

European Distributor Automates Order Processing with Enterprise Content Management Solution

Cito Benelux integrates Open Text digital delivery, archival with OCR, ERP technologies for faster order entry

Cito Benelux®

“With Open Text playing a part in the overall solution, we have achieved faster turnaround time for orders.”

André Pruijn,
IT Manager, Cito Benelux

Cito Benelux® B.V. based in the Netherlands, is a subsidiary of Phoenix Contact and Rittal – global manufacturers headquartered in Germany. Cito Benelux distributes industrial electrical and electronic components as well as enclosure and housing technologies from the parent companies to the Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) region.

Founded in 1978, Cito Benelux employs 250 professionals working from its headquarters in Zevenaar and six more offices across the region. It handles back office functions for Phoenix Contact and Rittal in the Benelux area, including logistics, warehousing, delivery, accounting, and IT.

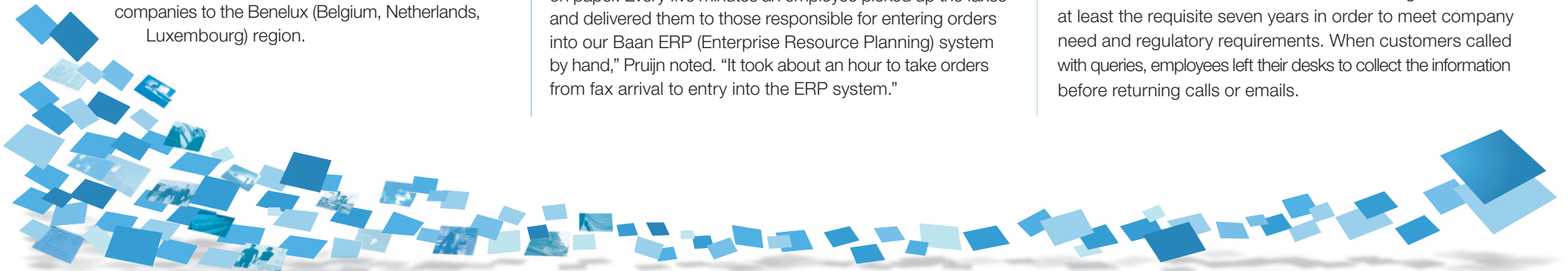
Paper-based, manual order entry

Managing orders is the most important and urgent business process for Cito Benelux, according to André Pruijn, IT Manager with the company. “Many orders must be delivered tomorrow or the day after. It is essential for our company to input orders as fast as we can into our system,” he said. The company receives more than 600 orders for electronic components and packaging every day; close to 70 percent, or 500, of those orders are sent to Cito Benelux via fax.

Previously, Cito Benelux monitored fax machines—five in the headquarters office alone—for the deadline-sensitive documents. “Faxes arrived on the machines and were printed on paper. Every five minutes an employee picked up the faxes and delivered them to those responsible for entering orders into our Baan ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system by hand,” Pruijn noted. “It took about an hour to take orders from fax arrival to entry into the ERP system.”

In the orders process, hours or minutes can mean the difference between on-time delivery that meets customer expectations or delayed processing that causes frustrating delays. Customers eager for next-day delivery must submit orders in time to allow time for processing. The last collection of paper faxes was completed by this deadline. Occasionally, however, papers could get backed up on a busy fax machines or misplaced en route to order entry personnel. A lost fax meant a lost order; customers might then re-send faxes resulting in double entry and double delivery of goods. Other errors were related to the outdated order entry process. “Employees built orders in the ERP system manually, which could result in mistakes now and then,” said Eric-Jan Van Kempen, IT specialist with Cito Benelux.

Once received and processed, Cito Benelux employees created paper order acknowledgements to be faxed back to customers. All orders, acknowledgements, and related documents were then filed and stored in filing cabinets for at least the requisite seven years in order to meet company need and regulatory requirements. When customers called with queries, employees left their desks to collect the information before returning calls or emails.



Digital, automated order optimization

Cito Benelux enhanced order processing and other business tasks with Open Text enterprise content management solutions integrated with OCR (Optical Character Recognition) capabilities and the company's Baan ERP system. The updated process replaced manual methods with digital, automated order entry.

One of Cito Benelux's parent companies first implemented a similar system. "Electronic faxes and automatic orders in the ERP system were up and running at Phoenix Contact," Pruijn explained. "It's a process that is very important for our company as well, so we were the first international subsidiary to implement the same solution.

"We were asked to choose our fax solution," he continued. "That was rather simple. We know the Dutch market and common solutions which led us to Open Text Fax Server, RightFax Edition. Upon investigation, we found Fax Server fulfilled our must-haves and should-haves for a digital fax solution." With the installation of Fax Server, Cito Benelux began its relationship with SecureComm, a value added distributor of information and communication technologies. "Our cooperation with SecureComm and Open Text is very good," Van Kempen noted. "We described what we wanted and have a solution that meets our needs 100 percent."

