ESSERTEC

Sofon
Guided Solutions

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Holger van Crüchten
Head of Finance and Controlling

Thomas Stucki
Head of Information and Communications Technology

Quick and convenient quotations

Award-winning business

ESSERTEC develops and produces domelights, flat-roof windows, daylight spots, continuous roof lights, smoke and heat extraction systems, blinds and roof gullies. From its sales and production site in Neuss (Germany), the company supports its customers in the design, planning, implementation and refurbishment of various flat roof properties.

Thanks to innovations with an appealing design and a high level of functionality, ESSERTEC aims to attract customers from the specialist trade as well as roofers, architects, planners, steel and hall constructors and general contractors. ESSERTEC innovations have won several awards for their design in the past, including the Red Dot Award, the German Design Award and the BAKA Award for Production Innovation Practice Old Building.

ESSERTEC USES SOFON TO CREATE QUOTATIONS

A highly complex market with a wide range of versions requires special solutions. This is a challenge that ESSERTEC GmbH faces on a daily basis. Furthermore, the market for lighting, ventilation, smoke extraction and drainage is very competitive and expects rapid and clear quotations. Optimal structuring of the quotation and the overall process is crucial. ESSERTEC found the suitable solution with Sofon's quotation software.

Increasingly rapid developments characterize the market for domelights, continuous roof lights, flat-roof lights and smoke and heat extraction systems for residential and commercial properties as well as industrial production halls and warehouses. Whereas there were 20,000 items fifteen years ago, ESSERTEC now has a range of 120,000 items. Domelights in various sizes have been created, with different numbers of glass layers, many glass variants as well as various accessories, to mention but a few examples.

These developments have shaped the innovative Neuss-based company but also posed a challenge. After all, the aim was to pursue the company's growth in all areas as planned.

A NEW SYSTEM WAS REQUIRED

'The old software system was no longer able to meet current and future requirements,' says Holger van Crüchten, Head of Finance and Controlling at ESSERTEC. The maintenance work due to the innovation progress had become too much with the old tool. Time and resources that the company wanted to use for other activities in the future.

SIMPLE AND TARGETED

With Sofon, 'we have the option to add various features to the rules - such as length, width, number of glass layers and color - in relation to one another,' explains Holger van Crüchten.

An example: If a length is selected as a feature, Sofon finds all suitable configurations of the same length via the rules.

'More and more features are ruled out until the most suitable product is displayed'

That may be a very large number, which had to be defined individually in the past. 'All of this work is now no longer necessary.'

Sofon enables a rules-based approach when creating quotations. In a simple and targeted manner, ESSERTEC employees are navigated through the quotation configuration in accordance with the guided selling approach. 'More and more features are ruled out until the most suitable product is displayed,' says Holger van Crüchten. Take a domelight, for example: angular or round? What nominal size is needed? What U value would you like? How many glass layers including color is requested? Another crucial advantage: it is impossible to end up with the wrong combination of products - for example with dimensions that do not match.

NEW DIRECTIONS

These are benefits that the employees of ESSERTEC hugely appreciate. 'Our old solution was wieldy and no longer worked,' remembers Thomas Stucki, Head of Information and Communications Technology. However, a new software system requires a rethink, moving in a new direction.

Instead of entering an item number as in the past, Sofon was now all about features and configuration.

But how was the change to be used optimally - for numerous future users? ESSERTEC had a well designed plan: 'To increase acceptance and limit potential sources of errors when applying the settings to the new program, we involved two sales employees in the project team,' says Thomas Stucki. The back office was then trained in small groups first. Within four weeks, the back office were using the Sofon tool. Then it was the field service's turn. 'That allowed back office staff to help field service staff if they had any questions.'

LESS ADMINISTRATION

Summary of the implementation: Sofon staff provided ESSERTEC with the necessary, targeted support. And the introduction with the employees also went 'very smoothly', was Thomas Stucki's happy conclusion. 'When we saw the first quotation made with Sofon, we were delighted - the system change had paid off,' said Holger van Crüchten looking back. Mission accomplished!

A success story

The success story of ESSERTEC started in 1955. Specializing in wood processing and selling domelights, the Esser and Helpenstein families jointly operated Klaus Esser GmbH. By 1960, the business had relocated to the newly built factory in Norf. Klaus Esser sold the wood processing division and started to implement his ideas at the new site, all relating to flat roofs.

In 1980, Eternit AG purchased Klaus Esser KG and in 1999, the flat roof elements business unit of Eternit AG was spun off as an independent company called Eternit Flachdach GmbH, which is still the market leader in Germany to this day. In 2015, Etex sold its subsidiary Eternit Flachdach GmbH to the French Soprema Group. Eternit Flachdach became part of Adexsi, the parent company of the Soprema business unit for skylights and smoke extraction systems.

Eternit Flachdach GmbH changed its name to ESSERTEC GmbH, linking the history of Klaus Esser with the current and future product philosophy. Today, ESSERTEC GmbH employs some 100 people.

'The quotation fits precisely, is always consistent and up to date'

A mission that came with additional benefits. Because Sofon not only speeds up the creation of quotations, they are also standardized and totally transparent.

QUOTATION WITH AN OPTIONAL POSITION

Creating a quotation with the old tool often required rework. Not any more! 'The quotation fits precisely, is always consistent and up to date,' says Holger van Crüchten. As a result, the quotation created with Sofon is ready to send, also in terms of its layout.

So off it goes, and thanks to Sofon now with an additional feature that is very positively received by customers. Quotations are now created with optional positions. An example: if a customer asks for a quotation for a domelight, ESSERTEC's quotation points out that a suitable opener system can be included as an option. The fact that this is only an option becomes visually clear to the customer.

OVERALL PROCESS OPTIMIZED

Ultimately, however, not only is the quotation creation process relevant, but also the overall process. And that's where Sofon comes in again: with this tool, interfaces can be easily added. A link and therefore a cycle is created between Sofon, the ERP system and the CRM system. 'This means that all quotations are available in all programs,' says Holger van Crüchten.

A perfect condition for controlling, i.e. for evaluation and traceability.

ESSERTEC is now perfectly equipped for new developments. When a new series of domelights recently came to market, 'the necessary adjustment in Sofon was completed with little work within a short period of time. That would have taken much longer with the old tool. Achieving that was one of our big subgoals,' says Thomas Stucki. Now everything is a lot faster and more convenient.

FOUNDATION CREATED

However, the company does not plan to rest on its laurels despite its progress with Sofon. Obviously there are plans to continue growth in the market for lighting, smoke extraction and drainage systems. There are new quotations to be drawn up. A good foundation for ESSERTEC has been created.