

Sofonnews

Robin Meinders Novoferm

Sofon achieved what
no other configurator
achieved at Novoferm

Business Case: Novoferm has used many configurators in the past. But none of them could ever achieve what Sofon has achieved: the configuring of complex sectional doors.

Sofon Connected: Integrations with ERP, CRM, CAD and PDM systems are a daily business for Sofon. Sofon's methods guarantee that integrations are quickly and successful.

Experts speak out: Smit Draad has been able to drastically reduce mistakes in quotations and production thanks to Sofon. Smit Draad has also gained more insight into cost prices and margins.



We can count on Sofon

3 Experts speak out

An interview with Astrid Prudon and Bianca Franken of Smit Draad. Smit Draad manufactures and sells insulated sectional copper wire and continuously transposed cables. These high quality products are used in very large transformers, engines and generators. Each wire produced for every customer is different. Sofon was able to speed up and improve the quotation and order processes, which were particularly sensitive to errors.

4 Business Case

Novoferm manufactures and supplies quality doors, for the private and industrial markets. A product configurator is a real must in this market, but was not enough for Novoferm. The sectional doors produced by this company are so complex that all previously used configurators came up short. But with the adoption of Sofon, Novoferm found it was functionally strong enough to take on the challenge.

6 Sofon Connected

In the *Sofon Connected* section Sofon customers usually talk about the integration of Sofon software with other systems, such as CRM, ERP, CAD and PDM. In this edition, Piet Brand – Senior Consultant Sofon – will explain in further detail how such integrations with Sofon are realized.

8 New customers – Activities

Sales: an integral part of your business

A common perception about sales reps is that they sometimes can over promise to prospective clients. Sales reps can be so hungry to sell that they would rather craft their own deal. For example, they might not want to be constrained by colleagues who remind them of the limits of selling products. Instead, some would rather set their own prices and discounts without involving Sales Management. As long as the deal is closed! The rest is only minor detail.

These perceptions are hardly accurate – nor thankfully, wide spread – but it is a fact that it is sometimes difficult for sales reps to actually operate as an integral part of a company. For many sales reps who deal with complex, client-specific products, it is often impossible to keep up with which configurations can be produced and which cannot. Continually checking with colleagues in the office and in engineering often takes up too much time and gets in the way of closing deals.

It is therefore a real necessity to offer sales reps better support, guiding them in setting the right discounts and the correct prices. Sales reps can only function as an integral part of a business if they are given the right tools.

In this issue of Sofon News, you will read about how Guided Selling can ensure that sales staff no longer operate alone as 'lone wolves'. With Sofon, not only can they react more quickly to clients' queries but can also take into account commercial and technological imperatives. When you make the right tools available to your sales team, the entire business becomes synchronized.

Otto van der Tang
Managing Director



Editors:

Marijn Schouten - Sofon
Judith Steinmeier - Sofon

Lay-out:

Grefo Prepress - Sint Oedenrode

Concept & Design:

credo.creatie - Eindhoven

Photography:

Hans van Asch, a.o.



Bianca Franken
SALES STAFF

Astrid Prudon
SALES STAFF

We can count on Sofon

5 questions for 2 Sofon Users

1 What does Smit Draad do?

Astrid Prudon explains: “Smit Draad manufactures and sells insulated copper sectional wire (enameled, glass fiber-wound, paper-covered) and continuously transposed cables. These high quality products are supplied to manufacturers around the globe, which make extremely large transformers, engines and generators. Our copper wire therefore represents an important and critical step in the production of capital goods. Every wire is different and is configured separately for each order. Keeping wire in stock is therefore not possible.”

2 What does Smit Draad use Sofon for?

Bianca Franken explains: “We have used Sofon since 2003 for order-entry and to produce quotations and calculations. These calculations take place automatically when we configure a product in Sofon. In this way, we quickly and simply gain insight into cost prices and whether a request is profitable or not. When a quotation becomes an order, generating an order is only a question of hitting a key. Sofon puts together the data to create bills of materials and routings and passes this information on to our ERP system.”

3 What was the situation before Sofon?

Bianca Franken continues: “Before Sofon was in use, we used our ERP system to take care of quotations. There was no check in our production system on whether a product was feasible, which made it possible for us to offer customers whatever we wanted. You could for example just put 1000 kg on a reel,

Experts speak out

Names: Bianca Franken and Astrid Prudon

Jobs: both Sales staff

Company: Smit Draad

Product: manufacturer and supplier of insulated copper sectional wire (enameled, glass fiber-wound, paper-covered) and continuously transposed cables

Locations: the Netherlands, Italy (parent company) with expansion in Brazil planned soon

even though this kind of reel can't take that kind of weight. In Sofon, limits are clearly indicated and controlled. So now we can never promise something we can't actually make. Previously, we would sometimes discover during production that an order was not feasible. Adjusting an order at this stage often costs extra time and money.”

