

Interview with Erik Jacquemyn, CEO (Chief Executive Officer), Technopolis, Belgium

1. What is special about Technopolis as a science museum?

Roll up your sleeves and get going, that's what Technopolis is all about. By experimenting for himself, the visitor finds out the how and why of countless technological and scientific phenomena. He finds out for himself what the answers to his questions are. It's therefore no coincidence that the mission statement of Technopolis is *'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand'*. Technopolis examines ordinary things from an unusual line of approach and works its magic to make even the most complex scientific phenomena crystal-clear. This often offers astonishing results and stimulates the curiosity of the visitor. After all, science starts with amazement. Technopolis means fun but it's not an amusement park: all interactive experiences serve first of all an educational purpose. Technopolis shows a lot but it's not an exhibition: visitors are not passive spectators but they are active participants.

2. How do you relate this science museum to school education?

A teacher has a very full agenda: tests, activity hours, trying to keep up to date and - at the end of the year - trying to reach the attainment levels. No easy task. Technopolis makes allowance for all that. Each exhibit is linked to the educational attainment targets, both of primary and secondary education. Moreover, a lot of the exhibits match the syllabus technological education for the first grade secondary education.

3. What are the pedagogical aims and target groups of Technopolis?

Education is much more than organised activities in formal education institutes. When we think of learning we automatically think of school. However we only spend 3% of our lives in school. So most of the time of our lives we learn out of the school. That's why informal learning is so important.

Informal learning means to learn at your own initiative, individual or in group, without forced criteria. A science centre like Technopolis is an ideal environment for this. Technopolis is open to everyone. Young and old have the time of their lives with the 261 interactive scientific experiments. Who wouldn't want to find out if he or she can make a television set function by riding a bike, or ride a bike on a steel wire 5 meters above the ground.

Target groups:

- Individual visitors from 6 to 96
- Schools
- Groups, associations, clubs
- Companies

4. Are there similar science museums in Europe? Which ones and where can teachers find them?

Yes, you can find a list with links on our website:

<http://www.technopolis.be/eng/index.php?n=7>

5. Why is science education important today?

The demand for scientific advances and technological innovation is increasing. But the number of science and engineering graduates is falling. Pupils these days find science dull and theoretical. That's why it's so important to show them that science is fun and also very important for their daily life and future.

6. At school less and less pupils are interested in natural sciences. How can science museums like Technopolis help to overcome this?

Schools are looking for ways to bring lessons in an interactive way. Visits to exhibitions or science centres are one of the possibilities. These centres have a broad educational offer for primary as well as secondary schools, taking into account the final attainment levels. Teachers who want to relate their visit to a certain course or school subject can appeal to other supplementary programmes offered by science centres.

7. Do visitors have any favourite experiments in Technopolis?

The most favourite experiments are:

- Flight simulator: Navigate an airplane: Would you be a good pilot? Be seated in a real cockpit with real instruments and take the stick. Through the window you see what you would see in real. Can you land the airplane safely?
- Nail bed: Which would you rather sleep on? Billiard balls or nails? Do you dare to lie down on a nail bed? In our bedroom you may choose: a bed with 147 billiard balls or a bed with 2 349 nails. Think about it before you decide to lay down!
- High wire bike: The bicycle in the air. Ever ride on a bicycle, 5 metres above the ground? A cable, a bicycle, and you. Do you dare to take the risk?
- Pin table: A print of yourself. Do you recognise yourself? Have you ever seen a dotted copy of yourself? Put yourself against our pin wall and make a 3D print of yourself. Even though you aren't but a small number of dots, you're still unique.
- Drunken drive simulator: Cheers... but can you still drive? How good are you behind the wheel? Our simulator is a real car, but for your own safety the car doesn't drive around. That's why we are allowed to offer you some virtual drinks. Choose your amount of alcohol and the whether conditions: from sun-drenched to snow. Can you stay on the road? An experience that will surely sober you up.

Very young children like our water area a lot as well as the hot air balloon.