



**"Global mobility is becoming more and more a reality"**

**Gert Rieder, CEO - Batelco (Bahrain)**

Speaks to Teletimes International



*Team in TDC Solutions as well as Chairman of the Board in Call Center Europe. He holds an Executive MBA (INSEAD, France) plus an MBA from the business school in Aarhus, Denmark and is fluent in English, Danish and German.*

*Gert Rieder was kind enough to speak to Teletimes International. The question and answer session with him is placed below for the interest of our readers:*

**Teletimes - Please give us the background of Batelco and its performance over the years since its formation.**

**Gert Rieder -** Batelco is a Bahraini company with roots that go back over 150 years. The Company has invested over \$1.4 billion since 1981 to build its state-of-the-art telecommunications network and today continues to invest to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, end-to-end integrated communications solutions for its residential, business and government customers. Batelco delivers cutting-edge fixed and wireless telecommunications services to its customers in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt and India. In spite of the introduction of regulation with competition in the local market, Batelco continues to be the leading communications provider in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**TT -** Our readers would like to know about your Business Enterprise and Mobility Solutions in detail.

**GR -** Batelco established an Enterprise Division to provide seamless, end to end services for its business customers. We have skilled personnel to

**G**ert Rieder joined Batelco in April 2009 to lead the Bahrain operation of the Batelco Group, as part of the Company's restructure to manage the growing needs of the organisation. Prior to joining Batelco he was Senior Advisor for ENEX Finance SA, a Private Equity company based in Switzerland. Gert has over 20 years of experience in the telecom-

unications business having begun his career in 1987 with TDC (TeleDanmark). He held various roles and executive positions within TDC including Director Residential FixNet Division, Director Business Division, Senior Vice President, Mobile Marketing and Wholesale Divisions. In 1997, he joined Sunrise Communications, a full service provider telecom-

unications company in Switzerland, a joint venture between TDC, BT and three Swiss partners, as Chief Commercial Officer and Member of the Executive Team. In 2001 he was promoted to COO Sunrise Mobile and member of the Executive Management Board. From 2004 until 2008 Gert was Executive Vice President for TDC Residential and member of the Executive

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design business solutions to meet each client's individual needs and requirements and our staff can offer advice and guidance on the best options available to give our customers the competitive edge. Our integrated solutions include mobile, broadband, local & International data connectivity and VoIP. All these are available with just a single point of contact, eliminating complexity and driving down the costs associated with dealing with several vendors and several billing issues.

**TT - Batelco conducts project management professional trainings for its staff. Please tell us about those in detail.**

**GR -** In line with Batelco's commitment to empowering employees through personal development and training, Batelco enrolled 35 of its staff in a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification training course, in October 2009. The five day certification programme was conducted to enhance their understanding of project management terms, theories and concepts. In advance of the programme, participants were given access to a dedicated Project Management Knowledge Centre. This one-stop portal allows Batelco Project Managers access to a diverse array of information, including articles, courses and online books. It also includes hands-on simulations and useful job aids in a real-time environment for ongoing development and exam preparation. After completing the programme, the participants registered and will sit for the exam at the beginning of 2010, allowing some study time. Once successfully passed, they will receive an internationally accepted certificate from the Project Management Institute (PMI), affirming their proficiency in

their field of work.

**TT - What is the level of competition you are currently facing? Who are your major competitors?**

**GR -** The level of competition is intense; there are now 76 operators with over 185 licences approved by the TRA. We believe this is far too many companies with far too many licences and it is not possible for all these operators to be successful. Our main competition comes from the 2nd mobile operator, Zain and of course we are preparing for the launch of services by STC, as the 3rd mobile operator very soon. As mobile penetration is gauged to be in excess of 150% already we are facing some interesting times ahead.

**TT - Do you have plans to enter any new markets in the near future?**

**GR -** As part of our strategy, our long term plans are to continue to diversify and grow the Group's geographical footprint. Our main locations of interest are Africa and Asia, because these places offer huge untapped markets with massive populations. The Middle East regions' telecommunications' opportunities are by this stage quite limited and well saturated.

