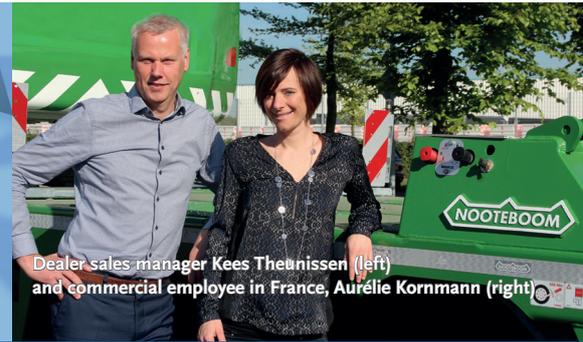




“The major advantage of configuring via Sofon is that we no longer receive orders containing errors”



Dealer sales manager Kees Theunissen (left) and commercial employee in France, Aurélie Kornmann (right)

Nootboom Trailers gets you there. And Sofon does too...

Nootboom Trailers B.V. offers clients integral solutions for exceptional transport. The company operates primarily in Europe and designs and builds trailers with a payload of 20 to 200 tons. For Nootboom Trailers, client, quality and innovation are the key concepts, which can rightly be considered trendsetting. With its continual investments in the best solutions for clients, Nootboom Trailers is characterized by ground-breaking innovations. The MANOOVR semi low-loader is one such example. The company's innovations are made particularly in the areas of lighter and extremely low vehicles and in user-friendly handling.

Nootboom Trailers employs an international service concept for reliable maintenance, service and overhaul and spare parts delivery. Nootboom Trailers also buys and sells used trailers. The company, with head office in Wijchen, the Netherlands, has a staff of 400 employees and annual turnover of approximately 100 million euros.

As its motto says, Nootboom Trailers BV gets you there. The family company, based in Wijchen, the Netherlands, ensures that its clients get where they need to be. Founded in 1881, this internationally operating company has the right solution for every form of exceptional road transport. Over the next two years, Nootboom Trailers wants to expand its dealer network for its SMART program throughout Europe, and in doing so, to boost sales by means of reselling. This, however, requires a streamlined tendering and ordering process between dealers and the homebase in Wijchen; an area of communication that, until now, has not been optimal. The company needed to find a solution to the situation. Which is why the trailer designer and builder turned to Sofon. The question now is: will the Sofon solution also ensure that Nootboom Trailers gets where it needs to be with its resellers?

We put the question to Kees Theunissen and Aurélie Kornmann, reseller sales managers at Nootboom – Aurélie as a business associate in France, and Kees as the dealer sales manager for all other European countries in which Nootboom Trailers operates. But first, we need to know the answer to the most obvious opening question: Why Sofon?

“We got a good impression of the specific solution that Sofon had developed at an Open House,” Kees explains. “But it wasn't just by chance. Our own sellers have been using Sofon since mid-2014 to configure most of our vehicles. And that's gone very well. The major advantage of configuring using Sofon is that we no longer receive orders containing errors. The system is logically structured and contains integrated exclusions, which prevents users from selecting options that could not be combined in actual practice. This also saves a great deal of verification work in Engineering. It also helps make difficult discussions with clients about missed options that would affect the agreed price a thing of the past.”

PREVIOUSLY, TENDERS WERE TIME-CONSUMING AND ERROR-PRONE

How did your resellers prepare tenders? “In France, we used our own Excel sheets, which dealers would then integrate into their own Word documents,” Aurelia explains. “That was far from optimal. It was time-consuming for the dealers and error-prone because of having to retype information. Often, there were also lots of questions, which took up a great deal of my time as a contact person.



“Resellers can draw up tenders and complete orders fast, independently and free of errors”

What was also quite difficult, for example, was passing on all the information to the sellers before I went on vacation. They would then have to negotiate a path between the dealer's price and the client's price, which wasn't always easy.”

NOW, TENDERS ARE PROFESSIONAL, ERROR-FREE AND PREPARED QUICKLY

According to Kees and Aurélie, it was actually the resellers themselves who ultimately asked to use Sofon. “Our new configuration method meant that we no longer used standard price lists. This left the dealers feeling unsure about what method to adhere to. They wanted more guidance and clarity,” says Kees.

The layout of Sofon documents also played a role. “When the dealers saw the new Sofon layout for tenders, they no longer wanted to use the old Excel and Word templates. Great! That meant I had to help convert their tenders to the new system, which in turn meant more work for me during the implementation of Sofon. That wasn't the deal, of course,” Aurélie laughs, “but now that the Sofon solution is available to the dealers, they can create their tenders all by themselves.”

