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Efficient and sustainable new distribution center for My Jewellery

Interview with Vilmar Blienkendaal, CFO/CTO at My Jewellery

My Jewellery opened a new, 10,000m² distribution center (DC) in the Dutch city of Den Bosch in 2023. The company enlisted the help of logistics consultancy Groenewout for the design, supervision of the construction work, logistics setup and realization.

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My Jewellery is a fast-growing Dutch fashion and jewelry brand that has evolved into a leading industry player since its foundation in 2011. Today, it has more than 39 bricks-and-mortar stores throughout the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France, plus a strong online presence. "We had no choice but to expand our logistics infrastructure to support the growth of our logistics activities," says Vilmar Blienkendaal CFO/CTO at My Jewellery.

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Vilmar Blienkendaal: "Thanks to Groenewout's expertise, we are now able to work more efficiently and respond flexibly to changing market conditions"

Logistics expertise needed

"Due to increasing demand, we had outgrown our existing 2,850m² warehouse, which included shelves and pallet racking. We simply needed more space to scale up our operations," Vilmar explains. "We had drawn up a plan for a new distribution center at a greenfield site in Den Bosch, but we realized we needed specialist logistics expertise to tackle the project properly. How could we organize our logistics processes as efficiently as possible? And what would that mean for the design of the facility? We went in search of a partner that could advise us on both logistics and building-related aspects."

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The search led Vilmar to Groenewout, and he immediately felt a click during the initial conversation. Therefore, he asked Groenewout to manage the project from start to finish. "We wanted a professional consultancy firm that could help us optimize the logistics design and also support us during implementation," Vilmar states.



The new distribution centre in Den Bosch is expected to receive the BREEAM Excellent in-Use certification by the end of 2024.

Feasibility study

After Groenewout had completed a feasibility study for the DC's logistics design, the consultants analyzed the findings plus other data to write a business case for two scenarios. "The first scenario was a manual concept with pallet racking and shelving. The second scenario was more future-oriented and also used robotization," Vilmar comments.

Groenewout then drew up a Program of Requirements for the layout of the DC and supervised both the realization of the logistics design and the implementation. Vilmar: "Groenewout was responsible for all the logistics-related systems, including pallet racks, shelving, packaging machines and goods-to-person (GTP) solutions. The consultants managed the tenders for the various systems and were also involved in testing and implementation."

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The new accommodation will enable My Jewellery to better support both online and physical activities, and to expand automation in phases in the future.

Accelerated implementation of automation

My Jewellery originally planned to automate its logistics processes step by step. “We didn’t want to make too many changes at the same time, because we were already implementing a new WMS,” Vilmar explains. That WMS had been advised by Groenewout as part of the Program of Requirements, and My Jewellery decided to handle the rollout itself.

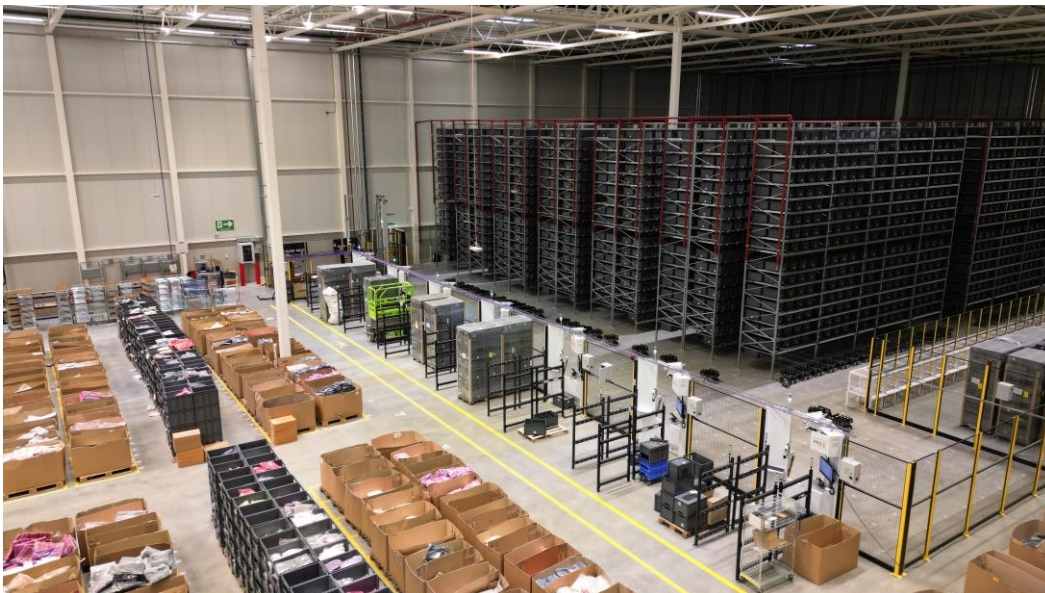
Groenewout advised conducting additional analysis for an automated packaging solution. “We implemented that solution immediately because of the rapid ROI,” says Vilmar. Thanks to the more efficient setup, the number of packing tables could be reduced from 12 to just two. Besides this, picking accuracy has significantly improved and My Jewellery has greatly reduced the number of goods damaged during shipping.

