

## FlexiForce copies successful order picking process with PickStar





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### Flexiforce

FlexiForce designs, manufactures and supplies components for manufacturers of overhead doors. The small to medium-sized businesses supplied by FlexiForce were at one time found solely in the Netherlands. Now they are located throughout Europe and often further afield. In order to aid growth in its Hungarian operation, FlexiForce has installed a pick-to-light system from Pcd data, just as it did some years previously in its operation in Barneveld, the Netherlands. Interestingly, this time around the company did not opt for the comprehensive Distrib PTL system, but for a standard PickStar solution instead. While the system is different, the results have been just as compelling!

FlexiForce began using pick-to-light in its Barneveld operation as early as 2004. The supplier of components for overhead doors uses the order picking technology for assembling hardware sets containing bolts, nuts, screws, bearing plates and other pieces of hardware. "Manufacturers of overhead doors can purchase all their components from us in bulk. However, we do also supply fully customised kits that contain all components to manufacture a door in accordance with a specified model and size. In addition to customised rails and springs, such a kit consists of a hardware set which includes all the mounting materials an engineer needs", Hans Lubbers, general director of FlexiForce Nederland, explains.

The contents of the hardware sets are determined by the FlexiForce ERP system, which exactly calculates the required quantity of each product based on the customer order. This bill of material acts as a picking list for the pick-to-light system, supplied by Pcd data. This system manages the displays of the three hundred picking locations where all the small items are stored. The order pickers push a box on the roller conveyor that runs along the picking locations and pick the number of products that correspond with the numbers on the displays. "Thanks to pick-to-light, the number of picking errors has been reduced to virtually zero. That is a massive improvement on the previous process, when we frequently had to send components afterwards", a satisfied Mr Lubbers explains.

### Fewer picking errors, shorter turnaround times

In 2012, the positive experience of pick-to-light in Barneveld gave FlexiForce every reason to introduce the technology at their rapidly expanding operation in Hungary. "The application is exactly the same, the composition of hardware sets. Not only does pick-to-light ensure a practically flawless process, it at the same considerably reduces turnaround times", Lubbers explains.

FlexiForce decided not to wait for any delivery or quality issues to arise in Hungary. Lubbers: "As long as it involves a limited number of hardware sets, it can still be done manually with pen and paper. However, we knew that, in Hungary, the number of hardware sets was set to rise substantially thanks to a number of new projects. Hence we decided to invest proactively".

FlexiForce did not need to engage in a lengthy supplier selection process. "We did of course consider other suppliers, but it soon appeared that there was no reason whatsoever to start doing business with an alternative company. We are extremely satisfied with the performances of Pcd data. Besides, they have a proven track-record with our process.

And they are true to their word." In the autumn of 2012, the pick-to-light system was implemented according to schedule. "The system, that counts 300 picking locations in Hungary, is now fully operation and performs satisfactorily."



## No more weight checks

One notable difference between the two operations is that in Hungary FlexiForce has opted for PickStar, the simplest and easiest to implement of Pcdatas solutions. In Barneveld, the company uses Distrib PTL, a more comprehensive software package with a wider range of functionality in the field of pick-to-light. "When we decided to implement pick-to-light in Barneveld, PickStar was not yet available. However, this solution is much easier in terms of implementation and considerably cheaper" says Lubbers, explaining the choice for PickStar.

FlexiForce does not miss the additional functionality of Distrib PTL in Hungary. "The only difference with the system in the Netherlands is the absence of the integrated weight check. In the Netherlands, scales are integrated at the end of the roller conveyor which calculates whether we picked the correct amount based on the weight of each product. However, after many years of experience, we found that the pick-to-light concept is reliable to the extent that this weight check does not provide any added value. It is only seldom that the scales detect a picking error. So we can easily do without the support of a weight check for PickStar."

## Fewer additional staff

In Hungary, three to four members of staff can work with PickStar to compile hardware sets. The fact that this system produces shorter turnaround times also means that FlexiForce now performs more efficiently. "This does not mean that we need fewer staff in Hungary, but it does mean that we require fewer additional staff", Lubbers explains.

The cooperation with Pcdatas has once again been excellent. Lubbers: "The management of the project was unsurpassed. Partly on the basis of their own knowledge and experience, they prepared a detailed project plan combined with a precise clarification of what was needed and when. The fact that this project was carried out by a Dutch company in Hungary did not give rise to any issues either."

## The company

**Name:** FlexiForce

**Activity:** manufacturer of components for overhead doors

**Number of branches:** 7 across the globe

**Location:** Hajdúböszörmény (Hungary)

**Warehouse:** 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>

**Pick-to-light**

**Product:** Pickstar

**Number of order pickers:** 3 to 4

**Number of pick-to-light locations:** 300

**Number of picking errors:** practically zero



*Hans Lubbers, general director of FlexiForce the Netherlands: "Pick-to-light considerably reduced turnaround times"*

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