4 What is the current situation like, with Sofon?

Astrid Prudon goes on: “Sofon does not only show us what limits we need to work within, Sofon also warns us when we go beyond them. For example, when we go through the product questionnaire, we receive a warning if we exceed available machine capacity or if product engineering needs to consult the quotation. With other configurators this was not previously possible. Also, we now save a lot of time because we prevent repeating work. We can now easily turn a quotation into an order and copy repeat orders.”

5 What has changed?

Astrid Prudon concludes: “A lot more supervision used to be necessary, as manual work had to take place. If a cable order came in, we would calculate how many spools and reels were necessary and how these should be divided. A small typing error on a calculator can have large consequences, causing mistakes in production. These days we can always count on a quotation or calculation being correct. We can count on Sofon.”

*Sofon is the
strategic choice
for us*

Robin Meinders

Case

What other configurators never achieved, Sofon did

Novoform Nederland BV (part of Sanwa Shutter Corporation since 2003) is a manufacturer and supplier of quality doors for the industrial and private markets. Novoform develops, produces and sells these doors from different branches in the Netherlands. Through a dealer organization and sister companies in just about every European

country, their products find their way to an international marketplace. The Dutch branches have started using Sofon as their Guided Selling solution. Robin Meinders (ICT Manager) explains why his company chose Sofon and what results have been achieved.

Wide range of products

Novoform manufactures a large variety of doors. “These are mainly sectional overhead doors, folding doors, swing doors, dock shelters, dock units... The sectional door is our most important product and represents a large part of our turnover”, says Meinders. “Every door we produce is client-specific: there is always a hole that needs filling, so to speak, and it always has different sizes. And every client has different preferences in color, operation, vision sections...

Apart from that, we need to take into account insulation values and where a door is situated when it is open: upwards or parallel to the roof. There are many calculations behind this that make things complex. For example, a spring calculation (springs in a certain thickness combined with a cable drum) is done to keep the door panel balanced. Not only weight and height are relevant for this, but also the available spring thicknesses, the roof’s incline angle, the room available to install a door...”

Past

At Novoferm Nederland BV, quite a few configurators have been used – both inside and outside ERP. “The configurators we used all soon showed their technical limitations. The sectional doors were too complex for these packages to configure. A customized package for sectional doors was then constructed externally. This functionally high-grade product could even support our dealers. However, there was hardly any knowledge internally to help maintain this package.”

Conscious

After a while, Novoferm no longer wanted to work with a customized configurator for the sectional doors and with yet another configurator for the other products. “We found there was a real need for uniformity: we wanted to use the same methods and the same applications for all products and all departments. So we wanted one configurator that could configure products and produce quotations. Until that time, we were not capable of making proper quotations with any of the configurators used previously.”

Challenge

Novoferm felt able to face the challenge with Sofon. “We decided to start with a pilot, because of the bad experiences we had had with other suppliers in the past. We started by modeling our most complex products: the sectional doors. We knew of no configurator that could handle this complexity. We really wondered whether it would be possible this time around. And yes, the pilot was successfully completed with Sofon in just a few months! After that, we started the actual implementation. We had had plenty of experience with configurators. That gave us a good insight into organizing the models, but we also found we had a great fit with the way Sofon worked.”

Method

Novoferm currently works with the Sofon Sales Organizer (CRM module), the Sofon Proposal Organizer and a far-reaching integration with SAP, created by Sofon and Uphantis (“SAP Integration Partner”). “We set-up an opportunity or a project in the Sales Organizer. The product is then configured in the Sofon Proposal Organizer and automatically visualized. Bills of materials, routings and data for machine operation are then created. After that, the interface with SAP is started with just one key-stroke and a new SAP order comes into being. When the order goes into production, a set of data is sent on to the PCs on the shop floor. Finally the operator simply types in the order number and the machine automatically starts sawing, milling and drilling.”

Results

A uniform work situation has now been created at Novoferm. “Quotations no longer have to be produced in Word or Excel. We now take care of this in Sofon. Another advantage is that we only have to save all our data once and that this data can be used throughout the whole process. So we no longer have to retype data in SAP when a request becomes an order.” Also, a few advantages have been achieved in the areas of logistics and production. “Machine parameters are no longer passed on at the time of configuration, but only when SAP shows that an order will be produced. Now no old, erroneous machine parameters can slip through. The procedure for changes is also more flexible. If customers change their mind, bills of materials and routings are easily changed. That used to be a different story.”

What has Novoferm achieved with Sofon?

