

Sofonnews



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We get more
work done with fewer
staff thanks to Sofon

Business Case: Erbi is an innovative supplier of kitchen counters and worktops. Specifying a kitchen counter is much more complex than it seems at first glance. Erbi wanted to minimize this complexity to streamline their sales processes. The goal was achieved using Sofon Guided Selling Software.

Sofon in Practice: Kinkelder develops, manufactures and sells circular metal saws. When Kinkelder needed a new ERP package, a good product configurator also became necessary. Kinkelder saw the solution in combining Microsoft Dynamics AX and Sofon.

Expert speaks out: Smeva manufactures walk-in coolers and freezers, cold storage units, refrigerated wall units, and service counters for supermarkets and specialized stores. Smeva made clear improvements in quotation cycle time and training time using Sofon.



*Thanks to Sofon
new staff becomes
productive sooner*

3 Expert speaks out

An interview with Smeva's Jenny van Gompel. Smeva manufactures walk-in coolers and freezers, refrigerated wall units and cold storage service counters. Smeva uses Sofon to configure products and to produce calculations, quotations and bills of materials. Thanks to Sofon, Smeva improved quotation cycle time and shortened training time for new staff.

4 Business Case

Erbi is an innovative supplier of kitchen worktops that is constantly looking for new materials and applications that are distinctive in terms of characteristics and materials. Erbi wanted to improve the way they dealt with the complexity of their products. Erbi achieved this with Sofon Guided Selling Software. A flawless quotation can now be quickly produced without a dealer or staff member having to memorize all the knowledge of products needed. This has made it possible for Erbi to get more work done with fewer staff.

6 Sofon in Practice

Kinkelder develops, manufactures and sells circular metal saws. Kinkelder wasn't only on the look-out for a new ERP package, they also needed a product configurator. Kinkelder saw their solution in the combination of Microsoft Dynamics AX and Sofon. AX and Sofon offer Kinkelder more insight. This makes it possible for Kinkelder to steer their business and so make progress.

8 New clients – Calendar



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Foreword

Many companies take initiatives to make production processes 'leaner'. 'Lean management' creates faster, less wasteful processes. In competition with low income countries, western manufacturing companies cannot afford to let hold-ups and waste continue to go on in production processes. Companies who have introduced 'lean manufacturing' have experienced that the risk of mistakes in a process decreases as the process becomes faster.

But how do things work in the sales process? It is becoming clearer and clearer that delays and waste in the sales process can have an exponentially negative effect on the whole organization. When mistakes (unconsciously) creep in from the first talks with clients about their wishes, this can lead to the ultimate form of waste: producing a product that was not what the client intended and which must ultimately be thrown out. The slower the sales process, the greater the risk of mistakes.

This is why making the sales process smarter and faster should be considered. A smarter and faster sales process not only leads to a better quality of sales – but automatically makes sure that the processes backing it up become leaner. Investing a dollar in 'lean sales' could easily lead to more profits than investing that same dollar in 'lean manufacturing'!

But how do you actually do that? Read in this edition of Sofon News how the companies Erbi, Smeva and Kinkelder have invested in making sales smarter and faster – and let the facts speak for themselves!

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colophon

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*New staff are
productive more
rapidly thanks
to Sofon*

Jenny van Gompel
MANAGER CUSTOMER SERVICE

Expert speaks out
Name: Jenny van Gompel
Job description: Manager Customer Service
Company: Smeva
Product: Coolers and freezers, and cold storage units
Branches: The Netherlands and Belgium

the ones in contact with the end clients: supermarkets and specialized stores. Our dealers consult with us on plans for supermarkets so that we can make an appropriate offer. The dealers then take care of the actual installation.”

2 What does Smeva use Sofon for?

“We use Sofon to configure products and to make calculations, quotations and bills of materials. We also work with the Sofon CRM package, the Sales Organizer. We regularly plan activities for our field organization using the Sales Organizer. When staff are out of the office we can easily make them aware of a quotation they need to follow-up or a phone call they need to make. We also manage appointments with our dealers in the Sales Organizer. That’s very convenient, as our staff work with their own dealers. If a staff member is on vacation or is leaving our company, a colleague can easily take over their tasks: all appointments, but also order confirmations, plans and drawings, are stored in the Sales Organizer. That saves us a lot of digging in our archives.”

3 What do your dealers use Sofon for?

“A number of our dealers use Sofon for generating calculations and quotations for the coolers and freezers. This saves us time because we are actually not needed to take care of this. As soon as a quotation becomes an order, we can enter the order and start production. In the future, we would like to extend the dealer application and possibly make it available via the internet.”