Pruijn added, "We first succeeded in making fax documents digital and transferring data through an OCR process. Then, the amount of incoming faxes grew and our automation goals resulted in more solutions from Open Text." With the new process, orders received via Fax Server are placed into a directory via E-Connect, a customized solution developed

Company

Cito Benelux B.V.

Industry

Distribution

Business Challenge

- Delayed or misplaced orders could result in double entry or delivery of goods
- Paper-based archival limited access for answering customer queries

Business Solution

- Integrated system including Open Text Fax Server, RightFax Edition (with Microsoft Exchange module)
- Open Text Document Server, Alchemy Edition (with Web access module)
- E-Connect, custom solution designed by Open Text Professional Services
- Baan® ERP system
- OCR technology

Business Benefits

- Faster, error-free order entry
- Enhanced service and compliance
- Elimination of fax machines
- Support of efforts to reduce energy use

by Open Text Professional Services. An OCR process from another vendor then separates the documents into orders and non-orders. Orders are archived in Open Text Document Server, Alchemy Edition as searchable Tiff (content) and searchable profile metadata and forwarded to Baan. The ERP system executes a customized workflow and the resulting metadata in XML format is updated to the order image previously stored in Document Server. Non-orders are printed and stored digitally within Document Server.

Order acknowledgements are also automatically created and delivered to customers. The Open Text Fax Server Connector for Microsoft Exchange acts as a communication link between Fax Server and the Microsoft Exchange Server. "We made a connection between Baan and an added solution that prints output to Exchange," Pruijn said. "Since we have the connection between Exchange and Fax Server, we're now capable of creating order acknowledgements in Baan that are delivered via Exchange and Fax Server."

Employees fax additional files from Microsoft® Word® or other applications without leaving Microsoft® Outlook®. Sent and received faxes are automatically stored for easy access.

"Ordered one minute, delivered the next"

Cito Benelux customers in the automotive, telecommunications, and other industries follow tight schedules for complex projects that call for carefully timed product deliveries. The motto for Cito Benelux's parent company promises, "Ordered from Rittal one minute, delivered the next!" As a subsidiary offering local, trouble-free logistics, Cito Benelux has realized several benefits with digital, automated order processing.



Fast, error-free order entry

Open Text solutions drive digital delivery and archival for Cito Benelux to efficiently fulfill customer orders, its foremost objective. “With Open Text playing a part in the overall solution, we have achieved faster turnaround time for orders,” Pruijn said. Order entry processes that took an hour are now fully automated to go from faxed order arrival to entry in the ERP system within seconds, and almost without any human interaction. “For our customers, faster processing and less mistakes mean that we are a more reliable supplier of goods. For Cito Benelux, the efficiency gains result in less returned orders and better service to our customers.”

Employee productivity

Order entry personnel are pleased with automated inbound order processing. Orders previously handled by the separate sales departments are now managed by the central order entry software solutions. Employees who worked full-time on order entry processes now support other department activities. Furthermore, “Employees who use Fax Server for outgoing faxes are enthusiastic about the service,” Van Kempen noted. “It is very stable and we hear no complaints.”

Enhanced service and compliance

“Employees now have electronic access to recent faxes to answer customer queries,” Pruijn said. Using the Open Text Document Server Web Access Module, employees across all locations can search Document Server repositories via the Internet. “There will be additional real efficiency gain in finding documents from a few years back in our digital archive,” he added. Since the new order process is a more recent implementation, there are still years of paper files in a warehouse to meet storage requirements. Eventually, digital archival will allow Cito Benelux to eliminate most on-site filing cabinets as well as off-site storage while conveniently answering customer queries and complying with industry guidelines.

Hardware elimination

Almost all Cito Benelux employees spread across several offices use Fax Server as the digital fax solution for sending and receiving general faxes. Subsidiary offices use remote fax board servers for local faxing within each country, inbound faxes are transferred to the central system in Holland making digital files available across all locations and applications. Order optimization enabled Cito Benelux to remove all five fax machines previously used at the main office; the IT team

expects to eliminate more machines in other offices as it rolls out the automated process to other sites.

Sustainability

The Sustainable, Responsible Business (SRB) initiative is a trend in “green” IT operations for efficient energy use. “One of our quality assurance tasks is to monitor the way electricity and gas are used in the company, we are even required by the government to be active in the area,” Pruijn said, noting Dutch companies are required to reduce electricity use by 5 percent per year, a benchmark Cito Benelux has met for several years. “SRB in Holland is one of the things companies use to distinguish themselves. We see that elimination of printers and fax machines helps in that overall effort.”



SecureComm is a value added distributor of information communication technology (ICT) solutions in the areas of data loss prevention, ECM, security, storage and virtualization. Based in the Netherlands, SecureComm delivers products and related services through an extensive network of resellers. For more information, visit www.securecomm.nl.

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