Kees nods his agreement: ‘It was important to us for tenders, order confirmations and contracts to look more professional. But it was also essential to introduce a process in which resellers could prepare tenders and complete orders fast – independently and error-free. At the same time, we wanted the communication with dealers to generate more market information for us.’

MAKING IT EASY FOR RESELLERS

So, how has Nootboom's experience been with the Sofon solution? “In France, we started working with Sofon in early 2017,” Aurélie says. “Our first impressions have been positive and the dealers are enthusiastic. The software is user-friendly and the tenders look professional, featuring both the Nootboom Trailers logo and the dealer's logo. And I've received very few requests for help with tenders and orders. They can do it all independently, which is also important for when I'm not here. Everything is located in one system. We don't have many reseller orders in France, or at least not yet. But even though a reseller might only use a system occasionally, it's important for the system to be very intuitive. Otherwise, dealers might not use it at all

and just pick up the phone instead. Then you've got yourself a system that you can't benefit from.”

“If dealers don't feel a system is providing support,” Kees points out, “they'll steer clear of it and might tend to quote prices off the cuff. That can have a negative effect on you as a company. It's also important for dealers to have the feeling that we are investing in them by providing proper support. By making it easier for them to carry out their day-to-day work, they will be more likely to recommend Nootboom Trailers over a competitor. In that sense, you have to wonder: why make it more difficult? And, to take this further, when the reseller's clients see how reliable, fast and professional our tenders are, that might just be the deciding factor in the choice they make; whether now or in the future. At the end of the day, that's what it's all about.”

IT'S ALL ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

Is the special road transport sector knowledge-intensive? In the opinion of Kees, it is. “In the special road transport sector, it's all about knowledge. We always say: Nootboom Trailers doesn't sell trailers. It sells solutions to transport problems. That's





“If you have a disciplined implementation, you’ll benefit enormously from Sofon”

also the nature of the requests we receive. For example, clients often send a picture with the question: ‘I have to transport this machine from this country to that country. What do I need?’ Tailoring your response requires technical knowledge, knowledge of transport conditions, knowledge of legal provisions and regulations, and so on. It’s not for nothing that we have many experienced employees who have been working here in Wijchen for decades.”

UNIFORM KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE FOR RESELLERS

When choosing a suitable solution, your question was in fact: ‘How can we get that knowledge smoothly to the resellers?’ “Yes,” Aurélie and Kees both acknowledge. “That knowledge must be available at times when the dealers need it for tenders and orders. With Sofon, everything is in one system. Everyone uses the same data and works with the correct prices relevant to their market and country. Everything is clear. Another advantage is that the dealers are able to draw up error-free tenders after a one or two-day training course. That’s the difference with other systems. When you have hundreds of options on a trailer, you need at least

eighteen months’ experience to be able to prepare a tender correctly. Once it’s been properly implemented, however, Sofon does the work for you. Dealers no longer need to puzzle over all those options.”

ONE MISTAKE IN A TENDER CAN BE EXTREMELY COSTLY

So, here as well, there are no more errors to be corrected by an observant engineer? “That’s right. But also, no more errors that might even get past Engineering. That’s something that happens occasionally with other systems. And the further an error penetrates your process, the more expensive it becomes. A single error in the tender can easily cost 10,000 euros if you have to cut, weld and spray part of a trailer again.”

DISCIPLINED IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE ENSURE MAXIMUM VALUE OF THE SOLUTION

What was your experience with the implementation process of the Sofon solution for resellers? “It took longer than expected,” Kees says, “just as with the configurator at the time. The most difficult aspect was linking it with our own system. Once those interfaces

are up and running, you’re ready to go. I also noticed that we were one of the first companies to start working with the dealers’ solution. I saw it in the bugs that were still present in the beginning. Speed was initially also an issue, but that was resolved. Support during the implementation by Sofon consultant Klaas Jan was fine. Great guy, very knowledgeable, calm and helpful. Yes, that was perfect.”

So, if a company wants to implement Sofon, they will need to invest time and energy? “Absolutely. It’s not something you just do on the side. You really need to allocate one or two people to implement Sofon. And it also needs to be well maintained. If you do things by half measures, you won’t make the most of it. But if you have a disciplined implementation, you’ll benefit enormously.”

SOFON COMES HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Would you recommend the Sofon solution for resellers to others? “It depends on what their needs are. If they are similar to ours, I’d say: do it! We also looked at other systems and we have no regrets about choosing Sofon.”

