blokker.

Blokker DC
Geldermalsen - The Netherlands

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One DC

In 2019, the upward trend at Blokker started again after a difficult period with falling sales. Both the stores and the range of products are adapted to the demands and wishes of today's consumers. Costs have been reduced by combining all logistics activities for the offline and online sales channels into one DC in Geldermalsen.

Looking at
similarities

Store chain Blokker has drastically reduced its logistics costs by integrating its operations for e-commerce and brick and mortar logistics. A sophisticated order picking concept has been designed in the thirty-year-old distribution center in Geldermalsen. Dc manager Roel Megens: "Our logistics can now grow into the driver of the commercial strategy."

Today, many retailers are struggling with the integration of e-commerce and store logistics. The question being asked: how should you combine both operations in one DC? "Most retailers emphasize the differences between the two operations. Then it is indeed difficult

to integrate it. However, we have looked at the similarities, which prove to be larger than is often thought", says Megens. The focus on the similarities between the two operations has led to a logistics concept that no longer distinguishes between picking e-commerce orders and store orders. Both order flows are handled simultaneously in a completely refurbished area. "Only after order picking do we make a split in internet and store flows", says Megens.
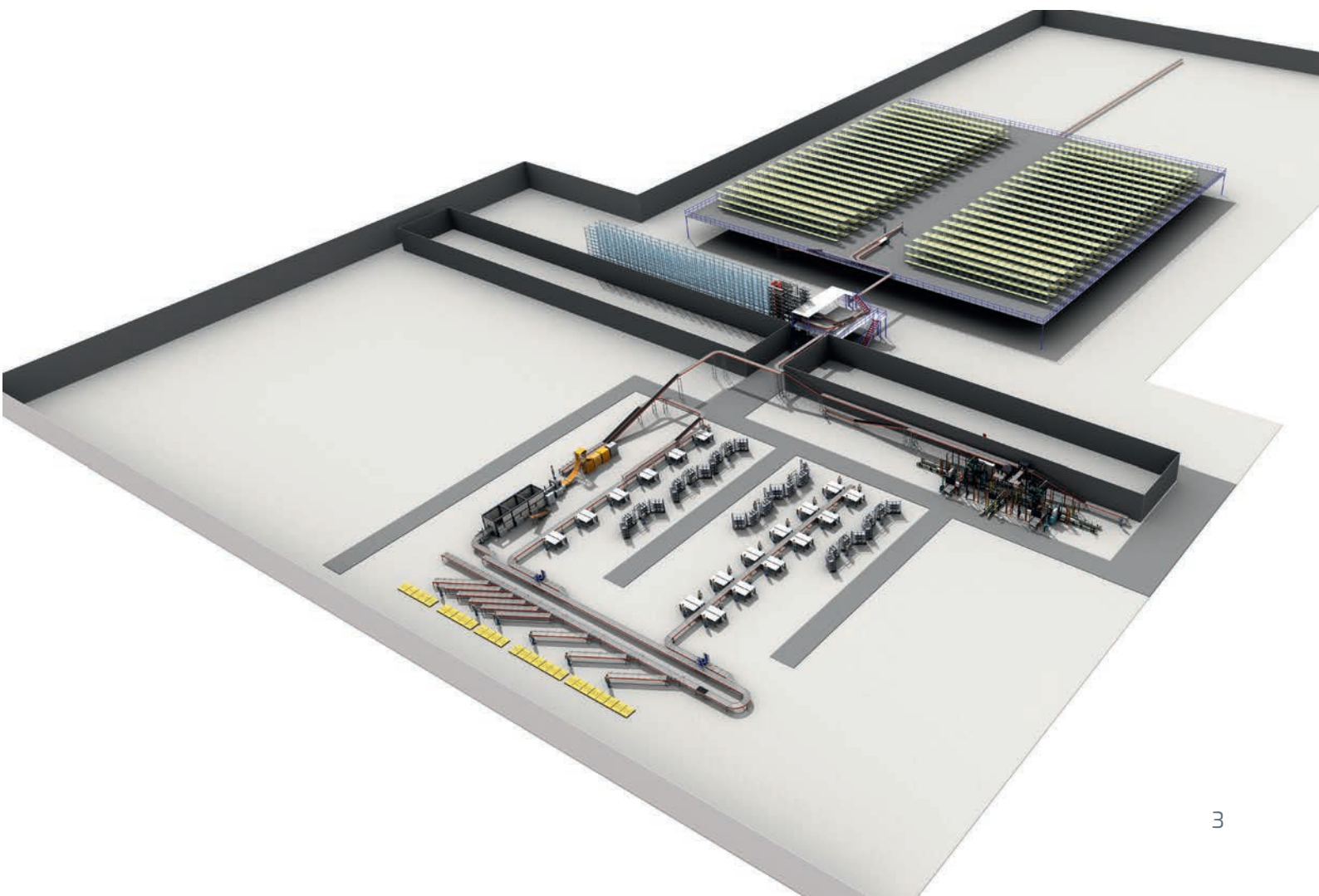
Shuttle system
as a buffer