- One solution (CRM, product configuration, visualization and quotation generation) for all products: uniform working methods and use of applications
- Less manual work
- Configuration of sectional doors: no other configurator achieved what Sofon achieved
- Maintenance of product lines under own management (without external programmers)
- Integration with SAP (SAP certified)
- Machine operation: parameters are determined at time of production not at time of configuration. In this way, any changes made between these times do not cause mistakes
- Data entered only once
- Flexible and faster change procedures
- Possible use of Sofon for dealers
- Good fit between product and company Sofon

Future

Novoferm wants to put their whole range of products into Sofon in the time ahead. Another important step for Novoferm is to have dealers use Sofon. “We want our dealers to be able to configure doors via the internet. They can use the quotations and prices that Sofon generates for their customers. When it becomes an order, a configuration comes to us via email. After a small-scale check, the order is put through to SAP. Then an order confirmation is produced in SAP. There are actually no changes made between configuration and production. For us, Sofon is clearly an excellent strategic choice.”





Piet Brand

*Integrations
are a daily business
for Sofon*

Integration framework *Sofon Connect* explained

In the *Sofon Connected* section Sofon customers usually talk about the integration of Sofon software with other systems, such as CRM, ERP, CAD and PDM. These connections make use of

the *Sofon Connect* integration framework. In this edition, Piet Brand – Senior Consultant at Sofon – explains how integrations are achieved with Sofon.

What is Sofon Connect exactly?

“Sofon Connect makes integration with other systems easy. This possibility is based on various technological standards, such as XML¹, API’s² and web services³. Integrations are realized with ERP, CRM, CAD and PDM systems. Based on Sofon Connect, we build so-called Connectors to other packages.”

Can you give some examples?

“ERP connectors are available for, among other systems, Infor ERP LN/Baan, Microsoft Dynamics NAV and AX, QAD MFG/Pro and SAP. CRM connectors are realized for Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Siebel, Salesforce.com and Update.Seven. Client specific integrations have been developed for various PDM systems (such as Teamcenter and SmarTeam). Integrations are also built regularly for custom-made systems.”

Technology explained:

- ¹ XML stands for eXtensible Markup Language and is a standard for showing structured data in the form of ordinary text. This representation is both readable for search engines and people.
- ² API stands for Application Programming Interface. Interface with which software can communicate with other (standard) software packages.
- ³ In a web service, an API of an application is made available for another application.

Customers organize their processes differently. How do you handle this?

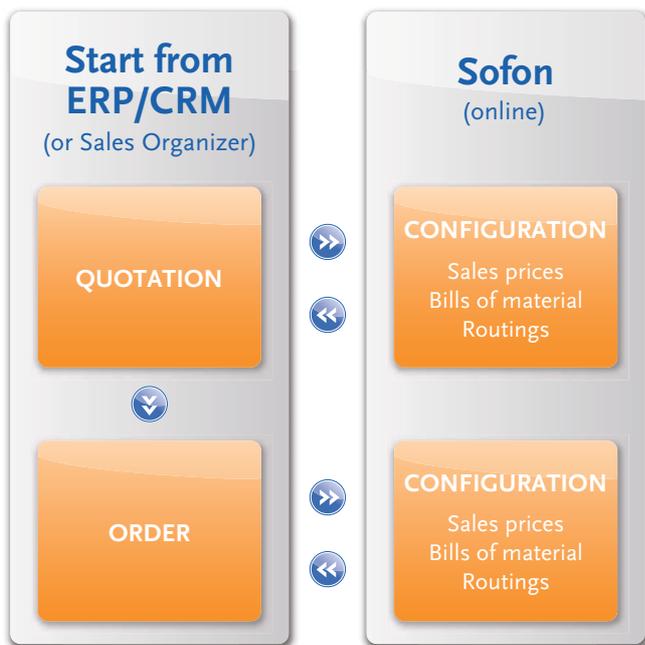
“The process the user goes through can almost always be split into two categories: starting from ERP/CRM/CAD or starting from Sofon. We offer solutions for both methods.”

Which method is used when starting from CRM?

“If you start from CRM, the opportunity is the starting point. Within the opportunity, an initial or a follow-up quotation is produced. Information from the opportunity (such as customer data) is used in the quotation. Information originating from the quotation is saved in the opportunity and a PDF document of the quotation is attached to the opportunity.”

What is the process like when it originates in ERP?

“If we start from ERP this usually originates from a quotation or an order. This can be at the level of an order line or a complete order. In the first case, only one article is configured. In the last case a complete quotation or order is put together in Sofon. The result is then saved to the ERP quotation or ERP order.”

