

As a logistics service provider, it was a logical step for PostNL to offer a total solution for fulfilment. At various locations in the Netherlands they offer retailers from sectors ranging from hardware to clothing the possibility for storage, picking, packaging and shipping. At the location in Houten, e-fulfilment for online stores is central. Thousands of orders are processed every day via an AutoStore system realised by Reesink Logistic Solutions (RLS).



"With a dedicated implementation team and due to the intensive cooperation with RLS, we were able to do live testing after two weeks!"

**Michiel Kalis,
Project Leader Fulfilment at postNL**

Praktijkcase PostNL

DELIVERY WITHIN 24 HOURS DUE TO AUTOSTORE

With the e-fulfilment concept, PostNL focuses on small and medium-sized webshops. "We see that large webshops can automate themselves more easily. We offer exactly the same automation benefits precisely to the webshops that cannot do that", says Michiel Kalis, Program Manager Fulfilment at PostNL. In 2017, after launching the new AutoStore system, they launched their new e-fulfilment concept in the market.

New solution on the existing premises

For a number of years fulfilment has been offered by PostNL. In Houten, layers goods were stored in racks and orders were picked by hand. "In order to strengthen our market position in fulfilment, we wanted to focus fully on automation," says Michiel. A new system had to fulfil a number of important conditions. "It had to be realised in our existing premises with certain heights. We also wanted a scalable system that requires little maintenance."

At a trade fair, PostNL got to find out more about the Reesink Logistic Solutions (RLS) AutoStore system. After a thorough comparison of a shuttle system and AutoStore, the latter was selected. Only six months after the approval of the final plan, the first phase of the system was commissioned. The system, consisting of the grid with around 10,000 bins, 3 workstations and 12 robots, started with processing the orders. Phase two will follow in November 2017. The total system now consists of 21,000 bins, 42 robots and 8 workstations.

Dedicated implementation team

With the fulfilment solution, PostNL takes care of the receipt and returns, in addition to picking and shipping. "You can imagine how complex this is for the IT system," laughs Michiel.

The warehouse management system of PostNL can be linked to the e-commerce system of the webshops. For example, webshop owners have real-time insight into their stocks and the status of orders. To facilitate the implementation running as smoothly as possible, PostNL created a 'dedicated implementation team'. "A group of specialists, specially released for this has worked very hard, together with employees, launching customers and the RLS specialists. Success is not making few mistakes, but rather learning how to remedy the mistakes in a short time. By quickly connecting with the fixed RLS project team, every problem was solved within a day. We succeeded because we really worked together as partners" he continues.

The customer PostNL (www.postnl.nl/fulfilment)

Location: Houten
Activity: All services which are required to successfully deliver an online order.



The AutoStore warehouse

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|-------------------|---------------|
| Surface area: | 15,500 m2 |
| Height: | 9,5 metres |
| Number of trays: | 21,000 |
| Number of robots: | 42 |
| Entry stations: | 2 |
| Exit stations: | 6 |
| Completion: | november 2017 |

"Due to AutoStore, our employees can do the things that really add value for the customer!"

More time for customisation

In peak periods, the AutoStore system operates 16 hours a day and 8 hours a day in the quieter periods. "Because every order placed before 00:00 is sent that same night, we start each day with an almost empty order-pot," says Michiel. The work of the employees has become less knowledge-intensive due to the AutoStore system. "The employees have to perform fewer actions and the margin of error is virtually zero with AutoStore. The unpleasant activities have been removed from the work and the employees focus on tasks that really add value to the customer.

Webshops can, for example, indicate how the product should be packaged. A pink ribbon, a personal card: due to the automation of the picking process, the employee has their hands free to make additions like this. "The wishes of the webshop are in the system and when an order is given, an employee will see exactly which additional actions apply. These actions are supported with photos and tips from the system", says Michiel.

Successful cooperation

PostNL aims to grow significantly



in the coming years in the field of fulfilment. For instance, a great deal of attention is paid to sustainable packaging and fulfilment automation in markets that are lagging behind. "Due to the intensive cooperation with RLS, this project proceeded smoothly and quickly and we successfully launched the e-fulfilment concept. The same project manager and engineer assisted us right from the beginning. They brought extensive knowledge and many ideas and always kept a critical eye on things", Michiel concludes.

Project Leader Daan Niels explains:

"The special thing about this project is that it was delivered in two phases. In

phase one, the entire grid was already built, but it was filled with only half of the number of containers. With this they could show that it worked before switching to phase two. We were able to implement the project at a rapid pace: both phases were completed in less than a year."

"PostNL is a large organisation, but that has not hampered the process in any way. Because a small but very diverse project team from various disciplines was made available, we were able to do all the work in a short time. We are happy to come to PostNL to show the system to interested parties. "



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