

“An ERP package is just not suitable to configure products”



f.l.t.r. Gert Braakman IT MANAGER, Stefan de Rijk PROJECT MANAGER
Anton Boonstra INTERIM PROGRAM MANAGER
In foreground: Peter Paul Wortman PRODUCT MANAGER

Erbi is an innovative supplier of kitchen counters and worktops. Specifying a kitchen worktop is more complex than it seems. Erbi wanted to deal more effectively with this complexity and found the solution in Sofon. After an implementation of a few months, Erbi and their dealers quickly recognized the results of this sales support system. Stefan de Rijk (Project Manager), Anton Boonstra (Interim Program Manager), Gert Braakman (IT Manager) and Peter Paul Wortman (Product Manager) talk about the implementation and the results.

Erbi gets more work done with fewer staff thanks to Sofon

COMPLEX WORKTOPS

Erbi's focus is on the production of kitchen worktops. Apart from that, Erbi also makes all kinds of other applications on a project basis. The products are almost all manufactured at Erbi's facilities. For the manufacturing of their products, Erbi makes use of many varied materials: Ceasarstone, Corian, topcore, glass, solid top grade wood... Boonstra explains: "A lot of work goes into the production of a kitchen worktop. We have to take into account materials, notches and recesses, the positioning of the burners and taps... And every kitchen worktop is custom-made. So this is really precise work and that makes it difficult."

EFFECTIVENESS

Erbi wanted to improve the way they cope with the difficulties caused by the complexity of their products and thereby shorten the cycle time of orders. Apart from that, Erbi saw possibilities for savings by making sure products are entered correctly into their system and thereby ensuring error-free production. Boonstra explains: "A good product configurator could help us map-out customer needs more quickly and in a qualitatively better way. The product con-

figurator in our ERP system did not meet our requirements. Maintenance was too time-consuming." De Rijk adds: "Because of the complexity of the kitchen worktops, only about 60 to 70 percent of the orders could be entered directly into the old product configurator. The rest had to be adjusted manually." Boonstra continues: "We looked at whether other ERP packages offered a solution, but ERP systems are just not suitable to configure products. Finally, we talked to 5 or 6 suppliers of product configurators. We 'clicked' with Sofon immediately: they understood what we were looking for." Sofon was asked to offer a solution for both the Sales Office and Erbi's dealers: kitchen stores.

DEALERS

Erbi's dealers work with their own drawing packages. Using these, they put together a kitchen for a customer during a sales talk. Boonstra explains: "Ideally, we would have liked to integrate Sofon with their drawing packages; all the information processed in the drawing package is routed to Sofon after which we could start production. This is possible, but the drawing packages have to make more



“An ERP package is just not suitable to configure products”

specifications available to do this. For the time being, we have decided to work with the web version of the Sofon software. The dealers can input all specifications for work-tops via a website – *Digital Ordering* – and this information is directly shot through to our production department.”

QUICK IMPLEMENTATION

Erbi went live after an implementation of 3,5 months with the application for the Sales Office and the dealers. De Rijk explains: “We went through the implementation process quickly, because we decided to put two people onto Sofon full-time. In this way, they could quickly develop and contribute during the process. We can now enter some 85% of all orders directly into Sofon and 15% need a few small adjustments. This is already a great improvement compared to 60 to 70 percent previously. Our goal is to ultimately make manual changes to only 10% of orders, for example in a CAD drawing. It is pointless to input the remaining 10% into Sofon. If this kind of adjusted order only comes along a few times a year, there will be no profit in modelling it.”

ORGANIZATION AND MAINTENANCE

At Erbi, Gert Braakman and Peter Paul Wortman are responsible for the organization and maintenance of Sofon. Braakman

explains: “Sofon has many possibilities and can be completely organized according to your own wishes. I can’t say anything other than that I think it’s a great package.” Wortman continues: “Changes and extensions are easy to put in place. Whether it’s about changing a product or the design of the configurator.”

HALVING STAFF

By using Sofon, staff at Erbi can do quicker and better quality work. Because of this, Erbi has been able to halve the number of staff involved in handling quotations and orders. De Rijk explains: “We used to have a separate order processing department and anyone working there would have to be well-trained to be able to enter orders. Now almost anyone can enter orders. In this way, the division of work has improved which has made us a lot more flexible within the company. We can now process the pile of orders quickly.” Boonstra adds: “This is also good for customer satisfaction. Customers now receive a correct order confirmation within 24 hours. Previously, they would have to wait up to five days. And now it has also become unnecessary to make a call checking the order, as we no longer forget questions thanks to the question and answer structure in Sofon. We are more than satisfied with the results achieved.”

WHAT HAS ERBI ACHIEVED WITH SOFON?

- Ability to cope with product complexity
- 85% of orders can already be entered directly in Sofon. Previously this was 60 to 70%
- Solutions for Sales Office and dealers
- Information from website *Digital Ordering* can be put through to production unchanged
- System can be organized according to own wishes and is simple to maintain
- Savings: personnel Customer Services halved
- Training time dramatically shortened
- Better division of work, resulting in fast order processing
- Order confirmation is sent out within 24 hours. Previously this was 5 days
- Specifications are no longer forgotten due to the question & answer structure in Sofon