4 What was the situation before Sofon?

“Before Sofon was in the picture, we used interminable Excel lists in which calculations were made. It was difficult to filter out the unnecessary parts, especially for new staff. In principle, you could offer anything you wanted in this system. But it was hard to tell if a product offered was actually possible to produce. The whole process took a lot longer – up to two or three hours. And if you received a phone call while making a quotation, you tended to lose your place. In that case, you’d have to start over. ‘Where was I?’ You’d think. Things are now quite different. Even if you are interrupted, you can see exactly where you were. It’s impossible to forget anything and a quotation can be completed within half an hour.”

5 What else was achieved with Sofon?

“Thanks to Sofon new staff can go to work quickly, without much explanation. They answer questions about our products to put together a quotation, using defaults and exclusions. Because of this, they don’t need to have extensive knowledge of a product to be able to generate quotations. Previously, it would take at least a year to train a new employee. These days, staff are already productive after two months.”

5 questions for a Sofon User

1 What does Smeva do?

“We manufacture walk-in coolers and freezers, cold storage units and refrigeration systems. Our products are used in supermarkets to chill milk and pre-packed meat. We also produce service counters and client-specific counters for butchers. Our dealers are spread over the world and are



Gert Braakman

Peter Paul Wortman

Stefan de Rijk

Anton Boonstra

An ERP package is just not suitable to configure products

Case

Erbi gets more work done with fewer staff thanks to Sofon

Erbi is an innovative supplier of kitchen counters and worktops. Specifying a kitchen worktop is more complex than it seems. Erbi wanted to deal more effectively with this complexity and found the solution in Sofon. After an implementation of a few months, Erbi and their dealers quickly recognized the results

of this sales support system. Stefan de Rijk (Project manager), Anton Boonstra (Interim Program Manager), Gert Braakman (IT Manager) and Peter Paul Wortman (Product Manager) talk about the implementation and the results.

Complex worktops

Erbi's focus is on the production of kitchen worktops. Apart from that, Erbi also makes all kinds of other applications on a project basis. The products are almost all manufactured at Erbi's facilities. For the manufacturing of their products, Erbi makes use of many varied materials: Ceasarstone, Corian, topcore, glass, solid top grade wood... Boonstra explains: "A lot of work goes into the production of a kitchen worktop. We have to take into account materials, notches and recesses, the positioning of the burners and taps... And every kitchen worktop is custom-made. So this is really precise work and that makes it difficult."

Effectiveness

Erbi wanted to improve the way they cope with the difficulties caused by the complexity of their products and thereby shorten the cycle time of orders. Apart from that, Erbi saw possibilities for savings by making sure products are entered correctly into their system and thereby ensuring error-free production. Boonstra explains: "A good product configurator could help us map-out customer needs more quickly and in a qualitatively better way. The product configurator in our ERP system did not meet our requirements. Maintenance was too time-consuming." De Rijk adds: "Because of the complexity of the kitchen worktops, only about 60 to 70 percent of the orders could be entered directly into the old product configurator. The rest had to be adjusted manually." Boonstra continues: "We looked at whether other ERP packages offered a solution, but ERP systems are just not suitable to configure products. Finally, we talked to 5 or 6 suppliers of product configurators. We 'clicked' with Sofon immediately: they understood what we were looking for." Sofon was asked to offer a solution for both the Sales Office and Erbi's dealers: kitchen stores.

Dealers

Erbi's dealers work with their own drawing packages. Using these, they put together a kitchen for a customer during a sales talk. Boonstra explains: "Ideally, we would have liked to integrate Sofon with their drawing packages; all the information processed in the drawing package is routed to Sofon after which we could start production. This is possible, but the drawing packages have to make more specifications available to do this. For the time being, we have decided to work with the web version of the Sofon software. The dealers can input all specifications for worktops via a website – *Digital Ordering* – and this information is directly shot through to our production department."

Quick implementation

Erbi went live after an implementation of 3,5 months with the application for the Sales Office and the dealers. De Rijk explains: "We went through the implementation process quickly, because we decided to put two people onto Sofon full-time. In this way, they could quickly develop and contribute during the process. We can now enter some 85% of all orders directly into Sofon and 15% need a few small adjustments. This is already a great improvement compared to 60 to 70 percent previously. Our goal is to ultimately make manual changes to only 10% of orders, for example in a CAD drawing. It is pointless to input the remaining 10% into Sofon. If this kind of adjusted order only comes along a few times a year, there will be no profit in modelling it."



