

# “War on Talent”™ Main Challenge for Hydrographic Industry



This week, Patrick Reyntjens, founder of GEOxyz, shares his thoughts on a variety of topics, such as key market trends, technology drivers and challenges, and the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change on the sector. This Q&A is part of a series of interviews with leading experts with different professional backgrounds, who share their thoughts on the present and future of the hydrographic industry.

## ***What has been the impact of COVID-19 on your business?***

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our company, and required adaptation and rapid change. Certainly, for our logistics department and the offshore teams, it is still a big challenge. But in general, we were able to adapt to the ‘new normal’ and maintain operations throughout our fleet. We even introduced our new Geo Ocean V during the pandemic and were able to fill her order book completely. We didn’t witness a decrease in market demand for our services.

There were of course a lot of practical consequences, such as a strict testing policy for the marine and survey crew and ever-changing travel restrictions. Most of our office teams were able to work remotely. Combined with the consequences of the Brexit, COVID-19 has required a lot of extra effort from most of our employees, for which I would like to express my gratitude.

## ***What do you consider the key market trend in the coming years?***

The growing renewables market and especially the construction and O&M phase of OWF development will continue to push market demand for the next five years in our main focus regions. Our clients are publishing more and more multidisciplinary tenders that require a combination of techniques and cover the offshore nearshore and intertidal areas. At GEOxyz, we want to support the complete wind farm life cycle.

In the longer term, I think that decommissioning oil rigs or converting them into carbon dioxide storage facilities will lead to an additional need for hydrographic surveys.

## ***Which technological driver do you consider most important in the coming years?***

I believe that the development of USVs will change the way survey campaigns are undertaken. GEOxyz group is investing in the development of USVs that are capable of carrying multiple sensors. Smaller units can be used for port and intertidal surveys and the bigger ones will be used offshore, first as a force multiplier and later as a standalone solution.

I also hope that data processing can be further automated by deploying artificial intelligence. Another challenge is data transfer: being able to transfer the enormous amount of survey data from the survey vessel to shore for high-speed processing at a reasonable cost would further drive our industry.

## ***What do you see as the main challenge in the coming years?***

We expect an increasing demand for hydrographic services due to the large investments in the renewable energy market. The current global fleet of survey vessels is too limited to support the market demand. We’ll need more manned survey vessels, USVs and remotely operated underwater vehicles.

However, most important will be finding the right people to develop and operate these vessels, process the data and turn it into valuable information. The main challenge will be the ‘war on talent’.

GEOxyz has multiple open vacancies for hydrographic surveyors, data processors, project managers, tender engineers and marine crew. I invite all your readers to check out our job site: <https://jobs.geoxyz.be/en>. Be the captain of your career and come and sail with us.

***The climate crisis urges companies to contribute to a safer and more sustainable world. What is your vision on this?***

As a company, GEOxyz has a passion for the sea and a strong bond with water and nature. We are always looking for ways to reduce our ecological footprint and increase our sustainability. This is why we are very proud to participate in the ISHY project. The objective of the ISHY project is the development, testing and validation of technical tools and socioeconomic models (business cases) for the implementation of hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell technologies in vessels and ports. Demonstrating the feasibility of these technologies by retrofitting different types of existing vessels is one of the goals.

We are also participating in an Interreg Seaweed and Wind project. This project aims to greatly improve the quality and yield of seaweed cultivation at sea. This should make profitable and sustainable seaweed cultivation possible within wind farms in the Belgian-Dutch border region and throughout the North Sea. The project contributes to the multiple use of space for the wind farms. We are supporting an industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management.

### **Patrick Reyntjens**

Patrick Reyntjens (1975) is the son of a topographic surveyor and founded [GEOxyz](#) in 1999 after obtaining his degree as a construction engineer. GEOxyz started as an onshore survey company but Pat's passion for the sea pushed their activities to nearshore survey and then towards offshore activities. GEOxyz has established itself as a European leading service provider, focusing on marine surveys and offshore renewable support activities with a fleet of over 20 vessels. GEOxyz is currently active in European waters but looking into further expanding its activities.



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