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New warehouse reinforces Marel's growth strategy

Interview with Vincent Smal, Warehouse Manager at Marel



Marel has opened a brand-new warehouse in the Dutch town of Boxmeer. The new facility, right next door to the factory, is a perfect fit with the manufacturer's growth strategy and will enable further professionalization of its logistics processes. Marel enlisted Groenewout's expertise for the design, layout and realization of the new warehouse.

CLAUDIUS PRINSENLAAN 132A
4818 CP BREDA
THE NETHERLANDS

T +31 (0)76 - 533 04 40

MAIL@GROENEWOUT.COM

WWW.GROENEWOUT.COM

Marel is the leading global supplier of advanced equipment, systems and services for the poultry, meat and fish processing industries. Among other things, the Boxmeer site is home to Marel's Poultry division that focuses on the poultry processing industry. In collaboration with customers worldwide, the company develops innovative solutions for the sector. Boxmeer is one of the locations where the advanced equipment and systems are assembled. "From here, we ship our products all over the world," says Vincent Smal, Warehouse Manager.

The company's growth resulted in the existing, on-premise warehouse becoming too small. "We had outgrown the available space and were forced to rent additional storage locations externally. At one point, we had as many as six external warehouses. Needless to say, external locations are far from optimal from a logistics perspective," Smal continues.



Vincent Smal, Manager Warehouse Marel, about the collaboration with Groenewout: "We've experienced the added value of a professional partner."

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Everything under the same roof

In 2021, Marel got the opportunity to buy a piece of land next to its existing site in Boxmeer. Smal: "That opened the door to the realization of a new, futureproof warehouse, where we could manage all our storage operations under the same roof and further professionalize our logistics activities. Moreover, it was a perfect fit with our growth strategy."



The new facility, right next door to the factory, is a perfect fit with the manufacturer's growth strategy.

Marel approached Groenewout for help with process design, the warehouse layout and project realization. "They have tackled projects like this before and have all the necessary knowledge and experience in-house," Smal states.

Based on close cooperation and an open dialog, Groenewout designed various layouts. The main requirement was that all volumes could be stored under the same roof and the external locations would no longer be required. Another prerequisite for Marel was a good connection between the new warehouse and the existing production facility. "This warehouse supplies parts to our production department and to our sites in the US and in Slovakia, as well as to our customers' installation projects and to our spare parts warehouse in Eindhoven. But our in-house assembly department is our most important customer; it accounts for about 90% of the total volume. Products are now transported from this warehouse to that department safely and smoothly," comments the warehouse manager.

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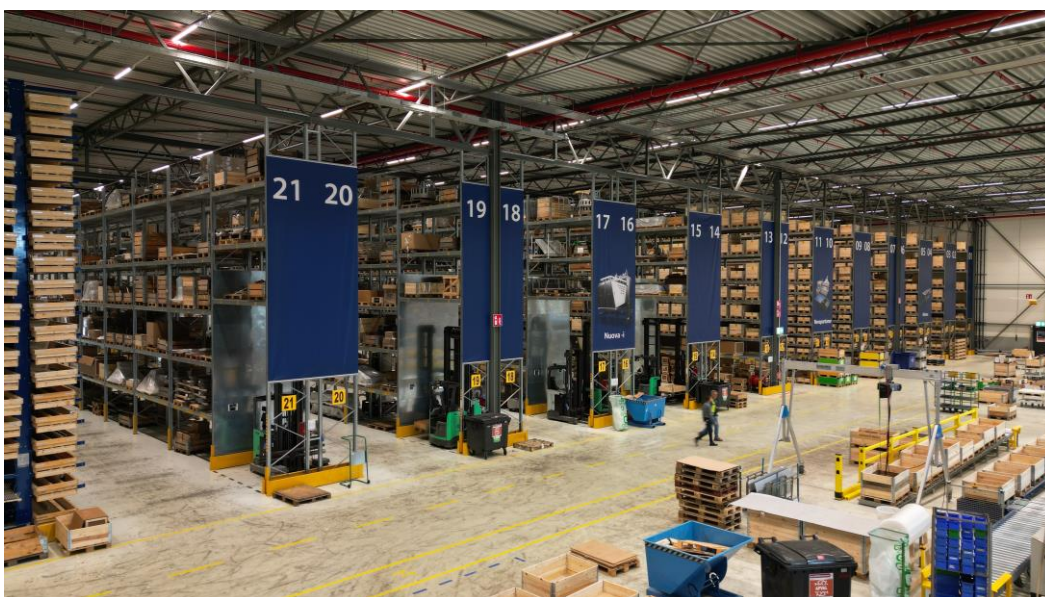
Solid figures and sound data analysis

When it came to equipping the new 12,000m² warehouse, several goods-to-person concepts – including cubic storage concepts and vertical lift modules – were evaluated and compared against a conventional racking solution based on multi-order picking. Groenewout backed up all its findings with solid figures and sound data analysis.

