

THE ORIGINAL PIONEER OF OPTICAL WAVEFRONT TECHNOLOGY: A LOOK AT HOW MARC ABITBOL BUILT THIS



Tune in once to the free audio podcast *How I Built This*, and you'll never want to miss an episode. In the weekly broadcast, National Public Radio host Guy Raz interviews successful entrepreneurs and shares their stories. Discover how the ice cream mammoth Ben and Jerry's evolved from a renovated gas station scoop shop to the five-dollar super premium pints in every grocer's freezer aisle. Learn about Whole Foods start as a natural food market with a staff of 19, and its growth to the "whole paycheck" retailer Amazon recently acquired for \$13.7 billion.

Other episodes demonstrate how something you consume daily (like a Starbucks Venti cold brew) or accept on autopilot (like your smartphone's Instagram feed) started with an innovator and evolved into a product and a company that works, that serves a mass market, and that improves our lives.

One of our fellow optometry pioneers, Marc Abitbol, would fit right into the program. Abitbol's story will capture you

for three reasons: the fuse, the method, and the impact. In the optical industry today, everybody knows wavefront technology, but nobody remembers where it started. Here's an inspiring reminder.

THE ABITBOL FUSE

Marc's inspiration took him to new heights, but his idea would later implant with firm roots on dry land. In the 1980s, the idea to use lasers to crash Russian satellites was on the White House to-do list and thus the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), also known as "Star Wars," began. Abitbol's PhD research, funded by the Reagan administration, helped check off the task. Marc developed a way to control wavefronts and prevent laser energy loss despite variations in atmospheric conditions. He lectured on his technology during his first visit to the United States. Always innovating, Abitbol asked, "what's next?" His out of this world application lit a spark in his creative mind for a much more minute purpose: using wavefront technology

in an optical setting. Though the instruments were much smaller, the impact was huge. Marc was the first to use wavefront technology to measure the lens and aberrations of the eye. Many of the first wavefront based instruments in the optical industry, from well-known manufacturers in Germany and Asia, utilized technology developed by Marc and the company he founded, Visionix.

THE ABITBOL METHOD

First, Marc knows how to survive a startup. Long hours. Little sleep. Less than ideal accommodations. 1994 wasn't glamorous for Abitbol's team of three, the infancy of the company he founded: Visionix. Marc recalls traffic delaying his caravan and sleeping in a car before a critical presentation. Nevertheless, they developed a successful prototype in only nine months. They became the first to demonstrate wavefront technology in an optical application.

Second, Abitbol knows how to network. Facing a conservative and mature industry, Marc contacted the biggest optical players in Europe, starting in Germany. The industry was interested, and the product launched into the ophthalmic market, taking live measurements of eye aberration.

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Third, Abitbol knows how to grow. In 2003, Visionix joined forces with Luneau, a French company with access to and an understanding of the market. In 2010, Luneau Technology Group was formed by an alliance between Visionix, Luneau, Briot, and WECO.

The philosophy Marc maintains is that “developing technology is very nice but it is critical to have a market presence, and there is a need to bring the product closer to the customer.” Though committed to continuous innovation, Abitbol’s mission is popular innovation. Bringing his technology to the mass market keeps his pricing competitive.

THE ABITBOL IMPACT

Wavefront technology is a staple in modern-day optometry, and likely your modern day office. Marc’s company has grown to 600 people spread all over the world and a wide range of products in its portfolio covering all the needs of the eye care industry, from manufacture through distribution. Luneau Technology Group operates state of the art production facilities in France and Israel. Fifteen subsidiaries and over 170 distributors worldwide provide services and solutions direct to consumers.

The United States and Asia are more recent targets for growth. Luneau Technology USA includes Latham and Phillips Ophthalmic and AIT Industries, optical equipment distributors acquired in the last five years, in addition to Visionix, Briot, and Weco product brands. In Asia, Luneau Technology Group is exploring local collaborations in the medical field.

Abitbol calls his success a “double commission” as he takes pride in the acceptance of his product within the optical industry but also within the mass market. Optometry partners achieve easier diagnoses and see more patients. Patients achieve better vision outcomes and improved quality of life.

THE ABITBOL FUTURE

Marc says, “the rest is history,” when he finishes his version of the optical wavefront origin story, but anyone who meets Abitbol and talks with him for more than five minutes knows the future holds unlimited potential. “Every morning I wake up with a drive to do something I didn’t have the chance to do yesterday. It’s a once in a lifetime chance to do something like this,” he says. Marc’s passion is one that is shared by the rest of Luneau Technology Group’s management team and their partners, making this a company to watch.

When you follow the leader in wavefront technology for the optical industry, you follow the leader in popular optical innovation. Innovation that reaches and benefits eye care at all levels (from the industry, to the practitioner, to the patient), all at a competitive price.

LATEST TECHNOLOGY



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VX130

Utilizes wavefront technology for complete anterior segment analysis



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