**TT - Would you like to tell us about any other of your services?**

**GR -** We are delighted with some of our most recent introductions delivered to the Bahrain market during 2009. We launched a 16Mbps Broadband Package, the fastest high speed broadband connection in the Kingdom, to coincide with Bahrain's National Day on 16th December, 09. We constantly review our BB packages and strive to offer packages to suit all budgets and internet usage styles. Our Unified High Speed Data Roaming Charges was



also very welcome news for our customers. The unified high speed data roaming charges are applicable in all GCC states and a number of major Arab countries. With a low rate of only 600 fils per megabyte for data roaming, Batelco's customers can benefit from substantial reductions in charges, as the previous rate was between BD5 and BD7 per megabyte.

**TT - What is your current market share?**

**GR -** At the end of Q3 2009, we had approx 780,000 active mobile subscribers and over 83,000 Broadband customers in the Kingdom of Bahrain. We will be announcing end of year figures for 2009 by the end of January 2010.

**TT - You are one of the companies in the kingdom that are well known for giving back to the community as part of their marketing communications. Would you like to tell us about some of your current SCR activities?**

**GR -** We have recently contributed BD200,000 to the Crown Prince Scholarship Fund as part of our BD1 million commitment to support the 3rd level education of some of Bahrain's brightest students at leading international universities. During the holy month of Ramadan, we distributed 22,000 boxes of foodstuffs to Bahrain's charitable societies to support needy families across Bahrain. This is an annual donation which the community can depend on us to continue with.

**TT - Batelco was the exclusive diamond sponsor for the Corporate Communications Conference 2009. How was the response from this conference?**

**GR -** It was very well received by the organisers and participants with many positive comments being received. It is always good to receive the feedback from those we support, it confirms



Batelco recently announced a new ground breaking roaming arrangement bringing the total number of roaming partners for all roaming services, up to 470. The Batelco launch of the Unified Data Roaming tariff is another excellent example of enabling Batelco customers to communicate globally in a seamless, efficient and inexpensive way. The Unified Data rates are applicable in all GCC states and a number of major Arab countries at a low rate of only 600 fils per megabyte for data roaming. Batelco launched earlier its attractive offer on free incoming calls while roaming. Today Batelco customers can enjoy this service in 21 countries including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Norway and Luxembourg.

**TT - Would you like to comment on TELETIMES International (which is the only tri-regional magazine**

that our CSR policy is working well and serving the needs of the community.

**TT - How do you see the future of the Bahrain telecom market?**

**GR -** In the increasingly competitive market, Bahrain's consumers will benefit from an extensive range of offers for products and services. However, Bahrain has we believe far too many companies with far too many licences approved and it is not possible for all these operators to be successful. We believe that there will be some consolidation with some companies closing down. Mobile penetration has reached 150% and that is even prior to the launch of services by the 3rd operator. Speaking from Batelco's viewpoint, we will continue as usual, giving priority to our customers and

*We will continue as usual, giving priority to our customers and getting the basics right in delivering the products and services they demand and ensuring our quality of service is unmatched.*

getting the basics right in delivering the products and services they demand and ensuring our quality of service is unmatched. The main areas of growth for Batelco and other operators will continue to be mobile, internet and data services as the demand continues to grow for technologies that offer seamless communications while on the go.

**TT - What is your say on the**

**current level of global mobility? How is Batelco helping bring the world closer?**

**GR -** Global Mobility is becoming more and more a reality. Communications wherever and whenever is a reality today. End-user equipment enabling mobile and mobile data usage globally, is booming. It's key for Batelco to ensure that customers can enjoy Batelco's services wherever they go.

**focused towards the telecom and IT sectors of the Middle East, Africa and Asia)?**

**GR -** Teletimes is doing an excellent job reporting on and commenting on the region's telecommunications industry. This coupled with topical and relevant interviews and articles makes for a very interesting read for all those involved in the telecoms and IT business. ■