



Group Nivelles slashes its office lead time

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Group Nivelles NV, a family business specialising in bathrooms and drain systems, distributes its products both throughout Belgium and internationally, and is continuously growing and improving its processes and products. The company had noticed that its lead time for new customized orders was too long and wanted to reduce it.

Group Nivelles NV is a manufacturer of bathroom furniture, solid surface wash basins, showers and panels, as well as drain systems, located in Gingelom. The company employs about 50 persons and sells its products to well-known distributors, such as Van Marcke, Lambrechts, Sax, Desco and Facq. Group Nivelles is specialised in the manufacturing of low volume, customized orders.

The company had noticed that its lead time for new customized orders was too long, which resulted in lost projects. The total lead time for an order was typically around 8 weeks including an office lead time of ca. 4-5 weeks. Manufacturing customized orders is quite complex and requires additional office work, such as making customized drawings and a work preparation for every order. Multiple departments were involved in the office process. The sales back office had to request drawings to a designer for review by the customer. Furthermore, a bill of material, a bill of labour, CNC programmes, … had to be made by the work preparation department. All these steps and handovers lengthened the lead time. When a change was requested by the customer, the

cycle started again which further increased the lead time.

Automation in the office

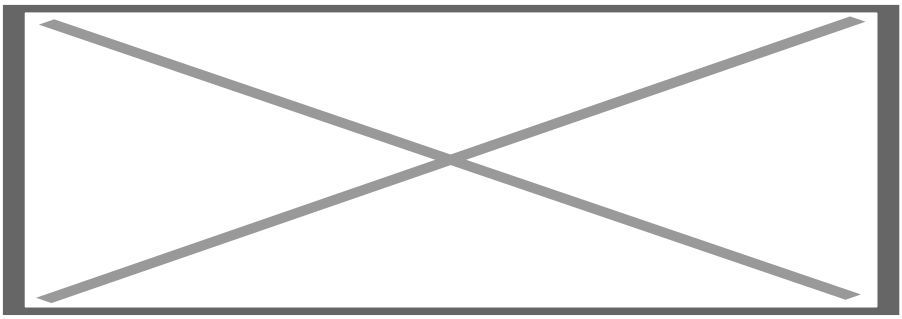
The long lead times in the office were caused by the manual processing steps and the handovers. The manual processing steps were largely automated and the handovers were eliminated. This was possible by using a product configurator and by connecting the information islands. The company is using Korpus (Vlecad) as their CAD/CAM-system and Ridder as their ERP-system. These systems were not connected. Connecting these IT-systems with an API (Application Programming Interface) was the key to improving the performance.

After connecting these systems, an improved work flow became feasible. The back office is now able to fully process the incoming requests for quotation and the new orders starting with the data entry in the product configurator in Ridder. The information in the product configurator is then automatically transferred to Korpus, which automatically generates a drawing and immediately a bill of labour and a bill of material. The back office can then immediately provide the customer with the necessary information. In addition, Korpus generates the sawing plans and CNC programs and sends this information immediately to the production. This solution was successfully implemented thanks to the fruitful cooperation between Group Nivelles and its IT-integrator Jorosoft.

From 5 weeks to one day

The new process offers many advantages. The back office has complete control over the whole process and is no longer dependent on the availability of somebody from work preparation. All the know-how is integrated and stored directly in digital systems. As a result, the office lead time could be reduced dramatically from 4-5 weeks to just one day. At the same time, this automation has reduced the amount of processing errors and has also freed up capacity in the work preparation department, which can now be used for new projects.

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Authors



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