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on building an alliance across the Gulf

## QUANTUM LOOPHOLE'S JOSH SNOWHORN

Why we should rethink data centre planning

## JEAN-LOUIS LE ROUX

talks about the changing role of the telco operator

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

# Antonio Matera, senior network engineer at Sparkle

46 year-old Matera, who lives with his wife and two sons in Sicily, details the most exciting parts of his job



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**A**fter I graduating, with a degree in electronic engineering Matera began working in the telecommunications department of the University of Catania. For close to a year he developed papers on the applications of wireless standards.

“In 2006 I had the opportunity to join MedNautilus (which was acquired by Sparkle), where I could follow the evolution of telecoms from SDH to Ethernet / WDM networks on the backhaul and DWDM transport on submarine parts with all the relating aspects.

“Currently I deal with traffic assurance for customers, with a specific focus on the company’s submarine telecommunications assets and capacity activation. Recently I have been supporting the analysis of the impact of new planned telecommunication and energy

submarine infrastructure, or marine research campaign, on submarine cables.

“I enjoy dealing with technical issues relating to data transport in submarine photonic networks. I’ve been involved in field surveying, reporting activities on the seashore and at cable landing stations which is also something I really enjoy.

“The opportunity to work in the city where I was born and where I currently live with my family is also another perk of my job.

“I believe the most difficult part of my role, but at the same time the most exciting, is when a cable break or shunt fault occurs on the wet end of our managed network. Then I must investigate the point of failure and coordinate the repair process with the cable-ship crew and landing station personnel.

“My job is both unique and interesting, but it can also be stressful which is understandable when you have to switch from a regular routine to dealing with faults or problems that are not easy to resolve, and happen outside of regular business hours.

“In the morning I have breakfast with my family and then I drive my two kids to school. In the summer if the weather is good I also have the chance to run with my dog by the sea before I leave the house and start work.

“Working for a big telecommunications company was the most natural choice after my degree”

“I usually reach my office around 8.30am and I will organise my work according to a list of prepared priority tasks that most of the time require the involvement of colleagues, not only from my company, but from other partners.

“This routine can be interrupted when unexpected major fault events occur, and I must support my colleagues for a troubleshooting or fault coordination.

“I think one of the highlights of my career occurred recently when I was involved in submarine operational issues.

“I was tasked to follow up and verify the feasibility of cable crossings of new systems and scientific research campaigns that might impact existing assets maintained by Sparkle and then contribute to find an agreement between the parties involved.

“When things go wrong I always vent to my wife, Valeria. Although she doesn't work in my field (she's a teacher) I rely on her for suggestions, and I must admit that most of the times she is right.

“I usually stop for lunch around 1pm, I tend to have a salad or pasta followed by a coffee. I usually devote the afternoon to working on new cabling activations or routine checks at the Catania landing station, which are also part of my job.

“A big project for us currently is the activation of the terrestrial section on the BlueMed cable connecting Aqaba in Jordan with the Mediterranean backbone.

“BlueMed is Sparkle's new cable that will connect Italy with France, Greece, and several countries along the Mediterranean Sea to Aqaba in Jordan. The cable is part of the Blue and Raman subsea cable systems built in partnership with Google and other operators, which will extend to Mumbai in India.

“I usually get home at 6pm and I will have dinner with my wife Valeria and my sons, Riccardo and Lorenzo, around 9pm in the evening. I try to relax by going running or reading a book. I will head to bed around 11pm.”



**What would you say your professional strengths are?**

“My patience, level of knowledge and experience on systems achieved during years of troubleshooting.”

**What is the best careers advice you could pass on?**

“It would be to just build on your aspirations without looking too much at the financial aspect.”

**What do you consider to be your greatest professional success?**

“When I graduated as an electronic engineer specialising in telecommunications is still what I consider to be my greatest success.”

**What do you like to do when you have some time off?**

“I spend my free time playing sports or being outdoors with my family.”

**How do people react when you tell them what you do?**

“People are usually very interested, mainly because most are not aware that most Internet traffic is carried by fibre optic cables and not by satellites. They are also fascinated when I explain to them how cable system are laid under the sea.”

**What are your strategic priorities for the coming months?**

“For the coming months I want to improve my professional expertise in submarine issues and continue to expand my knowledge of aspects related to submarine cable consortium management.”

**What did you want to be when you were younger?**

“Since I was young, I always wanted to be an electronic engineer. However, being a keen skier, which I practice regularly on Mount Etna, I also dreamed of being a ski instructor.”

**If you didn't do your job what would you do and why?**

“If I didn't do this job I think I would like to be an agronomist. Working outdoors to take care of my family's orange grove and other people's fruit trees.”