DG press

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"At Sofon a lot of 'bright sparks' are gathered together."

Directors of DG press,
Peter Kloppers (right) and Remko Koolbergen (middle)
with engineer Jan Brouwer (left)

Growth achieved, complexity simplified

For this user story we spoke with Peter Kloppers and Remko Koolbergen, directors of DG press, and with engineer Jan Brouwer. They talked about their company and about Sofon's involvement in the growth of DG press and, more specifically, about the importance of Sofon's solutions in the composition of complex quotes.

INTRODUCING DG PRESS

DG press started as a service provider in 2009 and is now a global player in high quality printing machines for the printing of, among other things, flexible packaging. At that time, DG press provided servicing and maintenance for about 1200 machines from the former Drent Goebel. The company started with 12 employees from Drent Goebel. In this way the specific expertise remained available for the owners of the printing machines. DG press was soon doing revisions and reconfigurations of existing machines, but the revisions and maintenance business is finite. In 2012, the decision was made to develop a new machine: the Thallo, in order to ensure the continuity and growth of DG press. The company quickly grew to 60 employees. At present, they build new printing machines with a value of 3 to 5 million Euro.

To see what we are talking about, we took a peek at the place where the machines are built. Jan Brouwer explains that they

do the development and assembly of the machines. That is an aspect of production that distinguishes them as a supplier, and it is the aspect that is too tricky to leave to others. „How do you specify for example, that something has to run smoothly? That is very difficult, something for which you must have product knowledge. Assembling is something you do with heart and soul," Jan explains.

MARKET POSITIONING OF DG PRESS

Peter Kloppers says: „As a result of years of experience, we know precisely how a web (roll of material) behaves under high pressure and with that knowledge we can steer the process." By now most of the knowledge required for building these machines is not only of mechanics, but also of software. Also in that area they distinguish themselves in the market: „We know as no other precisely how everything – including flexible materials – works, and we can convert that knowledge to software for the printing unit."

"The speed with which a quote is produced reflects the speed of our organization."

CHALLENGE

"We strive to work in a lean and mean fashion," says Remko Koolbergen. "That is our strength; other companies sometimes work with twice the staff." The challenge is to grow cost effectively with the existing staff and resources. In this market many quotes are made in order to bring in a few orders. It is important that the quote process also be set up profitably.

The new printing machines made by DG press are complex. The complexity is reflected in the quotes; there are all kinds of dependencies built in. Remko explains it simply: „If you were to see a machine as a Lego assembly, you would not simply place a blue, yellow, and red brick after each other. After the blue one there is a very small green brick, but only in a configuration where a yellow one follows. If a red brick is to follow that blue one, then a slightly larger black brick must be fitted in between." This is to illustrate the dependencies that have to be dealt with when putting together a quote. The quote process requires a lot of know-how. You must thoroughly know what you sell, not only in regard to specifications, but also in regard to cost price and sale price."

SOLUTION

At the outset in 2013, Remko and Peter were strong advocates of simply making quotes for new machines in Excel. When they wanted to undertake the new development, they knew that they would need their former colleague Jan Brouwer for the quote process. Thanks to his many years of experience with Sofon, Jan could convince management of Sofon's importance for DG press.

You can, of course, use Excel to input the necessary figures and then perform a calculation with them. But it is not possible to include knowledge rules in Excel, certainly not the ones as specific as those that DG press needed [Excel is not an expert system]. When using Excel, you must repeatedly think and then enter the elements that must be part of the configuration. Furthermore, DG press was not only concerned with a price computation, but also with the management of the complete quote process. You can produce a document based on an Excel spreadsheet, but it cannot be compared in quality and completeness with a quote generated by Sofon.

RESULTS

- „If you sell a 3-5 million euro product, then the quote must be drawn up for somewhere in that price range. It is our calling card."

- „By the manner in which we have put together the quote, customers can tell that we know what we are talking about."

- „The quote is reliable. Once the customer places the order, we know for sure that we will be able to deliver it as such."

- „The speed with which a quote is produced reflects the speed of our organization."

- „We issue about 100 quotes per year. Now we can make a slick 30-page quote with everything in it in about half an hour. It would otherwise take a day to make it."

- „The dependencies are properly included in the quote. They have been well researched beforehand and have been recorded in the system."

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„When Sofon dropped by for a talk, they immediately understood our situation, and with an example could demonstrate on the spot how our specific wishes regarding budget quotes could be implemented using Concept Designer. The very same day an order was given to Sofon for Sofon Studio and Sofon Concept Designer."

In Sofon, the sum of all knowledge regarding knowledge rules and price list records is up-to-date. Remko remarks that its maintenance does require a specialist: „It is a system that needs to be maintained by someone. This is at times a concern: what if we didn't have Jan to take care of this? Someone with the same ability to do this would need to have technical knowledge of our machines and would need to learn to work with Sofon. It takes us about two to three months to train someone who is then able to maintain Sofon."

By now DG press has worked with Sofon for a number of years and management realizes that they could not draw up the complex quotes without it. „At Sofon, a lot of ‚bright sparks' are gathered," explains Remko. In Sofon, knowledge regarding knowledge rules and price list records is up-to-date. The solution helps to make the sales process run flawlessly and successfully. Today, without the Sofon software, this would not be possible.

THE FUTURE

With the Sofon solutions, DG press can continue to grow. When necessary, one can easily scale up. Remko says: „We are gaining experience in how to draw up an optimal parts list. We know that once we start building more machines, those parts lists will be entered into Sofon." Jan adds to this: „The turnaround time will be reduced since our requirements will be readily apparent within the system; suppliers will then also be able to deliver faster."

FINALLY

"Sofon is a fine system without which we would not be able to produce complex quotes," says Peter. Remko adds: „We are very satisfied, and an added good point is that Sofon's people think along with you if you need something extra. That's how our business is: not to ask for the money immediately, but first prove that it has added value and the rest will follow."

As off November 2016

RESULTS

- „Without Sofon you would forget the obvious items. These are so logical that you assume they would be taken into account. „

- „The correct documents, such as the terms and conditions, are included in the offer – thus, not a previous version by accident. Once the information has been entered in Sofon, it is subsequently always output correctly."

- „We make extensive use of the ability to store multiple versions of quotes – for financial agreements as well as for technical specifications. If we did not have version control, we would be constantly searching [for the right information]."

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