The shuttle system is key in this area. Here, all full bins supplied by the conveyor are temporarily stored. They remain in the shuttle system until the relevant orders are complete. The shuttles then ensure that the bins for each store are unloaded at the right time in the right order. They then go to an automatic tray stacker, where they are placed in stacks of eight on a dolly. That dolly is then positioned with the roll containers in the correct preparation area on the shipping floor. The WMS stops all orders with one order line in a separate batch, so that the bins with these single-line orders are transported directly to a packaging machine. This machine packages the items automatically in a customized box.

Intelligent pick carts

The redesigned area of the DC consists of two different parts. The most complex part takes up the least space, but counts for the largest part of the range of products: the small items and the slow runners. In this area the articles

with the highest turnover are on the ground floor in flow racks or on pallets. The articles with the lowest turnover are on the new mezzanine floor with shelf racks. Pallet racks stand against the walls around this area to supplement the picking stocks. "We call these the close-to-fill locations", says Megens. Order pickers make their rounds with intelligent pick carts that offer space for eight bins. The intelligence is visible through the pick-to-light displays on each cart. As soon as the order picker scans the barcode of the pick location, these displays indicate how many pieces must be placed in each bin.

Pigeonholes
The e-commerce orders with two or more order lines go to an area with a put to light wall ('pigeonholes'), where they are consolidated by order. When an employee scans an article, a light indicates in which hole that article must be placed. When an order is complete, the light on the other side of the hole lights up. For packaging staff, this is the sign that this order can be packaged and shipped. "This step enables us to cut orders and bundle the partial orders per zone, so that order pickers do not have to walk as far. The time saving that this yields far outweighs the extra time we need for order consolidation."

Total cost of ownership

The control of the order picking carts, conveyors, shuttles, box stackers and pigeonholes is handled by Inther LC, the control software of Inther Group. This software is integrated with Locus, the existing WMS from Blokker. Criteria such as quality and reliability played an important role in the choice of Inther Group as a system integrator. "What Inther has argued is that they could offer a total solution. This leads to a lower total cost of ownership. Inther takes good care of its customers. They not only carry out the assignment, but also think along with us", says Megens.

Sales driver

Now that the DC overhaul is complete, the logistics costs are minimized. But that is not the only advantage, explains Megens. "Logistics is no longer an obstacle to the implementation of the commercial strategy. In fact, logistics can be a driver for the commercial strategy in the future. We can now support more logistics concepts, which provides additional sales arguments. Our distribution center has become a sales machine."

Facts & Figures

> Surface area: 90,000 square meters
> SKU's: 28,000
> Bulk stock 23,000 pallets in a small aisle warehouse
> Close-to-fill stock: 29,000 pallets in pallet racks
> Order picking of pallets: 8,000 locations
> Order picking from flow racks: 4,000 locations
> Order picking from shelf racks: 19,000 locations
> Buffer system with shuttle aisle: 4,160 totes and 13 shuttles
> Automatic tote stackers: 2 stations including automatic lidding and strapping machine
> Pigeonholes: 7 setups with 48 consolidation compartments and 8 setups with 24 consolidation sections
> 65 Pick-to-Light carts
> 60 sorting carts
> Operating software: Inther LC
> WMS: Locus (Centric)

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PICK CART 61

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