

# Sofonnews

Rob Luiken Schneider Electric

Sofon  
definitely  
handles  
complexity in  
construction supply

**Business Case:** After initial skepticism, Schneider Electric is now absolutely sure: 'Sofon can definitely handle the complexity in the construction supply!'

**Ready to Go:** Sofon knows how to keep implementations moving along at a good pace. How is this possible? Sofon customer Voortman explains.

**Expert speaks out:** Schmit will never again offer parking solutions too expensive or too cheap, thanks to Sofon.



*Our years of parking knowledge and our parking solutions, are stored and defined in Sofon*

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*'Voortman' refers to 'Voortman Automatisering' and Schmit refers to 'Schmit Parkeersystemen'.*



## Economy

Economically speaking, 2011 was an extraordinary year. Instability and uncertainty defined many industries. Thanks to the trust of many existing and new customers, Sofon was able to avoid these tendencies. Our revenue increased by 2.4% and our profit grew even more strongly: we achieved a profit for the twelfth year running. That makes Sofon a trustworthy and stable partner for 2012 and beyond!

But what is more interesting still, is that our customers are more capable of weathering the economic developments thanks to Sofon's software. More than ever, it is important to be able to react quickly in times of rapid economic change, or even better: to anticipate. Sofon Guided Selling makes the sales process faster, smarter and better.

In this edition of Sofon News, you will read about how Schneider Electric, Voortman and Schmit improved their sales processes.

Otto van der Tang  
Managing Director



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*Our years of parking knowledge and parking solutions are stored and defined in Sofon*

**Ron van Hagen**  
COORDINATOR LOGISTICS

**Wat does Schmit do?**

“Schmit specializes in parking solutions. Think of solutions in the areas of exit payment parking (e.g. car parks), pay-and-display parking (street parking) and entry controlled systems. These systems are constructed modularly and consist of high quality hardware and software components. The components are produced by internationally renowned companies from Germany, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands. In the past 25 years, we have taken on hundreds of projects in parking-related areas. For example, we provided the City of Amsterdam with solutions for pay-and-display parking.”

**How does Schmit use Sofon?**

“We use Sofon to produce quotations. I started by storing the knowledge of one of our solutions in Sofon: exit payment parking. The other solutions – pay-and-display parking and entry controlled systems – all have overlaps with exit payment parking. We decided to make one model. So if a change has effect on all three solutions, the change will only have to be made once. That works very efficiently.”

**What was the situation like before Sofon?**

“Before we started using Sofon, we would copy a lot of text from existing quotations to produce a new quotation. So you needed to know exactly what had changed in the meantime in the areas of specifications, texts and illustrations.... Calculations were produced using Excel sheets. Changes or additions to products were however not kept up in Excel. That caused problems in the calculation, quoting and order process. I – as Coordinator Logistics – would then see errors that I would need to correct in order to buy a full installation from the supplier. There was a danger that the installation would be offered too cheaply. Or that the cost price was estimated too high, making us lose the order.”

**What is the situation like with Sofon?**

“Now we work with Sofon, we know any quotation we send out will be complete, uniform, up-to-date and error-free. This is even more important if you are producing a quotation covering a whole project: from the solution itself to installation, service and maintenance. The advantage of Sofon is that we built the model ourselves and can maintain it easily ourselves as well. We also decided on the order of the questionnaire, so that we created a very logical way of operating. New staff can quickly start work with Sofon. Sofon leads them through the process, offers extra information if necessary and protects them from making errors: impossible combinations cannot be offered. We really have knowledge of parking solutions spanning years and we have defined the diversity of our parking products in Sofon. The integration with our ERP system has also been very profitable for us. We sometime need to deal with 400 order lines per order. We are very pleased that we no longer have to enter these lines manually. That saves us time, money and prevents order errors.”