“We intended to begin with a manual system for our picking process, and then move to robotization at some point in the future. However, the tight labor market forced us to accelerate that plan,” Vilmar continues. “So we decided to invest in an automated system for that right from the start too.”

Together with Groenewout, My Jewellery chose Geek+’s robotic solutions for this logistics process, with a total of 22 tote-to-person RS8 RoboShuttles and

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66 P40 picking solutions forming the beating heart. "This solution maximizes warehouse space and eliminates walking for our employees," states Vilmar. The system also keeps My Jewellery adaptive to the differing needs of store-focused, B2B and B2C activities as well as activities for platforms such as Zalando. "We have a special zone of shelving stocked with our fast movers," Vilmar adds. The robots will go live in the first quarter of 2025.



Together with Groenewout, My Jewellery opted for an AMR solution that maximises warehouse space and eliminates walking distances for employees. The robots will be put into service in the first quarter of 2025.

No-nonsense approach

Groenewout's no-nonsense approach suits My Jewellery perfectly, according to Vilmar: "We clicked immediately. The consultants are all-rounders and make proactive suggestions for how we can optimize processes. I particularly liked the project-based approach: from problem analysis through to implementation. We were so happy with how it all went that that we hired Groenewout for the realization phase as well."

Sustainable and efficient

Moreover, Groenewout played an important role in the revision of the construction plans. The consultants suggested various modifications that tailored the original, industry-standard design to suit My Jewellery's specific processes. These included improvements to security, access control, fire safety

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and data systems, as well as structural modifications to facilitate the company's future logistics process.

Sustainability is an important pillar for My Jewellery. BREEAM certification "Excellent In-Use" has been applied for the new distribution center and is expected to be awarded by the end of 2024. Sustainability considerations have also been incorporated into the logistics setup.

Vilmar sums up the benefits: "Thanks to our new packaging machines, for example, we use significantly less cardboard while saving energy at the same time. Additionally, the sustainable solutions help us ship products to customers quickly and efficiently, and ensure a safe and healthy working environment for our employees."



Thanks to the new packaging machines, My Jewellery uses significantly less cardboard and saves energy at the same time.

Future outlook

The new distribution center enables My Jewellery to better support both online and bricks-and-mortar retail activities. Moreover, it includes the possibility to further expand the robotic system in the future, if necessary.

Vilmar is very pleased with the final result and is optimistic about the future: "Groenewout not only helped us with the design and realization of our new DC, but also helped us to create a scalable solution that anticipates further

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growth. Thanks to Groenewout's expertise, we're now able to work more efficiently and also have the flexibility to respond to market changes."

"We are so satisfied that we recently conducted a new study with Groenewout, and we will definitely act on this in the not-too-distant future," he concludes.

More information

If you would like more information about this project, please contact Étienne Teunnissen (tel. +31 76 533 04 40). For more information about My Jewellery, go to <https://www.my-jewellery.com/>

About the author

Mark Dohmen has been working as a journalist in the logistics sector for almost 30 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 now works as a freelancer, including producing articles and videos for logisticsinside.nl and logisticsinside.eu.