

“Now whoever produces the quotation, the prices and content are uniform thanks to Sofon”



f.l.t.r. Albert Rijnveld CONTROLLER/MODEL BUILDER
Roel Nagelmaeker FINANCIAL DIRECTOR/PROJECT MANAGER

VMG supplies balcony and gallery balustrades. The company is automated and robotized to a large extent. Thanks to this combination VMG is able to deliver custom solutions for the price of standard balustrades. Market leader VMG places the emphasis here on safety, quality and an eye for detail. With around 120 internal staff and 60 installers working in the field, each year work is carried out at 200 to 250 construction sites. This equates to around 1,700 quotations and 250 kilometers of balustrading. When it comes to producing so many quotations, quality plays an important role. Sofon provided a welcome solution to this problem. Roel Nagelmaeker (financial director/project manager) and Albert Rijnveld (controller/model builder) explain the decision to use Sofon and the changes that Sofon has brought about.

VMG personalizes quotations with Sofon

PEN AND PAPER

In the factory and drawing office VMG is fully automated. This was not so much the case in the supporting departments. Nagelmaeker: “We are emerging from a time when we practically used pen and paper to make our quotations. Our calculators used Word and Excel tools for this. Each of the calculators drew up quotations in their own way. Differences in the way they worked were expressed in the layout, structure and product description, as well as in the price. Calculators estimated processing times differently, for example.”

SOFON PRINCIPLE

Sofon came into the picture to make uniform quotations and to offer more insight into the quotations produced. Rijnveld: “What appealed to us first of all was Sofon’s question and answer structure. Thanks to this structure it is no longer possible to make errors or forget questions. We also agreed with the Sofon principle that knowledge is modeled once and is managed in one place. This is much more efficient than having knowledge spread over different documents. This aspect also makes it easier to maintain. Moreover, IT knowledge is not

a requirement for working with Sofon. Although some affinity could be useful.”

INSIGHT AND ACCEPTANCE

For VMG, working with Sofon meant acquiring advanced insight. Rijnveld: “Naturally, the first thing you have to do is get to know the Sofon software. However, you also have to learn to define your product and to make knowledge available in an effective way and in the right place.” Nagelmaeker adds: “Eventually, we decided to restructure our models, because we had gained greater insight into our products and the production process. After introducing Sofon we gave our employees the option of falling back temporarily on the old method of working. Now, however, almost everything can be done using Sofon. A small club of enthusiasts were quick to appreciate this – they acted as a kind of accelerator for acceptance – and now all our employees recognize this and work is carried out more or less exclusively with Sofon.”

QUALITY AND UNIFORMITY

Now that VMG works with Sofon the quality of the quotations has increased further. Nagelmaeker: “Each customer can feel that



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attention has been paid to their quotation. We opted for the ultimate personalization, with every answer within the question and answer structure building up part of a sentence rather than a complete block of standard text. This makes a quotation completely personal, and also a customized product in itself.” VMG has been able to standardize its method of working. Rijnveld: “Whichever calculator now produces the quotation, the prices correspond and the structure is always the same. This not only makes things clear for our customers, but also for our drawing office, which begins their work with the order confirmation from Sofon. This saves them time looking for information and, therefore, expensive engineering hours.”

A MOMENT'S WORK

VMG works with the ERP system ISAH. Nagelmaeker: “Previously we drew up our bills of materials using pen and paper, or in Excel. We then processed these data in ERP. For a large project – with many different product lines – this took up a relatively large amount of time: a couple of hours. With Sofon a bill of materials is compiled automatically and correctly during configuration and passed on to ERP. It has become just a moment's work.”

QUICK FAMILIARIZATION

A number of processes are now quicker at VMG than before. Nagelmaeker: “The

training period for new employees has been reduced. It still does not make new employees ‘balustrade experts’ straight away, but it does mean that they can be deployed quickly. Prices are also updated more promptly. Calculations no longer have to be redone. A new price list is read into Sofon and the prices are automatically adjusted. Customers certainly find it convenient to see the price-related consequences of a modification – a narrower rail, a different color – more quickly.” Rijnveld goes on: “It is not only the prices that can be adjusted simply, however. Other changes can be made just as easily. If we purchase a faster machine in the factory, the standard time and costing details are also adjusted quickly. In the old days you would have to put up a memo and then you would just have to hope that this would be seen and remembered.”

FUTURE PLANS

VMG has big plans. Nagelmaeker: “In the future we want to gear our quotations to the customer and to the customer's needs even more. This will also include some work on the design of the quotation.” Rijnveld: “We also want to further optimize and supplement our current method of working. What's more – although this will lie even further in the future – we want to achieve integration with CAD for various purposes. We are excited by Sofon's capabilities in this area.”

WHAT HAS VMG ACHIEVED WITH SOFON?

- Uniform, error-free, complete and clearly structured calculations and quotations
- Standardized method of working
- Reduced training period
- Changes can be applied quickly now
- Quotations can be easily recalculated when changes are made
- Greater insight into quotations produced
- Knowledge made available and maintainable in one place
- User-friendly
- Automatic compilation of bills of materials and passing on to ISAH: previously bills of materials were compiled manually. This easily took up half a day. Thanks to the Sofon interface this is now a moment's work