Ultimately, Marel decided to stick with the same concept as in its existing on-premise warehouse. “We saw no need to rigorously change it. Plus the concept ensures maximum flexibility for our high-mix/low-volume environment, where the items being stored are changing all the time,” Smal explains. The chosen setup also allows for easy and flexible expansion of certain storage areas if the need arises.

Transition from block pallets to Euro-pallets

The resulting warehouse concept is traditional: racking over three floors, including lifts, and pallet racks for the larger items. “However, we did switch from block pallets to Euro-pallets for the larger items,” says Smal. “We realized that we were not always using the block pallets optimally. The smaller Euro-pallets are perfectly sufficient to store items safely, so the transition has created higher storage capacity.” Odd-sized items are stored on a mezzanine, and cantilever racks have been installed to hold special-sized pallets.



The new warehouse offers lots of space, is clearly laid out, and has plenty of natural light.

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Whereas a conventional approach was considered the optimal choice for the larger items, mechanization has been beneficial for the smaller goods. They are stored in five vertical lift modules. Marel and Groenewout worked in close collaboration to decide on the size of the various areas, the necessary functionalities and the positioning of the new warehouse.



Smaller goods are stored in five vertical lift modules. These enable compact storage and efficient order picking.



The transition to Euro-pallets has created higher storage capacity.



The resulting warehouse concept is traditional: racking over three floors, including lifts, and pallet racks for the larger items.



Odd-sized items are stored on a mezzanine

Detailed evaluation

Once the new processes had been designed, Marel asked Groenewout for assistance with tendering, contracting and supporting the final implementation. Groenewout provided full documentation for the tendering of all logistics solutions, and the consultants also took care of the tendering procedures. "Several suppliers were invited to present their solutions in each case. Afterwards, we received a detailed evaluation report of all solutions, including a financial business case," Smal explains.

Close collaboration with Marel's purchasing department resulted in the successful completion of all tenders and successful implementation of all systems. The entire project was delivered on schedule and within budget.

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Improved working conditions and more job satisfaction

The logistics process is based around the traditional activities of inbound, warehousing and picking. Orders are picked and consolidated primarily in line with the assembly department's requirements. A shuttle service then transports them to a handling location near the assembly department. "Orders are consolidated as compactly as possible and damage-free. Not all the external locations were optimal. There was a lot of unnecessary handling, and some of the transport took place on public roads. That is no longer the case. Thanks to this new warehouse and the new processes, we can safeguard our quality better," Smal states.

The new warehouse offers lots of space, is clearly laid out, and has plenty of natural light. "Together with the new equipment and the underfloor heating, this results in significantly improved working conditions and more job satisfaction," adds the warehouse manager.



A shuttle service transports orders to a handling location near the assembly department.

'The added value of a professional partner'

Looking back on the project, Vincent Smal is satisfied with both the collaborative partnership and the result: "Because we had a greenfield situation, we were able to optimize all processes and maximize our capacity. As a result, lead times have been reduced, our productivity has improved and we have a futureproof logistics concept. Groenewout's support was excellent from start to finish, both in design and project management."

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During the realization of the new warehouse, Groenewout participated in the weekly project meetings to coordinate the tasks of the construction companies, the operations team, and the IT and purchasing departments. "We've experienced the added value of a professional partner. They were the main point of contact for suppliers, and their project manager was a fully-fledged part of our internal project team."

Partly thanks to the good results in Boxmeer, Marel decided to enlist Groenewout's help again for the realization of a new spare parts distribution center in Eindhoven. Among other things, Groenewout took care of the location study there.

More information

If you would like more information about this project, please contact Petra de Boer, petra.deboer@groenewout.com or tel. +31 76 533 04 40. For more information about Marel: www.marel.com

About the author

Mark Dohmen has been working as a journalist in the logistics sector for 25 years. After studying Logistics Management, he worked as an editor at the trade publications *Transport+Opslag*, *Logistiek* and *Logistiek.nl* and was editor-in-chief of *Logistiek Totaal* and *Warehouse Totaal*. He is currently working as a freelancer, including producing articles and videos for *logisticsinside.nl* and *logisticsinside.eu*.