



GROENEWOUT

Kolb Moerdijk outsources internal logistics and reduces transportation costs

Interview with mr. Niels Wessel, site controller of Kolb Moerdijk by Marcel te Lindert.

KOLB

Almost fifty years ago dr. Werner Kolb founded a company in the village of Hedingen. When the production plant got too big for this small village in Switzerland, Kolb started looking for a second location in the EU. That resulted in the founding of the production plant in Moerdijk, The Netherlands. "That is close to Shell, our most important supplier of ethylene oxide. We are connected with Shell by a pipeline", says Niels Wessel, site controller of Kolb Moerdijk.

The company produces semi-finished products that are mostly used in detergent and cleaning agents. With a lot of success. Kolb Moerdijk is growing very fast, Wessel declares. "Two years ago we did around 65.000 tons a year, this year we will produce 130.000 tons. We hired a lot of new employees and went from four shifts to five shifts."

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Outsourcing of internal logistics



Niels Wessel

Together with the increase of operating hours, Kolb Moerdijk decided to outsource all internal logistics. The operators of Kolb used to drive the terminal tractors for loading and unloading tank containers themselves. "That is something we would like to leave to people that are specialized in driving tank containers of 35 tons", says Wessel. Nowadays the internal logistics is outsourced to a logistics service provider with a facility close to the production plant in Moerdijk. Wessel: "This logistics service provider is responsible for a big part of our inbound and outbound transport. Tank containers with raw materials for instance arrive first at their premises and are delivered to us on demand. Now their drivers also move these tank containers to the right unloading terminal and move them away when they are empty. A similar process is applied at the terminals where our finished product is loaded into tank containers."

To manage this outsourcing process, Kolb Moerdijk searched for an experienced supervisor. There was one excellent candidate, who unfortunately pulled out just one week before the outsourcing process would start. Wessel didn't hesitate. "At Tuesday I called Groenewout, at Thursday I had a meeting with them and at Friday I met the candidate of Groenewout who finally started on Monday."

Reducing transportation costs

For almost six months the interim supervisor of Groenewout managed the daily operations and developed new procedures to support the outsourced processes. "There are many different stakeholders like planning, production, laboratory and of course the logistics service provider. Our decision to call Groenewout turned out very well. Brian Willigenburg of Groenewout established an organisation that is still in use today", says Wessel.

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Page: 2/3
Our ref.: 9024D252/IS/ld May 2011



The job that Willigenburg did, was not an easy one. For a period of almost twenty years the employees of Kolb Moerdijk were used to work in the same manner. Now they had to change that. Besides that, a lot of new employees were hired because of the increase of operating hours. "We had to make some new agreements. Who is responsible for what? Who makes the final check before the tank container will be driven away again? The operator of Kolb or the driver?", says Wessel.

Although it was not entirely within his scope, Willigenburg also reduced the costs for inbound transport. Sixty percent of the volume of raw materials that arrives at Kolb by tankcontainer, consists of only one material: fatty alcohol. Wessel: "We used to treat this material in the same way as we did all the other raw materials. It was transported from the Port of Rotterdam to the logistics service provider and delivered to us on demand. During the winter we had a big problem, when the fatty alcohol got solid because of the low temperatures. We had to heat every tank container before we could use it. Nowadays the fatty alcohol is delivered to us just-in-time, directly from the Port of Rotterdam. Now it is still fluid when it arrives. That saves us a lot of time and money."

Pragmatic approach

After Willigenburg ended his job, Wessel stayed in touch with Groenewout. He invited Rob Clarijs, Supply Chains Management consultant at Groenewout to do a couple of workshops. The first workshop, a brown paper session, was about mapping the current processes based on Lean Six Sigma principles. What happens when a customer orders something? What departments are involved? What kind of decisions are being made? The second workshop was about identifying opportunities for improvement.

Page: 3/3
Our ref.: 9024D252/IS/ld May 2011

What are the bottlenecks in the current processes and how can we eliminate them? "These two workshops have opened our eyes and brought us closer together. Every one of us now realizes more than before the impact of his own actions", explains Wessel. "These workshops will lead to some improvements in the near future. We are working on that."

Kolb Moerdijk and Groenewout share a history that goes back to the early nineties, when Groenewout advised Kolb on fire safety and environmental permits. "I like their pragmatic approach. They know how to get things done and how to create a continuous environment", says Wessel. The consultants of Groenewout don't only try to improve the processes, but also the organization. That's the only way to make sure that changes become structural improvements."

About Kolb

Kolb is a successful manufacturer of nonionic surfactants, paper chemicals and chemical intermediates and employs 260 people. Its headquarters are in Hedingen, Switzerland. More information: <http://www.kolb.ch>

By Marcel te Lindert

Marcel te Lindert is a journalist with over twelve years of experience in logistics. He was editor-in-chief of the Dutch magazines Transport+Opslag and Logistiek. Today he works freelance for magazines like Supply Chain Magazine, Supply Chain Solutions, Nieuwsblad Transport and Logistiek Totaal

More information

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