



“It’s wonderful! Now it only takes me two hours to prepare a quotation, instead of the whole day.”



Sebastian Koch, IT-Spezialist für Programmierung und Prozessoptimierung

FROM HARVEST TO PROCESSING

The PETKUS Group is one of the world’s largest suppliers of cereal and seed technologies. For over 160 years, PETKUS has been designing, producing and selling machines for the cleaning, drying, storage, harvesting and dressing of various crops – from grass seeds through wheat and maize to nuts. The product range includes de-awners, rotary-drum cleaners, air-screen cleaners, gravity separators, indented cylinders, optical sorting equipment, treaters, dryers, silos and conveyor technology. PETKUS creates a bridge that extends from harvest and processing to seeds, food and forage.

In contrast to pure machine manufacturers, the PETKUS Group supplies technologies as well as engineering (i.e. technological solutions for seed lines, complete turnkey treatment plants, port and inland silo facilities and mills).

Continue to grow and thrive

IN SOFON, CEREAL AND SEED TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER PETKUS GROUP HAS FOUND A FLEXIBLE, ERROR-FREE AND TIME SAVING QUOTATION PREPARATION TOOL.

PETKUS has been synonymous with seed technology since 1852. Today, the PETKUS Group is the world’s most innovative company in the industry, comprising technology, innovation, engineering and service subsidiaries. PETKUS develops and builds a comprehensive range of seed processing machines, upgrades seed, silo and grain detection systems and constructs turnkey plants.

Sofon software now also provides the company with a quote configurator that is extremely flexible and modular, can recognise incorrect configurations and may be used internationally. This will enable PETKUS to continue to grow and thrive.

„Each plant that is planned and built by the PETKUS Group has its own specifications. These depend on the product to be harvested or processed, the location or country and the customer. „Every machine or plant must therefore be tailored precisely to the

customer, their needs, geographical location, local conditions and legal framework,“ explains Sebastian Koch, IT specialist for programming and process optimisation at PETKUS. This can be a very complicated business.

Despite these challenges, Sebastian Koch looks remarkably stress free. His relaxed demeanour has everything to do with Sofon. In obtaining this software, PETKUS has acquired the appropriate, centralised tool to prepare quotations involving extremely complex products. The application has furthermore helped the company enhance its international corporate identity.

STANDARDISING QUOTATIONS

Before Sofon, employees had to resort to Word and Excel templates. Word was used to write quotations in various languages, while calculations were performed in Excel. Hurdles occurred whenever a foreign language had to be used, for example. In the past, some of the company’s sales staff had to translate technically demanding specialised texts or terminology, a procedure that could be extremely time-consuming.



“Having a centralised solution based on Sofon now enables us to provide technical descriptions and pricing from a central location and, whenever data is updated, automatically make new data available to all other users.”

A click now enables Sofon to retrieve the right language within seconds - a great time saving feature.

Technical terms are sometimes translated differently. “We therefore needed uniform texts, so that components are only ever designated by one name. Thanks to Sofon, we can now configure uniform documents with one click.”

These documents also prevent quotations from containing errors, since the sales employee is led from question to question. With regard to cleaners, the employee is asked: What is being cleaned? How is it being cleaned? Which service is required? Which accessories? Up to 30 questions can be answered for each product. The price is generated at the end of the process, once all the questions have been answered. “A product configured in this way prevents an incomplete sieve set from being offered,” says application programmer Sebastian Koch. In part, prior answers also entail automatic answers to subsequent questions. Previously, when using Word and Excel files, the employee needed to know which

combinations were technically possible. This procedure involved risks, especially for inexperienced employees.

INCREDIBLE VARIETY OF OPTIONS

A multiplicity of variants is offered, despite the data volume involved at PETKUS. There are as many as 40 models of cleaners alone. “An incredible variety of options,” remarks Sebastian Koch. This makes it all the more important to keep on top of it all, which was a challenge for users of the earlier Word and Excel templates. Regular checks had to be run on the international sales team to ensure that they had the latest data, information and product descriptions. “Having a centralised solution based on Sofon now enables us to provide technical descriptions and pricing from a central location and, whenever data is updated, automatically make new data available to all other users.”

KEEPING PACE WITH GROWTH

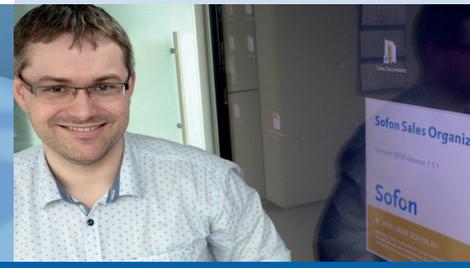
Quote preparation functioned very well in the past, partly due to the size of the company. Quotations were largely generated at company headquarters.

GLOBAL PLAYER RELIES ON REGIONAL TIES WORLDWIDE

PETKUS is a global, medium-sized company with over 350 employees in 20 countries. As a global player, PETKUS attaches particular importance to regional relationships and ties. The aim is to provide a direct and personal contact person for customers in all the world's time zones. PETKUS has therefore connected a total of 23 sales, service and engineering centres to six regional hubs. More than 200,000 cleaning machines and more than 2,000 seed processing lines have been installed over the past 40 years. The company has averaged double-digit growth throughout the past decade.

Its beginnings go back to founder Christian Friedrich Röber, who began to build farm wagons, ploughs and chaffing machines in his blacksmith's workshop in 1852, but also manufactured grain sieves. Following the division of Germany, RÖBER GmbH became increasingly international in the West, while in Eastern Germany PETKUS was integrated into „Kombinat Fortschritt“. In 1994, it was decided to continue the tradition of the internationally successful company and build on the past, and RÖBER and PETKUS were re-united. The company headquarters remained in Wutha-Farnroda, Thuringia.





