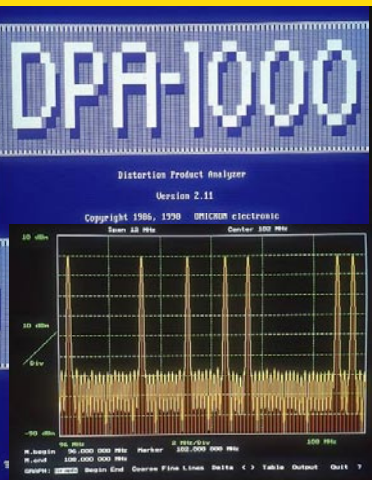


the guru



Believe in yourself and make your dreams a reality

rainer aberer



DPA-1000: The first commercial product that started Rainer's company

Your individual contribution is needed to make the world a better place

Have fun!

Note:

The answers to the questions in Rainer Aberer's interview are a summary of the content of many conversations he had on the subjects - starting from engineering school (with Martin Pfanner), the early days of OMICRON (with Herwig Ferstl - his first employee) and the first steps of PAC World (with Alex Apostolov).



2006 JobOskar - for the creation of integrated workplaces for handicapped people



1996 The Austrian Export Prize

Motto: Leave the world a better place than you found it



2006 & 2008



2001: Builder prize for the OMICRON company building



Create an environment with no artificial limits

where a team of excellent members can reach an
excellent performance
and enjoy working (having fun) together
at the same time.

Rainer Aberer

23 August, 1955 - 18 June, 2009

Biography

Rainer Aberer was born in 1955 in Western Austria. After graduating from the college for Electronics and Communications Engineering HTL Rankweil, in 1984 he started his own company for software development. It later became OMICRON electronics and focused on the development of test equipment and software tools for protection relays, metering devices, multifunctional IEDs and later primary substation equipment.

Rainer served as the company CEO until 2000 when he transferred his responsibilities to a management team of experienced long-time staff members from OMICRON. He then focused his energy in the development of new ideas, such as educational software. In 2006 he started work on developing and establishing PAC World as a forum for the electric power protection, automation and control industry.



PAC World: When and where were you born?

R.A.: I was born on August 23, 1955 in Hohenems, a small city in Vorarlberg, the most western district of Austria.

PAC World: Where did you grow up?

R.A.: I grew up in Hohenems as the younger of two boys, to Helga and Rudolf Aberer.

PAC World: Do you remember anything from your childhood that shows interests in electrical engineering?

R.A.: Like all the kids we liked to play, ride bicycles and roller-skate. We also played music with my father and brother.

I was fascinated by physical phenomena and made many experiments, not always to the pleasure of my parents. The wide range of technical possibilities around electricity deeply impressed me.

Rainer (left) with his brother Rolf, father Rudolf and his two sons Daniel and Lukas.

PAC World: What were your interests while in school?

R.A.: School was a hard time for me. I was never a brilliant student and particularly had difficulty with languages. Physics and mathematics were my preferred subjects where I could make very good use of my intuitive understanding of physical laws and phenomena.

PAC World: Why did you decide to study electrical engineering?

R.A.: As my 6-year-older brother Rolf turned out to be the much better musician, I identified the technical field as the one to focus on.

Studying was not my strong side, and since I liked everything technical, I decided to do an apprenticeship to become a technician in the field of radio and television. I grew up with vacuum tube technology and experienced the first transistorized circuits during this time. This transition in technology was something really exciting.

During my apprenticeship the wish to start my own company evolved and matured. To lay a good ground for this I decided that I need to study telecommunications engineering.

PAC World: Where and what did you study?

R.A.: After three years of working as a radio and TV technician I went back to school when in 1976 a new college for 'Electronics and Communication Engineering' opened its doors at the HTL Rankweil.

PAC World: What was the beginning of your career?

R.A.: After the HTL, I started as development engineer at Hirschmann, a company specializing in broadcasting equipment for radio and television. My passion at the time was software development.

To get this job I had to make a big sacrifice - at the time I had very long hair, something that was not acceptable in a big company like Hirschmann. After my interview I was very upset, but my wife convinced me that it is worth cutting my long hair short to get this job.