**RESULTS**

- Quotations are complete, uniform, up-to-date and error-free
- Model was built by Schmit themselves and will be maintained by them
- New staff can quickly go to work with Sofon
- Years of parking knowledge and diversity of parking products defined and stored in Sofon
- Integration with ERP system prevents double entries and errors

Rob Luiken

*Thanks to Sofon,  
our Engineers have  
more time and  
attention for  
our customers*

# Case

## Sofon deals with complexity in construction supply

Schneider Electric is a global specialist in energy management, with branches in more than one hundred countries. They offer integrated solutions for energy production that is safe, reliable, efficient, productive and green, for multiple market sectors. Schneider Electric has leading positions in energy & infrastructure, industrial processes, automation of buildings and data & network centers. They also have a broad presence in housing construction

### More ease and more support

As a specialist in energy management, Schneider possesses a very wide range of products; ranging from the production of electricity to delivery to your wall socket. “Many of our products are not complex by themselves, but most products are difficult to combine into a correct solution”, says Luiken. Schneider Electric possessed calculation software that gave them some support in their calculations. “The program was developed under our supervision, but it no longer satisfied our current wishes. Furthermore, program maintenance was inefficient, its user-friendliness left something to be desired

applications. In 2010, more than 110,000 staff achieved a turnover of more than 19.6 billion euro. With their motto ‘make the most of your energy’, Schneider Electric helps private citizens and companies get the most out of their energy. Now Sofon helps Schneider Electric get the best out of their sales process. Rob Luiken (Manager Engineering & Calculation) discusses how they achieved this.

and it was very difficult to implement new product groups. It was therefore time to look for new software that provided more ease and support – not only for calculations, but also in the whole sales process. Sofon won on flexibility from competing systems.”

### Project team

Schneider Electric was going through a very busy time during implementation. “Our need for a system like Sofon actually became more urgent the busier we became and you typically have to free-up time to introduce a new system. However, the

Sofon consultant challenged us on this in a good way. He was quickly at home in our material and he helped us to implement a solution that reflected the realities and challenges of our business. Two of our own support engineers – Marco Bijwaard and Hans Mooijen – completed the project team. Hans has extensive product knowledge; he knows almost every nut and bolt. With all his experience and product knowledge, he was a real walking encyclopedia for Marco, who took care of the implementation. Marco is a bit further from the material, his affinities lie with IT and he is an analytical thinker. Really useful characteristics in this kind of implementation!”

### Living system

The project team first put the knowledge of the most common product series into Sofon. “Of the twenty product series, we started by implementing five. Using these, we could produce 80% of quotations. In this way, we got some experience while we were implementing the other product series. Now we can produce 95% of all quotations with Sofon. Sofon functions as a living system. We collect wishes people have, think about them and put them into the Sofon model. We also think about the previous choices we made. What seems logical in the beginning may no longer seem so logical at a later stage. We can now really back our model, because we made it ourselves. We don’t even need consultancy for changes and extensions.”

### More time and attention for customers

Customer requests to Schneider Electric are very diverse. “It could be about requests from installers – a list with an overview of materials needed – but we receive (architectural) plans from installers more often. We translate the drawings and specifications from the plans into the products needed. In Sofon, you indicate what the width and length of e.g. a cable carrying system is, how many times it branches off and where these forks are. We now have more time and attention for the customer because we no longer have to concentrate on what kind of nuts and bolts, braces, and clamps we need to use. Sofon does this for us. There is an immediate test of the input and the combinations made. Our Engineers no longer need to look up information and they need to commit fewer

details to memory. With Sofon, they can concentrate on the difficult issues. Even new staff can start working quickly and independently because this knowledge is stored in Sofon.”

### Complete quotation and materials list

The data provided is the basis for a quotation. “Multiple installers ask for a quotation for the same job. These quotations all differ, even if just by a little. However, basing ourselves on one quotation, we can now quickly produce the others. In the end, one of the contractors will get the job. Often there are then a few changes to be made in the quotation. That used to be a hassle. What that really meant was: starting over. A revised quotation is now much quicker to produce, just change a few choices in Sofon – which maintains version control of our quote. When the quotation becomes an order, there are two situations: we get the order for the total delivery including all kinds of engineering. Or the installer in question buys our products via a warehouse. We then generate a list of materials with Sofon. In this bill of materials (BOM) all amounts and article numbers are summarized; if desired all articles are totaled per product group, or a detailed list is included per drawing (e.g. per building layer). This makes ordering easier for the installer.”