“Sofon shortens communication channels.”

However, PETKUS has grown as a company and requirements have become significantly more demanding – with consequences for structure, organisation and personnel. The number of international sales employees has soared. New employees are especially appreciative of Sofon. It bundles together everything – including quotations, order documents and pricing.

Sofon not only makes it possible to configure products, complete with cost calculations, it also enables quotation documents and templates to be stored in the program. As a result, specific and internationally standardised text modules exist for each cleaner in eight languages, including Russian and Chinese.

UNDER TIME PRESSURE

As a manufacturer of cereal and seed technologies, saving time is undoubtedly an important concern for PETKUS. Delivery times for machines and plants are becoming increasingly shorter. “We are therefore under time pressure,” says Sebastian Koch. “Sofon shortens communication channels.” Thanks to Sofon’s real-time storage, all project-relevant employees have immediate access to data and information and are specifically involved in all important updates virtually

as they occur - without touching a scrap of paper. Orders no longer have to be printed out, copied and distributed or sent by e-mail with many „CCs“.

Using SPO (Sofon Proposal Organizer) in combination with CRM enables PETKUS to map the order release process in a workflow diagram. “This has the advantage of eliminating the need to first email orders to various departments and submit them for checking. Instead, the order is checked directly in SPO and all relevant data is stored in CRM,” notes Sebastian Koch. “Sofon really accelerates price adjustment. Any new price list is available within a day.”

WITH A CENTRAL USER

What did PETKUS need to consider during implementation? “It is necessary to define a central user who maintains the system and programs other models.”

Initially, PETKUS received a number of factory-programmed models from Sofon, „but the company’s own users are more familiar with the products and can therefore respond faster to customer requirements,” Sebastian Koch knows from experience. However, the models they received from Sofon offered one major advantage. “They made it much easier to understand the

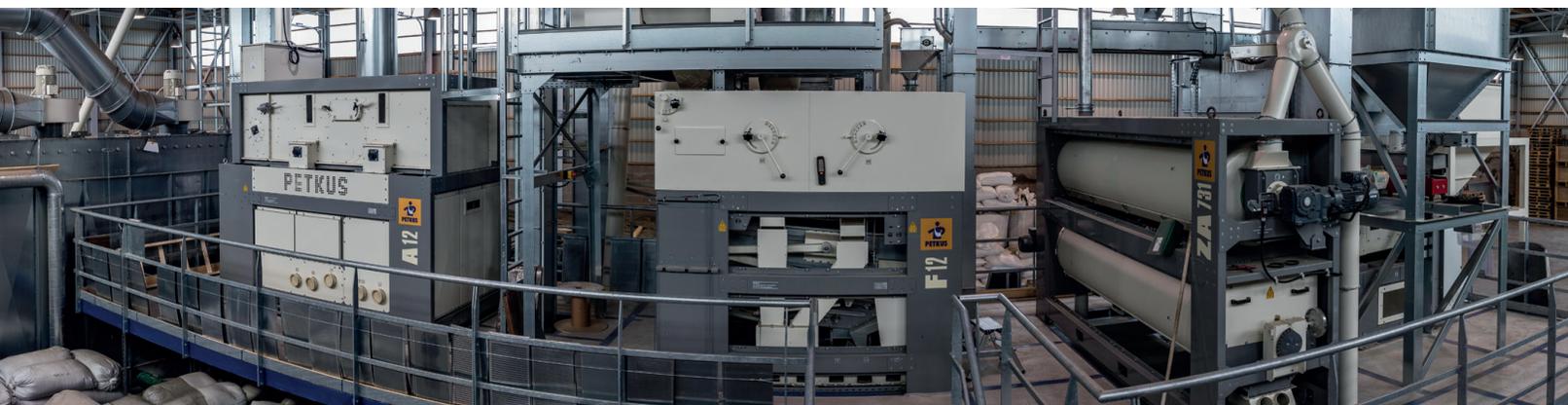
program and independently develop new models.”

Of course, it was first important to learn about the Sofon software. Sebastian Koch needed three days to train a group of three to four employees – including time for practice. The basic understanding of the program is not difficult and can be acquired in half a day. However, detailed questions arise during practical application regarding calculations, for example. That is why training took a bit longer.

Of course, Sebastian Koch is the person most involved with the software. One third of his working hours are spent on Sofon programming, support and training. “That makes sense.” The support increases employee acceptance.

EXCITED

Not all employees were immediately impressed by the change to Sofon. That makes it even more important to motivate them to use the program. “Various suggestions for improvement were only received after we made it compulsory to use the program.” This will improve the program’s capacity to grow and thrive - just like a seed!





“We want to do a lot more with Sofon“

In the end, employees who had been with the company for 20 or 30 years began to overcome their initial scepticism and discover some of the benefits. One new employee was very excited: “It’s wonderful! Now it only takes me two hours to prepare a quotation, instead of the whole day.“

Today, numerous PETKUS employees use Sofon software components like SPO (Sofon Proposal Organizer) for data generation, and SSO (Sofon Sales Organizer) as a kind of database, where customer data, contact details and quotations are managed and emails are stored, while remaining accessible to every relevant employee.

“DO MORE WITH SOFON“

PETKUS wants to go still further with Sofon and implement other sales modules and features in order to serve the market and its customers even faster and better. There are additional hopes for the software. “We want to do a lot more with Sofon,“ says Sebastian Koch. The future looks bright.

