of the most benefit to them and companies must re-invent themselves to have a competitive edge that tips the scale in their favour. Change should assist us in achieving the competitive edge whether in new markets, through new opportunities or due to the emergence of new technologies. The modern belief is that one should learn from everyone – but copy no one!

9 With respect to the current economic climate, how will it affect your thinking or business approach in your new position?

We have already noticed an increased number of cancellations on our network due to financial constraints. It is unfortunately true that an economic downturn affects most businesses negatively and we simply have to look at alternative ways of creating opportunities to sustain income and margins. We are not going to lie down due to the recession and will simply have to re-invent ourselves to a degree. Is this not a perfect example of change and the requirement for change management?

10 What do you do in your spare time?

I thoroughly enjoy a round of golf, although my handicap is testimony to the fact that I do not play as often as I would like to.

I spend many hours of my weekends watching my two sons and daughter playing sport and I make a concerted effort not to miss any of their weekend events.

I am a philatelist and started collecting stamps when I was seven years old. Although I would have liked to spend more hours on my hobby, other activities often reschedule my priorities.
"It’s the best thing that ever happened to me in my working career," – so says Johan Klein, Altech Group Executive: Human Resources and Industrial Relations, who recently completed the intense eight week Advanced Management Programme at the Harvard Business School in Boston, USA, the most senior programme of Harvard’s executive education curricula.

A total of 176 business people from 37 countries attended the course with Johan.

Commonly referred to as the “mini Harvard MBA”, Johan believes the programme was a great experience. While there was a lot of hard work as the students had to work through 160 case studies over 46 lecture days, the end result was a clearer and more fundamental understanding about business and what was required to ensure business success.

And while Harvard has been criticised by some for their case-study approach, he found that it taught him a different method of thinking as the case-studies covered real-world business issues and this forced one to think both strategically and analytically about business.

“We explored the best management practices and latest strategies for sustaining a competitive edge and this gave us a broader perspective and greater insight into what’s required for an organization to grow and be profitable. It gave us that ‘big picture’ approach,” says Johan.

According to Johan, the programme also raised some interesting issues about management style.

“Something that stuck with me is the following quote: Your success is not what you’ve achieved but how you have developed the people below you. Their success is your success.”

An interesting statistic that came out of this, says Johan, is the fact that 66% of MBA’s don’t reach top management positions because success is all about themselves and not about the collective good.

“Aligned to this is a concept that is continuously driven by Harvard – it’s not what you do, it’s what you deliver,” says Johan.

“You are taught that you need to continuously engage with your customers (internally and externally) because it’s your customers who determine your deliverables. What the customer wants and their expectations are your benchmarks.”

Of other great value, according to Johan, was the fact that students came into contact with business greats such as Jack Welch (former Chief Executive Officer of General Electric and considered to be one of the greatest business leaders of all time having made GE one of the most profitable companies in the world); Phil Knight (founder and CEO of Nike and today one of America’s wealthiest men); and Anne Mulcahy (former CEO of Xerox Corporation who worked her way from a sales representative to the head of one of the largest organisations globally). Additionally, the students were lectured by icons such as Michael Porter – the world’s leading authority on company strategy and the competitiveness of nations and regions.

Summing up his experience, Johan felt that the course taught him a lot about personal discipline and better enabled him to make a positive contribution to his area of expertise, human resources, and to the Altech business as a whole.

Next year, Boyd Chislett, Managing Director at Altech Autopage Cellular, and Peter Balchin, Chief Executive Officer at Altech Multimedia, will attend the Harvard programme, while Johan Gellatly, Group Executive: IT, will attend the advanced management programme at the Insead Business School in Fontainebleau, France.
The ScienCentre, a non-profit organisation based in Durban, received an outreach vehicle and mobile science laboratory from the Department of Science and Technology during National Science Week in August this year. Altech Netstar, in keeping with Altech's pay-off line of "Leading technologies, touching lives", sponsored the installation and subscription costs of a Cyber-Sleuth Supreme unit for the vehicle.

The Cyber-Sleuth Supreme is an innovative product combining RF (radio frequency) technology for recovery, GSM (global system for mobile communication) technology for communication, and GPS (global positioning system) technology for pin-point positioning. This gives staff at the ScienCentre the ability to monitor the vehicle in real-time via the Internet and keep detailed records of the mobile laboratory's outreach routes via the Cyber-Sleuth Supreme's logbook functionality.

The outreach vehicle, with its three education officers, conducts science and technology awareness campaigns using presentations, exhibits, workshops and practical experiments linked to the school science curriculum.

