

Case Study: Decostar B.V.

DECOSTAR

Decostar B.V. is a home decoration wholesaler based in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands. With the collection of diverse home decorations of their own brand Countryfield, supplemented by various fragrance brands, the company has been serving a significant target group on the global market for over 20 years. Its range consists of a year-round basic collection and two seasonal indoor and outdoor collections that are reconfigured every six months. Decostar supplies these to wholesalers, retailers and national and international retail chains. In addition to the company headquarters and showroom in Apeldoorn, Decostar has a distribution centre in IJsselmuiden, where the majority of Crown forklifts are in operation.



Crown's solution sped up warehouse processes at Decostar by over 18 percent

Decostar B.V. is a Dutch wholesaler of indoor and outdoor home decorations. Based in Apeldoorn, the company has been offering customers from all over the world a wide range of decorative and home accessories for over 20 years. Its customers include wholesalers and retailers as well as national and international retail chains, which Decostar supplies from a 21.000 m² distribution centre in IJsselmuiden. Products from Decostar's own brand Countryfield comprise the majority of its range, as well as items from selected manufacturers.

The strong growth Decostar has experienced in recent years has also had an impact on its warehousing, which is the reason why the storage capacities have been continuously expanded. In addition to a modern new building, this includes storage space rented from a neighbour. At present,

around 11,000 items are stored in 29,000 pallet positions in its distribution centre – which has expanded to four buildings – with many containers with goods ordered from the Far East arriving at the warehouse every year. These increased volumes led to Decostar's growing requirements in intralogistics performance. The growing number of pallets being stored and retrieved made it necessary to modernise and expand its fleet of forklift trucks. The focus was on accelerating and more efficiently organising their processes.

Long-standing partnership creates trust

Decostar relied on its long-standing business relationship with Crown to realise its high standards. This cooperation began in 2013 with the

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acquisition of seven lift trucks. The initial equipment included four WT Series pallet trucks and three GPC Series order pickers. Just one year later, Decostar expanded the fleet with two SP Series order pickers for the storage and retrieval of pallets stored at higher levels.

For over eleven years, order picking in the warehouse has been carried

out by Crown lift trucks, and this fleet has grown to 16 units. It currently includes five WT 3040 Series pallet trucks for loading and unloading lorries and for order picking purposes. The forks, which have been extended to 2,400 mm on some of the pallet trucks, allow the staff to pick up to two pallets at the same time, thus saving time and unnecessary travel.

Five GPC 3040 Series order pickers are also in operation for handling pallets that are stored on the lower shelves. These are also fitted with extended forks for transporting multiple pallets. With their high efficiency and intuitive operation, the pallet trucks and order pickers perform their pallet handling tasks with precision and in a reliable fashion. Users benefit in their daily work from the lift trucks' special operating comfort, which makes driving and manoeuvring in the narrow aisles considerably easier.

Productivity boost thanks to Xpress Lower

Decostar relies on the performance of three ESR Series reach trucks for loading and unloading from the higher shelves. These trucks are specially designed for intensive operations and, with their fast lift and lower speeds, offer greater productivity for demanding operations at considerable heights. Supply Chain Manager, Bastiaan Vosselman, describes the Xpress Lower functionality of the reach trucks as an absolute highlight. The Decostar manager emphasises: "The outstanding thing about it is the particularly fast pallet lifting and lowering.



In the warehouse, employees communicate via modern headsets with pick-by-voice technology.

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Xpress Lower technology doubles the lowering speed, thereby increasing productivity in the warehouse.

This saves us a great deal of time because we then spend far less time waiting in front of the shelves. Our highest racks are over 11 metres high, so these faster processes quickly add up to considerable time savings.”

Xpress Lower helped to accelerate the pallet handling processes significantly. This enables Decostar to speed up its processes by more than 18 percent. Where previously each reach truck moved around 185 pallets per shift, throughput increased to 219 pallets thanks to Crown. In the first year after switching, the faster processes arising from the changeover led to five-digit savings.

However, the strong performance of the ESR Series in the over-eleven-metre-high racks is due to other factors as well. For instance, the reach trucks are supported by integrated cameras to ensure safe and precise access at considerable heights. The camera systems are mounted to the reach trucks’ forks, providing operators with an overview of pallet placement through colour monitors in the operator compartment. This means they can reliably store and retrieve pallets regardless of their location.

The SP Series supports access at high levels

In addition to the ESR Series, Decostar counts on two SP Series high-level order pickers for precise and safe picking. With their performance-oriented lift, lower and driving capabilities, these functionalities ensure effective retrieval processes at greater heights as well.

Thanks to a spacious operator compartment, users of the SP Series also benefit from plenty of room to manoeuvre and from wide access to the racks. As a result, this allows them to access pallets quickly and complete picking tasks swiftly.

In addition to Crown’s high-performance forklifts, reorganising the workflows in the warehouse ensured efficient use. One of the reasons for this was the seasonal fluctuation in handling volumes. Retailers order a lot more goods in the run-up to the spring and outdoor season and for the upcoming Christmas season than they do during the rest of the year. In the past, this meant that the peak seasons at the beginning of the year and in August and September were very busy, pushing warehouse capacity to its limits. For this reason, additional lift trucks had to be rented on a short-term basis during these periods.

In the recent years, a balanced order management and improved planning levelled out the peaks in demand. This cushioned the previous peak periods and led to a less fluctuating capacity utilisation throughout the year. Bastiaan Vosselman explains the decision to expand Decostar’s cooperation with Crown: “We’ve grown considerably in recent years, which has resulted in a demand for additional lift trucks. We decided in favour of Crown because we’ve already had a good experience with their products in the past. Crown lift trucks are reliable and safe. And we’ve always had a pleasant working relationship and become accustomed to Crown’s excellent service.”

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Pick-by-voice creates additional precision

Employees at Decostar's distribution centre are supported by proven technology tools while they pick orders. The staff have been using headsets featuring pick-by-voice technology for eleven years. The voice commands provided via the connected WMS system give precise instructions on where the next line should be picked from. Once the orders are completed, the operators confirm it via a voice message. After that they are informed about their next task via their headphones. In addition to the expansion of various reach trucks, the number of pick sets has also been expanded.

Great ergonomics and reliability

What all the Crown lift trucks in operation at Decostar have in common is that their operators' tasks are carried out under highly ergonomic conditions, which has contributed to employee health. Integrating the fleet went smoothly as well. A key reason for this is that the employees need only little time to familiarise themselves with the Crown lift trucks, as well as the vehicles' intuitive handling. This contributes to user satisfaction as well, as does their robust design and resulting resistance to downtime. In this way, long-term operational readiness is ensured.



Thanks to Crown, Decostar is improving ergonomics and reliability within the warehouse.

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