Soon after I started work, I got the chance to establish and lead a small software team developing simulation programs for the R&D department.

PAC World: Why did you decide to start your own company?

R.A.: This was the only way to realize my visions. I wanted to start a company to develop software for the electronics and communication engineering industry. I wanted to create an environment where excellent team members could create outstanding results and have fun together. And could also have long hair, wear jeans and t-shirts. No hierarchies or other artificial limits should hinder their work.

As a start, I was able to acquire the rights for a program for the analysis of distortion products which I had developed at Hirschmann.

In addition, I knew some excellent development engineers from my time at HTL Rankweil whom I wanted to convince to work with me.

PAC World: When and how did you make your dream a reality?

I founded OMICRON in 1984 with the idea to sell the Distortion Product Analyzer (DPA) software. Later we developed QuickFil and AFIL - software tools for passive and active filter design.

Since I had a strong believe in the importance of marketing, in 1987 we already participated in our first big trade show in Vienna.

We built the booth ourselves from wood in my father's backyard.

PAC World: How did you come up with the name of your company?

R.A.: This was done while brainstorming with friends. From the many ideas we had, two proposals made it to the last round:

- EleSoft (for Electronics Software)

- OMICRON (the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet)

After many many discussions, finally, we decided to use OMICRON because it did not restrict the company's focus to software, but kept more options open for the future.

PAC World: Why and when did you decide to start development and manufacturing test equipment?

R.A.: This came into the picture by a request from one of our software customers. The Austrian utility BEWAG was searching the market for a test set for measurement transducers and asked us whether we could develop it to their specifications. The development took place in 1990.

We called the device a Calibrator for Measurement Converters (or CMC). In reality we should have used Transducers instead of Converters, but that's the way we did it at the time. The number 56 was derived from the digital signal processor type that we used.

The first prototype of the CMC 56 was handed over to BEWAG in October 1990.

Soon we realized that there was an even bigger need for a new test set in the field of protective relay testing.

PAC World: What was the greatest challenge you faced?

R.A.: The biggest challenge was to convince the banks to lend us money back in 1990-1991. At this time we had great ideas and ongoing developments, but still no success in the market.

PAC World: What do you consider your greatest professional achievement?

R.A.: In hindsight, I think it is being able to recruit the right people and establishing some good guidelines and an environment that allowed our outstanding team to evolve and unfold its power. Together we were successful in setting



Who says that
one can not

have breakfast

outside in

the middle of

winter?

new standards in the field of power system testing and becoming a world market leader in our niche.

PAC World: What do you think is the best approach to developing a new product or business?

R.A.: I am a strong believer in small and focused teams that can develop new products and/or businesses in a very effective way without bureaucratic overhead. There should be a good understanding of the market needs in the team but also a vision in what direction the technology will move. I can summarize the recipe as:

- Have an idea
- Find the right people that can convert the idea into a product
- Create an environment for them to do their job, while still having fun

PAC World: You have gone outside of engineering into the development of educational tools. What made you do that?

R.A.: Some years ago I developed a flashcard software to meet a personal need to memorize vocabulary and other data. Subsequently I made it available to the world community as free-ware. Because of the very positive response to the MemoryLifter software, Learnlift was founded with the goal to develop the software further and to fill a market niche by creating custom content for a range of applications in various knowledge areas.



An innovative method for presentation of a new product.

PAC World: What awards have you received?

R.A.: Back in 1997 I was awarded "Entrepreneur of the year" by the Austrian business magazine Trend.

All other awards were won by our entire team:

- A regional innovation prize in 1992
- The Austrian export prize in 1996
- A "company Oscar" in Vorarlberg
- The Trigos for taking social responsibility and
- Top ranking in the "Great Place to Work Award" for Austria and Europe in 2006 and 2008

PAC World: Which one do you consider the most significant?

R.A.: The "Great Place to Work Award" best expresses how well we did in making OMICRON an outstanding employer where people enjoy working.

PAC World: What do you think made receiving such recognition possible?