### Skepticism eliminated

Now that Schneider Electric migrated away from the old system and is live with Sofon, Luiken takes a look back: “The initial skepticism in the organization has completely disappeared. In the beginning, I would still sometimes hear some criticism: ‘This kind of system can’t handle the complexity of construction supply.’ This was not the case with Sofon, we have achieved all of our goals! Thanks to the many possibilities in Sofon and a new way of thinking gained during implementation, we were able to solve all of our complex challenges. If you think of the way a customer specifies a question, you find a lot more is possible than you originally thought. Our quotation cycle time has been shortened and the risk of errors has gone down. Apart from that, maintenance is much more efficient. Changes are made in one place and quotations are immediately up-to-date. So we have plenty of reasons to further extend the use of Sofon in the future.”



RESULTS
· Complexity in construction supply handled
· 95% of quotations can be produced with Sofon
· (Revised) quotations error-free and produced quickly with user-friendly system
· Possibility of generating BOMs; list of all articles totaled per product group or a detailed list per drawing
· Information no longer in people’s heads, but in Sofon
· Automatic testing of data entered and combinations made
· More time and attention for customer
· No consultancy needed for extra wishes and extensions

ready to go



*I expected the implementation to cost far more time*

Robert Oude Avenhuis

## Sofon offers Voortman complete sales support system

If you think of the words ‘software implementation’, you may think of long cycle times, high costs and customization. That might be true for traditional software implementations, but not for an evolutionary implementation approach like Sofon Ready to Go. Sofon knows how to keep up the pace of implementations. This time we will introduce

you to the company Voortman. Voortman develops, constructs, installs and maintains CNC-driven processing machines for the steel processing industry and steel trade. Together with Robert Oude Avenhuis – Manager Inside Sales at the Dutch branch – we look back at the speedy implementation.

### Complete sales support system

Voortman has gone through considerable growth in the past few years. The machine manufacturer does not only possess sales offices in the Netherlands, USA, Russia and Australia, they also have an extended worldwide dealers network. Oude Avenhuis comments: “Our growing international clientele makes it necessary for us to optimize our sales process. We were therefore looking for a complete sales support system. And Sofon turned out to be very complete. We use all of Sofon: from CRM to quotation generation – and everything in between. I myself was involved with the CRM implementation.”

### Phase 1 – Preparation

Sofon introduced the *Ready to Go* concept for implementation at Voortman: a structured approach to implementation, from preparations to live introduction. “Working with a Sofon consultant, our wishes and demands were taken on board in a project plan. In this way, we quickly had an idea of the cycle time and man hours needed. The consultant and I scheduled one day a week over a few months. I had expected that we would need far more time, but my expectations were definitely proved wrong. This was probably because of our matching methods of working. The consultant operated with a critical attitude and a structured approach.”



## Phase 2 – Simulation

Voortman wanted to use Sofon Sales Organizer to map out sales cycles, define contact moments and to gain insight into win rates. “But we also had some wishes for the organization of the Sales Organizer. For instance, we wanted a few more fields added and we wanted other fields renamed or deleted, in order to increase user-friendliness. During this phase we did a lot of testing and we weighed alternative solutions. If I got stuck, the consultant always had a few good solutions up his sleeve. I would then choose the idea that was best fit for our company.”

## Phase 3 – Realization

It was important to Voortman to have access to a user-friendly system: “We wanted to use a minimal number of mouse clicks to achieve our goal. Sofon now actually directs staff. When we have filled-in one field, another field will, for instance, become required because the information in question is needed to produce a report; really convenient for our process.” Apart from that, Voortman wanted to structure and organize the access to information per Business Unit. “We have Business Units over the whole world. It is therefore not necessary for a staff member in the USA to be able to look at business opportunities in Russia. So we have organized Sofon in such way that sales people abroad can only look at their own opportunities and activities. The sales staff at our Dutch branch have a few more rights. They are often linked to certain sales offices abroad for support purposes.”

## Phase 4 – Hand-over & live

In the last phase, Oude Avenhuis put his knowledge on paper in the form of a manual. Then he presented the possibilities in the Sofon Sales Organizer to his colleagues. “Because of the experience I had gained, I didn’t need any support from a consultant. Sofon was received well in our organization. The twenty colleagues that work with Sofon are very pleased with the ease of use the system offers. It is also good that Sofon works as one. You need no separate CRM system, product configurator, quotation generator... You produce a quotation from the standpoint of a customer. All quotations are automatically stored with the right customer data. You therefore

see years of customer history at a glance. So: no more loose Word files and extensive files in archives for us. There is a structure now.”