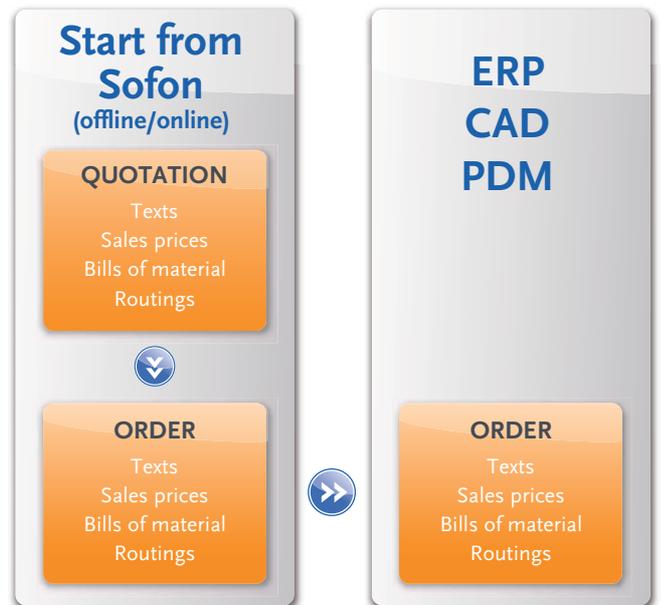


What is the process like when it originates in CAD?

“In a CAD scenario, it can be desirable to start with a lay-out drawing in CAD, after which the various parts of the lay-out are configured in Sofon. Data from the lay-out components in question can be entered into Sofon, so that only the detailed questions need to be further answered in Sofon.”

What is the process like when it starts in Sofon?

“In these situations, Sofon leads the quotation process. The quotation or order is generated in Sofon. The acceptance of a complete order usually occurs when the order specifications are passed on to ERP/PDM/CAD. This variant offers the possibility of using Sofon offline and passing on order data when the user is online. Another advantage is that sales reps do not need to work with an ERP system.”



Does information need to be saved more than once, e.g. in Sofon and in ERP?

“No, information is entered only once. Shared information usually concerns article and client data, but can also include prices or other information. One of the systems is the source. The other systems are periodically (immediately, every hour, day, week or month) brought up to date. Sofon usually adjusts to data delivered from the other system. By saving information in Sofon, it is possible to work offline.”

How much experience does Sofon have in implementing Connectors?

“Almost every Sofon implementation includes one or more Connectors. Implementation time depends on complexity and customer-specific requirements. Organizations are naturally hesitant and nervous about interfaces and integrations because of less than pleasant experiences with other suppliers in the past. However with Sofon interfaces are well organized and much easier because Sofon strives only to support – or only exchange data – pertaining to the processes that are strictly necessary to achieve goals set. The current technical possibilities have made interfacing much easier. Realization takes place as much as possible parallel to model-building, so that implementation cycle time is not unnecessarily prolonged.”

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:



CentroSolar Group delivers high-quality solar modules produced in-house at their production sites in Germany. Customers in the private building sector, industry and agriculture all trust in Centrosolar solar modules and value their quality.

Sofon has been selected as Guided Selling solution for CentroSolar Benelux; the sales office for the Netherlands and Belgium. Sofon will be implemented for both their internal sales processes and as external web sales configurator for their distributors. Sofon will be connected with SAP to support their order-entry processes.



Simed International designs, builds and equips hospitals and other medical facilities worldwide. Simed International is specialized in the turn-key realization of health care projects, from upgrading an existing facility to realizing a completely new hospital. Simed International is located in the Netherlands, Belgium, China, Germany, Russia and the USA.

Sofon has been selected to support their sales, calculation and tender processes worldwide. Sofon will be connected with their existing Microsoft SharePoint environment.



Agis is one of the larger health insurers in the Netherlands, with 1.23 million customers and more than 1400 staff. Agis fills an important position in Dutch healthcare. In January 2008, Agis merged with Achmea. As an insurer, Agis makes contact with prospects and customers for their communication, mainly using the internet.

Agis chose Sofon for the speedy and flexible realization of a commercial self-assessment and quotation tool.



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 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.

activities

Events

Dreamforce 2010
December 6-9, 2010
Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco, CA, USA
Sofon is present as Industry Solution Sponsor at this annual global **Salesforce.com** event.



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.

Twitter

Would you like to be kept up-to-date on Sofon's activities? Follow us on Twitter! You will be the first to know about a new blog post or our participation in a seminar or fair. You can find us at www.twitter.com/sofonsoftware.

Sofon B.V.

Sofon UK Ltd.
Sofon (U.S.), Inc.
Sofon Deutschland GmbH
Sofon Belgium bvba

I www.sofon.com
E info@sofon.com