Organization and maintenance

At Erbi, Gert Braakman and Peter Paul Wortman are responsible for the organization and maintenance of Sofon. Braakman explains: "Sofon has many possibilities and can be completely organized according to your own wishes. I can't say anything other than that I think it's a great package." Wortman continues: "Changes and extensions are easy to put in place. Whether it's about changing a product or the design of the configurator."

Halving staff

By using Sofon, staff at Erbi can do quicker and better quality work. Because of this, Erbi has almost been able to halve the number of staff involved in handling quotations and orders. De Rijk explains: "We used to have a separate order processing department and anyone working there would have to be well-trained to be able to enter orders. Now almost anyone can enter orders. In this way, the division of work has improved which has made us a lot more flexible within the company. We can now process the pile of orders quickly." Boonstra adds: "This is also good for customer satisfaction. Customers now receive a correct order confirmation within 24 hours. Previously, they would have to wait up to five days. And now it has also become unnecessary to make a call checking the order, as we no longer forget questions thanks to the question & answer structure in Sofon. We are more than satisfied with the results achieved."

What has Erbi achieved with Sofon?

- Ability to cope with product complexity
- 85% of orders can already be entered directly in Sofon. Previously this was 60 to 70%
- Solutions for Sales Office and dealers
- Information from website *Digital Ordering* can be put through to production unchanged
- System can be organized according to own wishes and is simple to maintain
- Savings: personnel Customer Services halved
- Training time dramatically shortened
- Better division of work, resulting in fast order processing
- Order confirmation is sent out within 24 hours. Previously this was 5 days
- Specifications are no longer forgotten due to the question & answer structure in Sofon



Sjak Ponjée

Robbert de Ligt

Peter Kuipers

AX and Sofon offer us more insight, thus enabling better steering

Kinkelder enjoys the advantages of integration between MS Dynamics AX and Sofon

Kinkelder develops, manufactures and sells metal circular saws. The manufacturing of these saws takes place in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. The other companies within the Kinkelder Group – located in the US, France, Belgium, England and Germany – take care of purchasing, sales and service. When Kinkelder needed a new ERP package, a good product configurator was absolutely

necessary. Kinkelder saw the solution in the combination of Microsoft Dynamics AX and Sofon. Sjak Ponjée (Financial Director), Peter Kuipers (Application/Systems Management) and Robbert de Ligt (Application Management) explain why they chose this combination, how the integration is organized and what the results are.

ICT company-wide

The Kinkelder Group has grown considerably in the past years. Within Kinkelder there was a desire to manage ICT for the whole company, uniformly and in a structured manner. This came at a good time for the branch in the Netherlands because they were running into the limits of the ERP system then in use. Ponjée: “We needed more specific management information and a better steering of operating processes. That was enough reason to start a search for a suitable successor.”

Combination ERP and product configurator

Kinkelder was not only looking for a new ERP package, but also for a product configurator. Ponjée explains: “It quickly became clear to us that product configurators within ERP systems have their limitations. This was confirmed by the Microsoft Dynamics AX implementation partner Pulse. Pulse advised us to use AX only for the ERP functionalities and not for product configuration. They advised us to use Sofon for product configuration. In practice we also found that Sofon has far more possibilities than the AX product configurator.”

Implementation

During implementation, Sjak Ponjée himself started with Sofon model building: “As Financial Director I am responsible for Finance, Purchase and ICT, and I added model building to that. Now Peter Kuipers does model building and Robbert de Ligt keeps the information up-to-date which is used by the models .” De Ligt adds: “We have modelled all our main products in Sofon Studio. This means that we have put all our knowledge of these products into a model. Sales people use these models to answer questions about the products and to configure them flawlessly.”

Features administration

When a request for a product comes in, we first check whether the article has been configured before. Ponjée explains: “We do this in AX with the features administration. Here we enter a number of characteristics of the article in question. If a positive result emerges, the configuration has been produced before. In this way, we can easily re-use information from articles delivered previously.” If the search in the features administration does not yield any results, then Kinkelder uses Sofon Proposal Organizer to configure the new product. Ponjée continues: “We add an order line to ERP, after which Sofon is automatically started to configure, for example, a saw blade.”

Machine operation

As soon as the configuration is completed, bills of materials and routings are handed over by Sofon to AX. Then the order can be delivered from stock or planned for production. Ponjée



What did Kinkelder achieve with AX and Sofon?