## Reports and e-marketing

Voortman also makes use of reports in the Sales Organizer. “We have insight into our installed base and can very easily produce a reference list. In the Sales Organizer, we indicate that we want to know which customers have machine type A in country B. With a few keystrokes, a reference list appears. From this, we choose a selection of companies suitable for a reference visit from one of our potential customers. We used to keep up this reference list manually in Word. It would sometimes take an hour to find a few good references. Another possibility we really appreciate, is the link between Sofon and our e-marketing package. Every night synchronization takes place. This means that if I add five new contacts at the end of an afternoon, they can immediately be included in a new e-mailing the next morning. It saves us a lot of time in exporting and importing data. And we now know that all data is up-to-date. That is necessary when you send a lot of e-mailings – like we do.”

## RESULTS

- One complete sales support system: from CRM to quotation generation
- Timely implementation:
  - Few consultancy hours necessary (twelve days, over three months)
  - Appreciation for role Sofon: critical and structured
  - No dependence on Sofon consultant
- Years of customer history; visible at a glance
- Link to and synchronization of e-marketing package
- Installed base can be managed
- Management reports are available
- Opportunities can be managed



## New customers

Sofon Guided Selling is used in various industries by – at first glance – totally different customers. Our customers operate in the world of industry, warehousing, transport, insurance, telecom and services.

A short introduction to a few new clients:



- KOMA is a one of a kind, ingenious producer of refrigeration technologies. For the past 70 years, KOMA has been involved in understanding the specific characteristics of products that need to be chilled or frozen. KOMA is on a constant quest to find innovations for its customers.

Because of its self-critical character, KOMA concluded that internal innovation was necessary. KOMA decided to replace their ERP system. KOMA chose a combination of Microsoft Dynamics AX and Sofon, implemented by Sofon partner Pulse. Sofon will mainly be used to improve, speed up and simplify the quotation and order process.



Transwall is a well-established developer and manufacturer of moveable floor-to-ceiling and architectural wall systems. Founded in 1963 in the western suburbs of Philadelphia, the brand has positioned itself firmly in the relocatable wall segment of the contract interiors industry. Noted for its high quality products and superior services, Transwall has carved out a strong place for itself in eastern markets. It is also a long-standing and trusted supplier to the federal government with installations throughout the US and the world.

Transwall chose Sofon to improve their sales and quotation process. They will both use Sofon Sales Organizer (CRM) and Sofon Proposal Organizer (Quotation Generator).

## Keep up-to-date on what's happening with Sofon!

Sofon is pleased to keep you up-to-date on developments in Guided Selling. We organize seminars a few times a year and publish Sofon News every quarter.

If you would like to receive the electronic versions of these mailings, please let us know. Every 50th subscriber will receive a digital photo frame as a nice decoration for their desk.

You can subscribe at our website [www.sofon.com](http://www.sofon.com).



**Sofon**  
Guided Selling

Sofon is the supplier of sales support software under the name Sofon Guided Selling. With Sofon, quotations, contracts, orders and other sales documents are put together simply, quickly and error-free. Among other things, Sofon Guided Selling supports calculation, configuration, visualization and document generation in any language desired. This decreases sales costs, reduces delivery times, increases scoring rates and improves cooperation between customers, dealers, sales, engineering and production. Sofon integrates with standard CRM and ERP systems and is suitable for all companies who have a customer-specific way of operating – in every sector – anywhere in the world.

## activities

### Events

**Sofon Seminar**  
29 March  
Kasteel Maurick,  
Vught (NL)  
Theme: "Sell more in  
challenging times"  
Speakers: Rob Luiken  
(Sofon customer:  
Schneider Electric),  
Lex Tholen (RedFoxBlue)  
and Bert de Vries  
(Sofon).

### Guided Selling Blog

Sofon is happy to share knowledge with you! In Sofon's weekly blog posts, various experts from the Sofon organization speak out. These experts have a clear insight and experience into best practices within the sales and quotation processes of companies who supply client-specific products and services. You can share in this knowledge by visiting [www.sofon.com/blog](http://www.sofon.com/blog).



### Twitter

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