

Meet iVOX, an Internet innovator

In the 2010 Deloitte Technology Fast50 competition, the highest-ranking Belgian company was iVOX, specialist in online market research. To learn more about this innovative firm we went to iVOX headquarters in Leuven to talk to CEO and founder Steven Deketelaere.

Does a good score in the Deloitte Technology Fast50 have value to your firm?

Steven Deketelaere: Absolutely it does. When we turned out to be the best Belgian contestant our clients reacted positively. It confirmed that we were doing well.

iVOX includes several distinct businesses, doesn't it?

Steven Deketelaere: That's right. There's iVOX Research Facilitators, established in 2004. It's mostly known for online opinion polls, where we're the Belgian market leader. We also conduct online market research panels. We have around 130,000 panel members, one of the biggest and most representative research panels in Belgium. iVOX is also the exclusive distributor of Socratos, the most widely used online research platform in Benelux. Indigov is a sister company that provides clear-cut full service marketing communication research solutions for the public sector – from municipalities all the way up to the European Commission. Finally, we have a joint venture called Proximity Panels, which is both a quality label and a project management platform for international online research projects that unites local online research panels in more than 40 countries

How did all this get started?

Steven Deketelaere: It began in 2003 with Indigov, a KUL spin-off. The challenge was to get 'street credibility' because we faced a lot of resistance to using the Internet as research mechanism. People said we should stick with offline research – street interviews, phone, mail, etc. But times were changing. People don't want to be bothered with evening phone calls in order to take part in a 25 minute survey. We told clients and prospects that we don't just supply data. We're research methodologists. We know how to translate questionnaires into an online form and how to create new research tools like interactive profiles.



So you overcame this initial resistance?

Steven Deketelaere: Yes. The big players in our industry even came to ask us how to do this. Indigov is a full service bureau, from data collection to consultancy. But iVOX is just data, so we had no problem working with the competition. That's one of our success factors: our independence. iVOX pretty much always ended up with the project.

How did iVOX become so strong in panel research?

Steven Deketelaere: Because we're in the media as the number one polling firm, people know about us. We respect our panel members: if a questionnaire is too long we'll revise it. We also ask them fun questions. In a study for a famous shower product we asked how many people have sex in the shower. It got a lot of nice media exposure for the client.

What advice would you give to a starting CEO?

Steven Deketelaere: Have enough money. We began with €6,200. If I had a million we could have made a lot more out of it. Innovation is another key word. For example, don't be hesitant in adopting new media. At university I had a lot of fights with colleagues over this. The Dutch are more adventurous, but in Belgium we're used to doing it the old way. The lesson is, if you wait too long you won't win.

iVox

CEO Steven Deketelaere

Location Leuven

Founded 2004

Revenue €3,7 million

Headcount 31

Activity market research via Internet

www.ivox.be