- All product knowledge saved in models
- Re-use of existing configurations
- Generation of flawless bills of materials and routings
- Data integration with laser marking machine
- Collective reconfiguration
- Configuration of service processes, such as sharpening and soldering
- More insight into stocks, margins, liquidities and order portfolio

goes on: “Sofon also plays a role in the operation of the laser marking machine that is used to provide the saw blades with client-specific information. This process works in the following way: different variables are defined in Sofon and sent on to AX. Based on these variables, AX supplies a combined order list. This combined order list contains a barcode. As soon as the barcode is scanned by the operator of the laser marking machine on the production floor, the sales order is picked up – containing the variables to direct the machine. After that, the laser marking machine adds a logo to the circular metal saw and the right diameter and thickness. This process now takes place automatically and flawlessly. Previously, the operator had to retype numbers from paper to activate the laser marking machine. A lot of mistakes used to be made with this. Incorrect retyping of the codes caused incorrect processing, for example, adding the wrong logos.”

Reconfiguration

Kinkelder has realized more special applications in Sofon and AX. Kinkelder can also reconfigure products collectively. Kuipers explains: “If there is a change in a treatment or treatment time, we can put through this change for all articles in question. We call this reconfiguring. We don’t need to do this manually. Using the ‘reconfigure’ button we can go through all the articles in a certain series from AX, so that routings or processing times are automatically adjusted, while the article number remains the same. We do this with a batch in AX that calls up Sofon.”

Service

At Kinkelder, Sofon is also used for service. Ponjée elucidates: “We made a service model in Sofon to configure the maintenance treatments that saw blades need. This can be, for example, sharpening or soldering. In our production space, we have an employee who works with Sofon and AX. This employee inputs sales orders and uses the service model to enter the characteristics of the saw blade. Then a production order is added to the sales order. In this way, the saws go into production and the necessary maintenance treatments are taken care of.”

Results

The combination of AX and Sofon has brought Kinkelder tangible results. Ponjée: “We now have more insight into stocks, margins, liquidities and our order portfolio. Because of this insight we can steer our business and make progress. We want to make further progress by rolling AX and Sofon out for our subsidiary companies. We also see possibilities for Sofon’s Web Sales Configurator. Using that, our customers could put together products online.”

New clients

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

A short introduction to a few new clients:



Compass Group Nederland is part of the British Compass Group PLC and is quoted at the stock exchange in London. With more than 380,000 employees in more than 50 countries, the organization develops and supplies original and innovative concepts in the field of food and support services. In the Netherlands more than 4000 Compass Group staff supply food and support services to almost 1,000 companies, hospitals, restaurants, schools and (government) organizations. The activities are undertaken under the names of Eurest, Eurest Services and Medirest.



Compass Group Nederland recently purchased Sofon Proposal Organizer to make it possible to quickly and flawlessly produce quotations and tenders. Compass Group has also decided on Sofon's Approval Portal. This functionality facilitates authorization in the quotation and tender process: adjustments in quotation and tender texts are reported to an approver. The approver can approve the adjustment or not. At the moment, Sofon is working with Compass Group on implementation.

TEXTILMASCHINEN



This is one of the world market leaders in the area of wool and textile dyeing machines. Today, the company has grown to become a medium-sized company operating on the global stage and currently employing 350 members of staff at its headquarters in Coesfeld (DE). Thies is introducing the Sofon Sales Organizer and the Sofon Proposal Organizer in order to optimize the quotation and sales process and to enable the complex machines to be configured and calculated perfectly.



SAPHIRE NOW 2010 is the leading SAP conference bringing senior executives and managers together to discover new and innovative solutions within the SAP landscape.

This year SAPHIRE NOW will be held both in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and Orlando (Florida, US). Sofon will be present at the conference in Frankfurt am Main. SAPHIRE NOW will be held from May 17 to 19. Sofon can be found at booth number 813 where SAP users can see how Sofon enlightens quotation and order processes.



Sofon is the supplier of sales support software under the name Sofon Guided Selling. With Sofon, quotes, contracts, orders and other sales documents are put together simply, quickly and without error. 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 the chances of winning business and improves cooperation between clients, dealers, sales, engineering and production. Sofon integrates with standard CRM and ERP systems and is suitable for all companies who have a client-specific way of operating – in every sector – anywhere in the world. 100% Customer Driven.

calendar

May

to

June

Sofon regularly takes part in fairs and events in the area of CRM and ERP at home and abroad. We also organize seminars, client days and workshops with some frequency. In the period ahead you can expect Sofon at the following events:

17 to 19 May 2010

Sapphire
Frankfurt am Main
(Germany)

17 June 2010

Sofon Seminar
Kasteel Maurick
in Vught
(the Netherlands)

June 2010

Sofon Seminar
Duisburg
(Germany)

2010

Webinars
Sofon regularly organizes 'webinars'. Keep an eye on our website www.sofon.com for future online events.

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