R.A.: I always wanted to create an environment where people enjoy working. Selecting the right people for the team and establishing a culture of trust and empowerment were the key ingredients.

PAC World: Why did you decide to start the PAC World magazine?

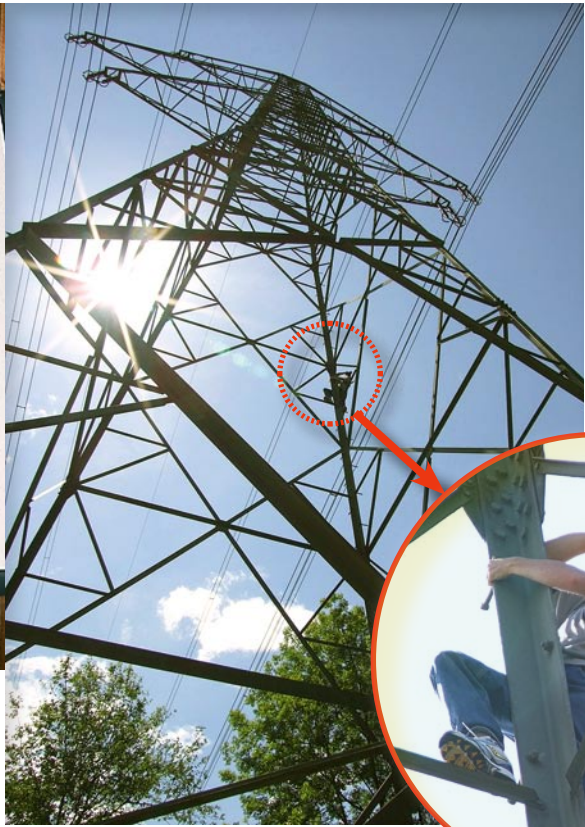
R.A.: About four years ago I met Izabela Bochenek, an expert in magazine publishing. This suddenly brought the memory of a conversation I had with Alex Apostolov probably ten years ago. In a late night discussion he mentioned that the

the guru

Rainer Aberer



In 1996 Rainer Aberer received the Austrian Export Prize.



Rainer was always ready to get to new heights to take the best picture for the PAC World magazine.



Sharen and Rainer enjoyed flying and skiing, riding their bicycles or having a good time with friends.



PAC industry does not have a magazine. The idea to use Izabela's experience and to develop and publish a magazine focused on the protection, automation and control industry fascinated me. I decided that if I can convince Izabela (someone that knows about publishing a magazine) to work with Alex (someone who knows the industry) - they can probably make it happen. The rest is history.

PAC World: What is "Crossing Borders" and why are you doing this?

R.A.: "Crossing Borders" is a social initiative of OMICRON. It is part of our vision to make a contribution to change the world for the better. We spend part of our profits to give education to children in underprivileged situations. Currently we are involved in 18 projects around the globe. Each project has a voluntary mentor at OMICRON.

PAC World: What do you like to do when you are not working?

R.A.: In recent years I became a passionate pilot. Flying is a great thing for me. My wife Sharen and I both enjoy flying, so we often take an extended weekend to leave work behind and visit other places with our Cessna. I also love playing with children or meeting friends to develop and discuss new ideas, riding a bicycle, skiing, hiking or listening to music.

PAC World: Do you watch movies? Any favorites?

R.A.: I have hundreds of films in my collection. Depending on my state of mind, I like to watch different kinds. But since I don't want to be a couch-potato, usually I exercise on my treadmill while I watch.

PAC World: What kind of music do you like?

R.A.: I enjoy a wide range of music - from classical to rock.

PAC World: What is your favorite food?

R.A.: When I am in Houston, I prefer to try different kinds of Mexican food.

Back in Austria, my favorite meal is Käsknöpfe (cheese noodles) which I like as well to cook for my friends. You can always get me with a good cake. I also always have some chocolates around.

PAC World: Do you have a motto?

R.A.: Leave the world a better place then you found it.

PAC World: Is there anything you would like to say to the young PAC engineers in your country and around the world?

R.A.: Believe in yourself and make your dreams a reality. Your individual contribution is needed to make the world a better place - and have fun while doing it.