

“Using Sofon, our proposals take only 3 minutes to process. Previously, this took 3 days!”



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The Dokkumer Vlaggen Centrale (DVC) is a producer and supplier of promotional communication tools on canvas, varying from flags with a company logo to an ad for the latest model of a car. DVC is the market leader in the Netherlands and is also active abroad, where they operate through an extensive dealer network. Sofon recently went ‘live’ at DVC’s sales department. Together with Folkje Sjoerdsma (Manager Front and Back Office) and Rene Holen (Information Systems) we look back on this period and look ahead to the future.

DVC improves quotation lead time

COMMERCIAL POWER

The Dokkumer Vlaggen Centrale was originally a manufacturing company. DVC wanted to improve their sales efficiency and commercial power. They wanted to quickly provide clients with quotations. For a number of years, foreign clients have had a system at their disposal with which they could quickly calculate a good price. “Our retailers abroad wanted to have the calculation data at their fingertips and not have to continually consult our export staff in Dokkum (NL). For these reasons we started looking for a web-based tool that was user-friendly, easy to deploy and easy to maintain”, Holen explains. “We encountered the Sofon Web Sales Configurator by chance. After the first introduction and demonstration we were immediately convinced. This was the solution to our problem! There are models built into the Web Sales Configurator with which a dealer can calculate staggered discount prices. The models contain complex methods to calculate the best printing method for each number and size of flags. This automatically generates the best price. We have translated the models in the Web Sales Configurator into English, German and French so that each retailer can calculate prices in his own familiar language. The Web Sales Configurator has now been running for about three years to the full satisfaction of our dealers.”

INDEPENDENCE

After the introduction of the Web Sales Configurator, DVC came up with the idea to extend this solution to the quotation generator (Sofon Proposal Organizer) in order to quickly supply customers in the

Netherlands with a proposal. Holen comments: “We were so pleased with the Web Sales Configurator that it was logical to purchase the Proposal Organizer for our internal sales staff. The calculation models were extended for this version and all our merchandise was put into the system.” DVC had of course investigated competing packages. “Sofon was really the only package that allowed us to organize the configuration according to our own needs”, Sjoerdsma continues. “Sofon supplies tools, with which we ourselves can tailor our own products to size. It was very important to us to have that independence. A custom-made package doesn’t offer this. That kind of package leaves you dependent on the maker.” DVC’s front and back office sales staff has been working with the Proposal Organizer for some time now. “The implementation process went well”, says Sjoerdsma. “This was due to solid preparations. We ran a pilot together with Sofon. We had our sales staff supply us with a large number of cases. Then we had our sales reps solving each other’s cases using Sofon. In this way, we checked whether Sofon could handle everything. In the end, we saw that all the cases were very rapidly solved using Sofon. This is mainly because Sofon is so user-friendly.”

RIGOROUS

DVC involved their staff in the whole process. Sjoerdsma explains: “A transition like this always has a lot of impact, but by involving staff in the process they became very flexible and prepared to change. We prepared them to go ‘live’ with special training. We deliberately approached this quite rigorously.



“With Sofon we have achieved a 20% increase in orders compared to the same period last year”

We didn't want our staff to fall back into the old methods. Previously, someone in our front office would answer the phone and write down customer requirements and produce a quotation later. The back office would then produce the quotation. Now all this paper work is gone and quotations are made in Sofon while calling with the customer. The whole process is so fast that the complete proposal (prices and text) is even generated during the phone contact with the client. This is possible because Sofon configures the product using a question-answer structure. This set-up ensures that our proposals are simply and quickly put together and are always error-free. Invalid configurations are prevented by Sofon. In the past, our proposals were also almost error-free, because of an extra manual check done by a colleague. This is no longer necessary and we therefore save time.” Holen adds: “We actually save so much time that we can send a professional, customer-friendly proposal by e-mail to the client immediately after the phone conversation. Using Sofon, our proposals take only 3 minutes to process. Previously, this took 3 days! Clients think this is great. Since then, we have noticed that orders come back within minutes. It is very important that a proposal be sent immediately after a warm conversation with a client. Now clients change their minds less often.” This is reflected in an increased proposal win rate. Sjoerdsma continues: “We have already achieved a 20% increase in orders compared to the same period last year. This is beyond our expectations! Of course, this is due to our rapid reaction time, but also because of cross-selling. With the help of Sofon, our staff can actively help the client in their decision-making. If a client places an order, we

always check whether he has thought of everything. So our staff is pro-active and extra involved. That is appreciated by our customers.”

INTEGRATION

DVC works with Microsoft CRM. It was very important to DVC that Sofon could be linked to the CRM system. “During our intensive cooperation with Sofon, the integration was developed and fully tested. This link is now on Sofon's shelves, so to speak, and has been made available to other clients who work with Microsoft CRM. In this way, we were able to speed up and improve the development of a Sofon product through our comments and wishes.” Because of the applied link, Sofon can access the necessary data from CRM to generate a proposal. “In the meantime, our CRM package has been linked to our Baan ERP system”, says Sjoerdsma. “These connections work very well. No errors are found. Even better: users often have no idea that these are separate packages because the connection between the packages is seamless.” Sjoerdsma is therefore very happy with Sofon. “Sofon works well, but your own input is also important. We spent a lot of time on this at DVC, and now we can work very smoothly.”

FUTURE PLANS

DVC plans to make even more use of Sofon in the future. “Our export department also wants to start working with Sofon. Apart from that, we want to develop a functionality on our website with which our clients can produce their own web orders. These orders should then go directly into our CRM system. We will be using Sofon for this too, but that's in the future”, Sjoerdsma concludes.

WHAT DID THE DOKKUMER VLAGGEN CENTRALE ACHIEVE WITH SOFON?

- 20% increase in orders
- Higher quotation win rate; more proposals become orders
- Improved quotation lead time: from 3 days to 3 minutes
- Dealers make their own price calculations
- Pricing and cost price calculations are precise
- Proposals can be produced on the phone (no more repeat work)
- Proposals no longer need to be checked by a colleague
- More efficient and flexible operations
- Sales can spend more time on cross selling and up selling
- Shorter training times for new dealers and internal sales people
- More efficient sales process because of seamless interaction between CRM, Sofon and ERP.

