

Fabio Gattari, Etere: In 3 years, we became the top software company for Italy's radio stations

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Interview with Fabio Gattari, Founding partner and Director of [Etere](#).

English

– When and where were you born and who were your parents?

I was born in June 1958, in Italy, in a small town of about 25000 people called Tolentino. It was quite unknown but it became a little more famous because I was born in the area where they produced luxury leathers and where Paltrona Frau was headquartered.

– What part of Italy is this city?

It is situated in the centre of Italy, about 30 km away from the Adriatic sea near the industrial areas.

– What were your parents' occupation?

My father worked in the state railways. He was in charge of monitoring steam. My mother usually worked on fashion leather in a company that still exists till today – Italian luxury leather, nazarenogabrielli. My grandfather was one of the founders of the company at the beginning but that was before the wars.



– Do you have any siblings?

Yes, I have an older brother who still lives in Italy.

– Can you tell us about your school years?

I did all my schooling in the same school, in Tolentino. I liked Maths, Physics and English. Interestingly, I was the first in my city to study English. In Italy, the foreign language to study was French but I was the first to study English from middle school. It made me very happy because it opened my mind beyond the walls of Italy.

– What were you like outside of school?

At the age of 14, I liked driving motorbikes. Our area was more akin with driving motorbikes than with playing football. Back then, at that age, I could drive without a license and plate number. I

was neither good at playing football or basketball.

– What university did you attend and why did you choose it?

I decided to attend Ancona university. It is the biggest city of Marche, and it is about 70 km from where I lived. It was a brand new university and one of the first to offer computer engineering with software. This was partly engineering and partly software. Back then, I did all my exams on the computer with punching cards.

– Was your university education free?

It's a state university. The fee was not too much. We just paid taxes. The costly part was living there because I didn't want to commute from home. We also had to buy books. It was not exactly cheap but my parents sponsored my education as I was the only one who chose to attend a university in my family.

– Did you live on Campus?

The university was quite new. It looked like a factory then but a new site was completed by the time I had finished my schooling. I and some friends rented a place to stay with my colleagues.

– Did you live in Ancona where the university is?

Yes, I did throughout my schooling there but I came back home right after I completed my education.

– Did you still enjoy motorbiking while in school?

Yes, I had my Vespa in school and rode this all the time.

– What was your first job?

I worked in the public administration. It was a typical office job. For me, it was a good opportunity to make some money. I continued working during my university days.

After this, I and a friend of mine opened a company to support radio stations. At that time, the first non-national radio station was not in Italy but really in a quite strange area because they had abolished the law of having only one radio station which is the state radio station. So you could open a radio station as you wished.

Then, there were 15000 radio stations which was a huge number because parents would buy radio stations for their kids so that they would stay at home playing. So I started a company to support radio stations because no one understood what it was to have a transmitter and an antenna. My job was mainly about transmitters and antennas rather than music and microphones. It was my first company and then later on I moved to another place where I started to do software which has led me here.

– What style of music did you broadcast back at the radio station?

I worked as a Dj at the radio station and I also translated English songs. I wasn't a professional, we were not paid to do it but it was an adventure.

– What was the name of the company you created after working at the radio station?

The company was called GBE. We did installations for radio stations. I worked there for about 7 years then I moved to a different company that did software because I liked the idea of software and at that time it was just beginning.

– What happened with this first company when you left?

We closed it down mainly because I was more attracted with the idea of working in an office with software than out in the cold winter installing transmitters.

From that point on, software influenced all my ideas. At the beginning we didn't use software for radio and TV. But one day in 1992, we started to go fast in this area because there was law change in Italy and so when we noticed a big boom, we decided to close down a branch and turn it into another company entirely. Then we started to do a software management system first in radio, then in TV and now we are going back to radio.

– It says here you have been in business for over 30 years?

Yes, it's been 32 years. Because right now, in Etere, we are currently in version 32. We do this to keep track of how long we've been doing this. It's been a very long time.





- What does Etere mean?

Etere means luminiferous aether. It was the supposed path with which light travelled, an experiment of Michelson and Morley which was later disproved. My other shareholder chose the name and at that time we thought the English would never be able to pronounce it properly and we never thought it could become an international company. At that time we were young and we thought that the Italian market was even too big. When we began to expand we didn't want to change it because the name was part of our history.

– Does your co-shareholder work with you?

Yes, he does. At that time I worked as an engineer and he worked on the accounting side of the business. He took care of the finances. We are a good team and that is why the company became bigger every year.

– Considering how young you were when you started and the friendship between the two of you, what was the main goal for your company back then?

We started as two people in a garage. Idea was that we needed to make a business. We wanted our software to be famous all over Italy. Back then, companies would make both software and hardware or you would buy the hardware and get the software for free. We knew how important software is and so we wanted to create a software only company. When we started, in 3 years, we became the top software company for Italy's radio stations. Because our solutions were so efficient that other companies started becoming obsolete.

– You were the CEO, developer and salesman, right?

We were two people at first but in time we started to hire software engineers and I moved into sales. It is easier to find an engineer than to find a salesperson and though I see myself as an engineer, I understand the advantage of working in sales. A salesperson is more exposed to the potential customer and their needs which helps in developing the product. I believe it is good for those who develop the products to have this exposure.

– What has been your main achievement since your company started?

I am extremely proud to have employees that trust me and see me as one of them. In 32 years we have consistently satisfied our employees as best as we can and I believe they trust me to continue to do so. Secondly, successfully raising two kids as a working single father is one the greatest achievements I have ever made. The least important though still noteworthy is creating an international company from a small town in the centre of Italy.



- Are you married?

Yes, I was married but now I am divorced.

- Do you have kids?

I have two kids. My daughter is 18, and she studies in Scotland while my son is 21 and has started to work with me.



- Do you practice any hobbies?

Yes. I like riding my motorbike. I'm hoping to buy another one.

- What brand of motorbike do you ride?

My current bike is Italian, Moto Guzzi. Until last year I had a Ducati. My next one would probably be a Ducati too. Here in Asia, the weather is nice enough to ride all year long. I also like diving. Another unsafe hobby. And certainly I like travelling for work and leisure.

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