

# DRIVEN...

He may not be the rock star he'd dreamed of becoming, but life as a techie hasn't been so bad either, confirms John Boulton, Managing Director of Damarel.

“I joined Damarel in 1990, as a fresh-faced IT graduate pursuing a role in software development,” Boulton begins. “A career in music had been cut short through a tragic lack of talent, so university, then engineering, it was. I’ve since grown up with the company, and through a series of spectacularly ill-advised career moves somehow ended up as Managing Director, overseeing a talented and growing team with a worldwide product installation base,” he summarises modestly.

“Back then, Damarel was in its infancy and had just secured its first contract; a project for a ground handler at London Gatwick. Although risky from a career point of view, this was exactly the opportunity I’d been looking for: a small start-up company in an interesting sector where I could be an integral team member,” he relates of his ambition. “There’s a great deal of satisfaction in helping something you started to grow from such small beginnings to driving handling operations in over 150 airports worldwide.”

## Enriching experience

“Over the years I’ve been involved in nearly every aspect of the business. I’m still heavily involved in the technical side of things, but one thing I don’t do any more is write code, which, as a techie, I confess to missing. On the business development side, I also have responsibility for Sales and Marketing - about the only area I stay out of is finance!” he relates, detailing a diverse job specification

Boulton describes a fulfilling experience. “I’ve been privileged to have worked with some amazingly talented people, both within Damarel and our industry partners and customers, from change leaders like McCarran airport, Las Vegas, driving the pace of new technology, to Japan Airlines and their incredible attention to detail,” he remarks. And the job is rewarding in many more ways. “We’re growing strongly, so I’m often reviewing CVs and interviewing candidates. We have a strong student



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MD, Damarel

placement and graduate programme in place, which is something I’m particularly proud of. We’ve helped some very talented people to experience commercial software development during their studies,” he explains. “It’s also a tremendous recruitment opportunity and a lot of those students have gone on to work full time with us,” he concludes, highlighting Damarel’s commitment to investing in the future of the business.

## A day’s work

Is there a typical day for a manager at Damarel? “I can’t imagine there is,” is

Boulton’s frank response. “With so many areas of responsibility there’s always something that needs input. We have operationally critical systems installed in over 200 airports around the world operating 24/7, so there’s a lot to stay on top of, together with a fair amount of travel, visiting clients,” he explains. “As a software company you can’t stand still – the aviation industry is going through a period of rapid change and it’s vital that our systems support that, so looking at the progress of the next generation of our products occupies a lot of my time.”

When he’s not in the office, Boulton confesses that he prefers cars to aircraft. “My main hobby is motorsport, racing cars at iconic circuits around the UK. It might sound strange but it’s a great way to relax,” he reveals. “When you’re racing you can’t be thinking about anything else - and no-one can phone you!”

## Employee perks

Boulton is quick to relay his favourite part of the job. “I’ve always enjoyed the travel that is an essential part of the business. I’ve got a great team who take most of the burden now; however, back then I would always carry a passport with me, as you never knew what would come up. I still remember the awkward phone calls home after forgetting to tell the family I had to go somewhere at very short notice: ‘We haven’t seen you since yesterday. Where are you?’ ‘Dallas...’”

Unsurprisingly, as he reminisces of his jaunts to the likes of Japan and the Maldives, his overriding memory is of just how much fun the job has been. “There are not many jobs where you get to travel the world, doing what you enjoy, and I’m fortunate to be in that position. Damarel isn’t a monolithic company with strictly defined roles, so I still get to work across many levels.

“In essence, we’re a group of engineers with a passion for what we do and the drive to make it happen. I’m not sure I’d change a thing!” **ghi**