



GROENEWOUT

Bol.com's new dedicated facility gives returns a second life

An interview with Leander Nuij, Product Lead Returns at bol.com, by Mark Dohmen



Earlier this year, bol.com – the biggest online retailer in the Netherlands – opened its new returns facility in the Dutch city of Waalwijk. It is a shining example of far-reaching process optimization, including partial mechanization. For help with designing the bol.com returns center, the e-tailer enlisted the expertise of Groenewout. "Thanks to their relevant expertise and experience, we've been able to design the perfect process," concludes Leander Nuij, Product Lead Returns from bol.com.

CLAUDIUS PRINSENLAAN 132A

4818 CP BREDA

THE NETHERLANDS

T +31 (0)76 - 533 04 40

MAIL@GROENEWOUT.COM

WWW.GROENEWOUT.COM

In 2020, bol.com's revenue increased by over 50% to a record-breaking level of €4.3 billion. Although the returns rate remains steady at just a couple of percent of the total revenue, this explosive growth – combined with the transition from a web shop to an online platform – has also led to an increase in the total number of returns. Therefore, bol.com decided to set up a brand-new returns facility. "Up until recently, we handled the returns flows in part of our fulfillment center in Waalwijk, but that was holding back our commercial growth," says Leander Nuij. The new bol.com returns center (BRC) creates more room for future growth.



Leander Nuij: "Thanks to Groenewout, we've been able to design the perfect process for bol.com."

Specialist knowledge

The 33,000m² BRC is situated directly opposite the fulfillment center in Waalwijk and has been optimally set up to handle the various returns flows. Bol.com enlisted the expertise of Groenewout for help with designing the facility. "Building a returns center isn't as easy as it sounds. It requires specialist knowledge," states Nuij.

GROENEWOUT B.V. TRADE REG.

NR. CH. OF C. 20009626.

ESTABLISHED 1966. ALL ORDERS

ARE ACCEPTED AND CARRIED-

OUT ACCORDING TO THE

GROENEWOUT GENERAL TERMS

AND CONDITIONS 2012.



Page: 2/3
Our ref.: 9024D683

“Groenewout is a trusted partner who has helped us on multiple occasions in the past, so we also involved them in this process from an early stage.”

A process design was developed in collaboration with Groenewout. The first task was to define the key success factors for a dedicated returns center. “We then headed out into the field to visit various returns operations,” continues Nuij. He knows from first-hand experience just how much returns handling differs from the regular fulfillment operation: “In a fulfillment operation the focus is mainly on efficiency, whereas handling returned goods is much more about output quality and operator expertise.”

Optimization and mechanization

The BRC is a shining example of far-reaching process optimization, including partial mechanization. The returned goods pass through a sorter and are then transported to the various workstations on conveyors. At the workstations, the returns are carefully



The new bol.com Returns Center is a shining example of far-reaching process optimization, including partial mechanization.

assessed by trained operators who decide whether the item should be put back into stock, sold at a discount as a ‘return deal’ or be passed on to wholesale buyers or auctions for re-sale. The aim is to give virtually all returns a second life.

The processes have been optimized and the mechanization allows bol.com to save additional time. Moreover, the new BRC has given the company much more handling capacity. “The process is now in place and we have sufficient scope for continuous optimization in the years ahead. This will enable us to get the very best out of our returns flows and facilitate future growth,” comments Nuij.



The returned goods pass through a sorter before being transported to the various workstations.



The returns are professionally and efficiently assessed by trained operators.

Perfect process

Nevertheless, Nuij is not ruling out the need for a second returns center at some point in the future. "And if that becomes necessary, we will definitely approach Groenewout again. They have in-depth knowledge of processes as well as relevant experience with other operations. They excel at optimally combining that knowledge and experience with our own ideas and requirements. As a result, we've been able to design the perfect process for bol.com."

About the author

Mark Dohmen has been a journalist in the logistics sector for 25 years. After gaining a degree in logistics management, he worked as an editor of the Dutch trade publications *Transport+Opslag*, *Logistiek* and *Logistiek.nl* and he was chief editor of *Logistiek Totaal* and *Warehouse Totaal*. Nowadays he works freelance, including to produce articles and videos for *Logisticsinside.nl* and *Logisticsinside.eu*.

More information

If you would like more information about this project, please contact Dennis van Steen (vansteen@groenewout.com) or call +31 76 533 04 40. For more information about bol.com, see www.bol.com.