“We are grateful to the Department of Science and Technology for its sponsorship, as well as the Altech Netstar team, and are immensely excited about being able to continue our education of KZN's youth out in the field," said Candice Potgieter, General Manager at the ScienCentre.

During National Science Week – driven by the Department of Science and Technology - the mobile outreach vehicle hosted over 5 700 learners from 114 schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It promoted and demonstrated the role that science and technology plays in the economy and highlighted the growth of skills and subsequent employment opportunities available in these fields.
Altech Card Solutions (ACS) has a second provincial hockey player in Julie-Anne Scott. Unlike Aileen Marson, however, Julie-Anne wields her stick on terra firma instead of under water.

Julie-Anne has worked for the Integrated Transaction Services Division of ACS since 2008. She was selected this year to represent Eastern Gauteng as goal keeper at the Interprovincial Indoor Hockey Tournament that took place in Pietermaritzburg. Julie-Anne thoroughly enjoyed the experience of the tournament and is already working towards retaining her position in the 2012 season.

During August this year she was approached by the South African Country Districts side to represent their team in the B-Section at the Interprovincial Outdoor Hockey Tournament that took place in Bloemfontein. Julie-Anne was presented with an award by the South African Hockey Association for the “save” of the tournament. Her winning the award was exceptional in that it is usually presented to the more “visible” field players.

Outside of her provincial commitments, Julie-Anne represents Crusaders Hockey Club in the Southern Gauteng Premier League. Crusaders took gold in a pre-season outdoor tournament at the Randburg AstroTurf in April 2011.

The Crusaders Premier side ended fourth in the Southern Gauteng League which was a great achievement as they were the only side not fortified with a member of the national team.

To cap a great year for Julie-Anne, she was also named player of the year at the Crusaders’ year end function.

Julie-Anne Scott received the ‘save’ of the tournament award at the recent interprovincial hockey tournament.

Riaan van Kooten (right), Branch Manager of Arrow Altech Distribution (AAD) in KZN, congratulates Gary Stanton, Managing Director of PFK Electronics, on the company’s 25th anniversary. AAD has had a long standing relationship with PFK, a leading designer and manufacturer of automotive electronic systems, and values them as a key customer.
As part of a restructuring process to provide more focused value to internal and external customers, Arrow Altech Distribution (AAD) established a new business unit within its marketing department. The Arrow Altech Technology Solutions (ATS) business unit will focus on penetrating new markets and opportunities within the electronics industry and will be a key driver for future growth at AAD.

As part of this process, AAD is investing resources into capturing market share in new lucrative markets such as embedded computing products, power supply modules, LCD modules, lighting products and products related to these product classes.

"AAD is the South African market leader in electronic components distribution and while our market share is increasing on a year on year basis, it has become a challenge to maintain this growth," says Kobus Botes, AAD Technical Marketing Manager.

"2012 is going to be a difficult year for the South African electronics industry and AAD, as a components supplier to the industry, will feel the pinch. The European electronics distribution industry is currently experiencing a sharp decline in growth and has recorded, for the first time since 2009, a negative book to bill ratio. The current debt crisis in Europe and retrenchments at major European electronic companies do not portray a comforting message to the industry. South Africa usually follows European trends and other major South African electronic distribution companies have already indicated a depressed outlook for 2012," he continues.

"From a South African perspective, there is, at this stage, no clear path on major government initiated projects such as digital terrestrial television and smart metering. There is also an indication that some key local electronic companies intend to import complete products rather than to design and manufacture locally anymore. In order for AAD to continue its place as a market leader and to stimulate growth and job creation in South Africa, we are embarking on a diversification strategy where new products will be introduced into new markets within the electronics industry. ATS will play a strategic role in this initiative. This strategy will also push new technologies into the market, such as LED lighting products, which are set to become a large growth area worldwide. South African companies need to capitalise on this opportunity and the ATS department already has major design wins with South African LED manufacturers," Botes concludes.

"This is a new, exciting and challenging opportunity for us as our entire business is built around helping our customers to bring their latest technologies to market as quickly as possible," says Kevin Jurrius, the newly appointed ATS Business Manager.

"At ATS, our customer’s mission is our mission, from assisting them with their initial product concept, to design, post manufacturing and supply chain management. Our dedicated team will bring it all together to help them deliver the latest technologies to market quickly and efficiently. We pride ourselves on bringing together the technology, design engineering expertise, integration and logistics support that our customers require for the success of their products. We back up our product offering with technical expertise, adding value added services wherever required through each step of the design cycle and for the lifecycle of their products," Jurrius concludes.

