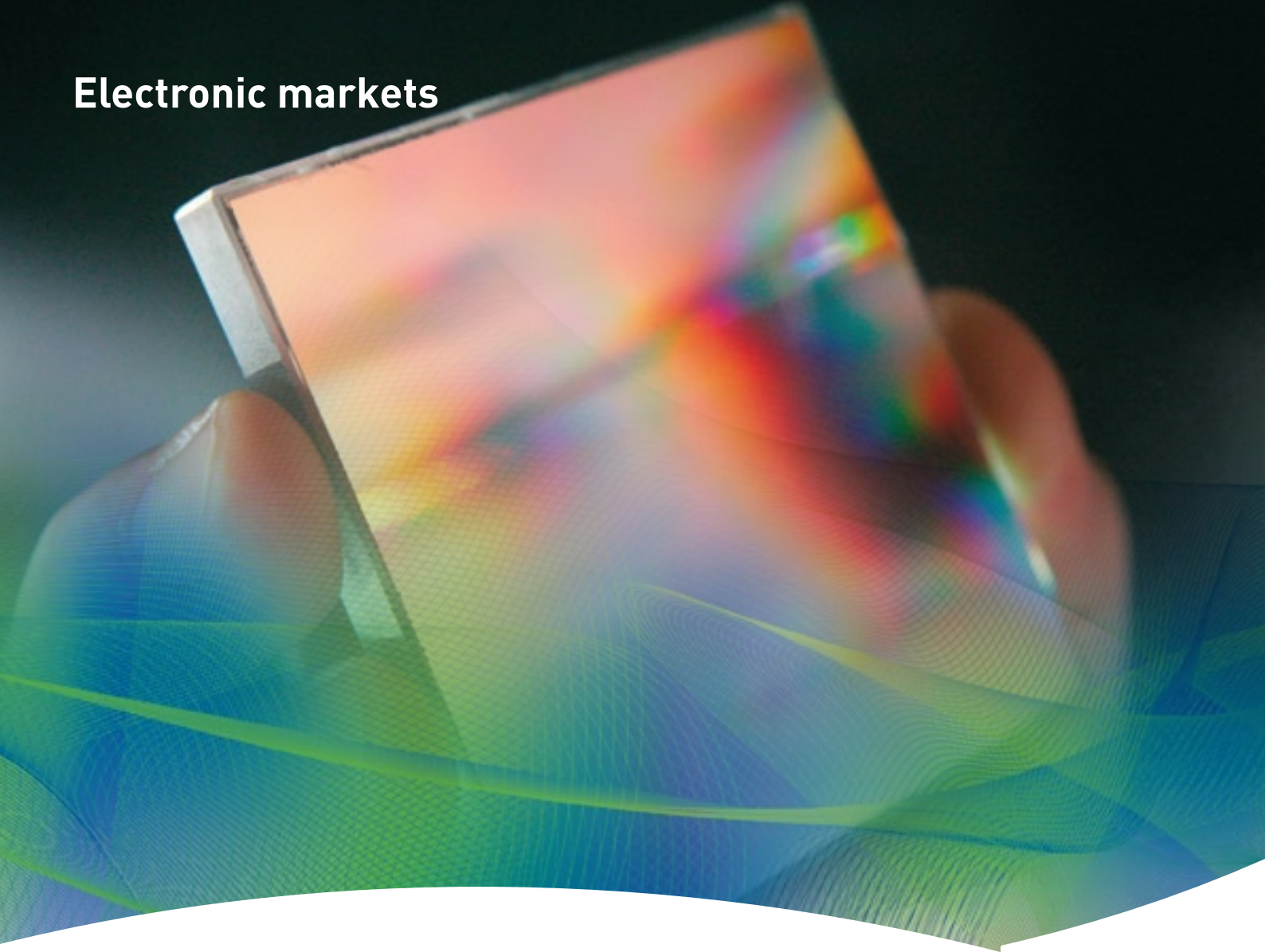


Electronic markets



Gilden Photonics

Development of a new high-performance, but moderately priced, desktop fluorescence measurement system

About the company

LOCATION

Clydebank Business Park, Glasgow

INDUSTRY

Electronic markets

INNOVATION CATEGORY

New product

Gilden Photonics was formed by a group of scientists, under managing director Dr John Gilchrist, to specialise in optical spectroscopy, the fine measurement of light and its different wavelengths. This is a science that has wide laboratory and commercial applications: for example, explains John, the agents used to whiten fabrics or paper work by imparting fluorescent dyes on to the host material.

Project

Gilden was created in 2005 with the specific objective of developing a desktop instrument for measuring fluorescence, that was capable of exceptionally high sensitivity and stability but was priced at the level of much less sophisticated kit, and could therefore offer major competitive advantages to customers in both the academic and the corporate research sectors.

Challenge

John approached Scottish Enterprise just weeks after his company was set up for support with developing the product. His deep personal experience in this marketplace had equipped him well to put together both a technological pitch and a credible business plan, including development costing, very swiftly, and he was delighted to receive innovation funding approval almost as promptly: "Scottish Enterprise were immediately responsive," he recalls. "If I remember correctly, it all went through their system in two or three days."

Solution

The product is now launched into the marketplace and selling successfully: "It is unique in the marketplace in that we can provide a top-level performance instrument at about a 40 per cent price advantage over our nearest rival," says John.

Benefit

From that initial platform, the company is now spinning out new products based on additional software applications and sales growth has exceeded best expectations. The initial success, in other words, has emboldened and facilitated a continuing programme of development. A further tranche of SE grant aid is now underpinning on a complementary product, which is due to be ready for the marketplace by mid-2009.

Gilden Photonics is also well-placed to build on its initial success by forging collaboration with other scientists in the field, notably in the Asian marketplace, where John Gilchrist has long-established contacts from his years in the UK and US opto-electronics sectors.

Testimonial

"I can only say good things about Scottish Enterprise," says John. "They have been fantastically helpful and they grasped the significance and the potential of this very quickly. We have found them to be extremely positive – very, very supportive. But they have also been frank and open: a spade is a spade. Our account manager at Scottish Enterprise has been a most valuable resource for us."

Key message

"Right from the outset, we saw an exciting opportunity to produce this instrument at the price level of the routine low-level instruments," says John Gilchrist. "And yet, within that price level, we could make an ultra high-performance instrument and make a reasonable margin of return on it. And Scottish Enterprise grasped that immediately."

Scottish Enterprise

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