

HTNL Young Professionals (Hyps) meet at Metal Valley

“The building block that was rejected became a corner stone of a whole new world!”

The most recent edition of the HTNL Young Professional program can be considered to be somewhat different than the usual visits we pay to high-tech companies. In the sense that we didn't visit an individual company, but Metal Valley. High tech yes or no? It doesn't matter. It is all about knowledge, development, application technology and production at an early stage in the supply chain. Which ends up in high-tech systems! As such, Metal Valley strongly represents the “M” of topsector HTSM. This afternoon was dedicated to “Materials”.



A new strategy

What Mr Frits Philips mend for Eindhoven has been for a long time the reputation and position of Mr Max Lips in the region called The Langstraat. Starting in 1934 and based in Drunen he developed activities such as propulsion propellers, messing products and foundries. Knowledge and application experience of metals like aluminium was the second nature of the numerous employees. The Lips company has been an important employer until the late nineties. Unfortunately, the company suffered from several economic crises and parts were taken over by world wide players like Wärtsilä, Alcoa and, later, Sapa. In 2010 Wärtsilä decided to relocate their production activities to China. A new strategy to maintain a leading position concerning “Metal” was required.



Welcome at Metal Valley!

A strong proposition

That is when Mr Wim Schonk –a very experienced industrial manager and visionair- was asked to develop a new future for this

regional specialty. Together with Mr Raymond van den Bos –who has a background as a regional political decision taker- he translated his dream into a clear strategy. With their first report Metal Valley was born. Can we compare Metal Valley to Silicon Valley? Perhaps not. But it is a strong proposition you want to be part of!



Mr Van den Bos and Mr Schonk: making a dream come true!

Campus

On Tuesday the 11th of June, a group of HTNL Young Professionals arrived at about 2 o'clock at the entrance of Metal Valley. The sites and buildings are the silent witnesses of the past. But this didn't seem to bother our host, Mr Wim Schonk, who welcomed us as if his empire is nearly finished! Together with Mr Raymond van den Bos he presented the history of the Lips company and the processes which have lead to the current situation. A few years ago, they started to work on a new concept, Metal Valley, which includes education, expertise on materials and innovation. Metal Valley should not only be a knowledge (sharing) institute, but a production plant as well. The first SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) already found their way to Metal Valley. And step by step, a new campus like ecosystem starts to grow, as if

Metal Valley has to rise slowly from the ashes of the past. The presentation of Mr Schonk was only interrupted shortly by a phone call of the mayor of the community, who is strongly involved with the developments.

Cradle to cradle

This was the moment to put on the safety shoes and have a look inside the production facilities of Sapa. A part of the group went to visit the profile production plant. The other group got to understand (nearly) everything about pole products. Just imagine, Sapa produces 70.000 poles a year, serving large parts of the European markets, with a variety of over 5.000 different types! 95% of the aluminium is recycled material. Together with specific characteristics of the production processes makes this Sapa to the only “cradle to cradle” certified producer in this field of competencies.



Building the future. A team challenge.

Well balanced

When we returned to the main building, Mr Schonk explained his ambitions to built up a network of researchers, teachers, application specialist and development engineers, located partly on the Metal Valley site and focussing on 3D printing, among other fields of application. Well known research institutes and universities are involved. Combined with the SME activities, like prototyping and production, this should lead to a well balanced set of competencies and activities forming the framework of a real valley of material expertise. Offering jobs to 500 engineers on site with a multiplier of four each. His dream is more like a dream. Mr Schonk is making his dream come true!

Desire

That is where Mr Van den Bos took over. He challenged the Young Professionals to work

out new ideas about the choices to take. The visitors then split up in groups and started to work on their assignment which had to result in a pitch as real business accelerators! During their discussions they turned out to be real professionals. Not only in the field of their own responsibilities, but as business consultants as well. Three speakers were invited to do the group presentations. Finally, Mr Schonk and Mr Van den Bos pointed out the third group as the “winner” of this challenge. Frank Steeghs, account manager of ACE Ingenieurs- en Adviesbureau, focussed on developing desire for Metal Valley on a global scale and a clear branding based on unique selling points like cradle-to-cradle, recycling, knowledge sharing, research and education. Mr Van den Bos evaluated the strong points of each group proposition. The members of the winning team received a nice bottle of wine as a reward.

Added value

After having a drink together, Mr Van den Bosch evaluated the Metal Valley session by asking each individual Young Professional if and why Metal Valley in optima forma could be of interest for their companies. Generally, the guests shared the idea that the Metal Valley concept has an obvious added value for the high-tech companies in the supply chain. A lot of questions on materials characteristics and applications are unknown and deserve to be discovered and shared between companies specialists.



Presented by Frank Steeghs, Joost van Gorp and Sulabh Sharma

“M”

Yes it is true that we used some more time than initially planned when we finally waved bye bye. But we learned and we enjoyed Metal Valley! Something completely different? No. Metal Valley embodies the “**M**” of HTSM!

Do you want to know more about Metal Valley? Check or contact:

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- Please notice next HTNL Young Professionals meeting will take place at VDL ETG October 22th.
- The Golden ticket international study tour will be organized end of November to Lille France (Pôle de compétitivité).
- The destination of next years Golden ticket international study tour will be the Hamburg region (Germany)

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Jos van Erp
Program Director High Tech NL