Kevin Jurrius (right) has been appointed as ATS Business Manager while Trevor Heyl has been appointed as a field applications engineer within the ATS department.
ALTECH STAFF COMPETITION

READ THIS EDITION OF ALTECH TALK FROM COVER TO COVER TO FIND THE ANSWERS...

1. In which of South Africa’s historic and famous townships has Altech Autopage Cellular opened an outlet?
2. Who is the new CEO of Altech Kenya Data Networks?
3. What project was Altech Fleetcall recently involved in with Becker Electronics?
4. Which two Altech operations recently signed an agreement to collaborate on streamlining internal financial practices?
5. What is the name of the Altech data centre in Nairobi?
6. Who received the Best Student of the Year Award at the Altech Academy Student Presentations event?
7. Who is the new Minister of Communications?
8. In which African country is Altech Netstar’s newest licenced operator based?
9. At which university has a laboratory been named “The Arrow Altech Distribution Studio”?
10. What is the name of the employee from Altech Card Solutions who recently received provincial colours for hockey?

Send your answers to:
Shirley van Niekerk
(svniekerk@altech.co.za)
by 17 February 2012

and stand a chance to win an AirCard 319U valued at R1000 courtesy of Arrow Altech Distribution, together with its supplier Sierra Wireless.
The International Broadcasting Convention (IBC) is the leading global tradeshow for professionals engaged in the creation, management and delivery of broadcasting media and entertainment services. The exhibition encompasses the very latest developments in broadcasting, mobile TV, IPTV, digital signage and research and development, making it the essential destination for anyone requiring an understanding of the industry and its future. This year’s event was held in Amsterdam and drew an audience of 50,462, an increase of 4% on last year’s attendance, giving a clear indication of the resilience and optimism of the industry despite the current economic climate.

Altech Multimedia was there to exhibit products, solutions and services from its four lines of business - Altech MediaVerge, Altech UEC, Altech GDL and the newest member to the Altech family, Altech SetOne.

This year’s theme focused on convergence between the broadband and broadcast markets, specifically around the multi-screen environment and the connected TV. With the trend to an integrated and holistic multi-screen experience, there is a move away from the traditional Set-Top Box (STB) environment to an all purpose multi-media entertainment platform. In this environment, companion applications, such as remote control from a smartphone and pause-resume functions between devices, will soon be the standard.

It was appropriate that Altech used this year’s IBC exhibition to launch the new Altech Multimedia brand and announce the acquisition of SetOne GmbH (“SetOne”), a German-based pioneer of innovative DVB-based products and solutions in the German-speaking European market. Altech Multimedia is focused on providing innovative products and services for the global multi-media market. As part of its international strategy, Altech Multimedia has established a presence in Africa, Europe, Australia and Asia, with a strong focus on convergence of the broadcast and broadband environments.

Although numerous product demonstrations were on display at the Altech Multimedia stand, the primary message to visitors to the stand was about the services offered, including systems integration, professional services and software development. A number of existing and potential customers from around the globe visited the stand, including: MultiChoice (South Africa and Africa), MultiChoice Hellas/Nova, FetchTV, Digiturk, Optus, Austar, Orbit Showtime Network, NGB, TopTV and e.tv.

Endorsing the spirit of IBC as a melting pot of new thoughts, future developments and trendsetting technologies, ideas were exchanged with key Altech partners and suppliers in the industry, including Broadcom, ST, Intel, Irdeto, NDS and Opera, to name a few.

The key demonstrations exhibited at the Altech stand were HbbTV (Hybrid Broadcast Broadband TV), provided by Altech SetOne in conjunction with Aprico Solutions, and the DVB monitoring solution developed by Altech MediaVerge. The DVB monitoring system is an advanced, multi-faceted solution that provides real-time monitoring of DVB streams and simultaneously displays multiple live DVB streams using DVB over IP technology.

Altech SetOne, in collaboration with its partner, Aprico Solutions, also demonstrated a new HbbTV solution that integrates with a large number of innovative features, including multi-screen viewing of personal content from anywhere in the world, recommendation engine capability to allow easy access to favourite content on demand, and web portal functionality which collects and presents numerous smartTV services to the viewer, ranging from music and video services to social TV applications.

Commenting on Altech’s presence at the event, Peter Balchin, Altech Multimedia Chief Executive Officer, endorsed the reputation of IBC as an industry event that brought together key players in the broadcast and media industries in an environment that facilitated new business and enabled participants and visitors to keep track of new trends and developments.

“It was absolutely necessary for us to be at IBC. This is one event in the international calendar that enables us to meet new and potential customers and remain up-to-date on industry developments,” he said.