

comotor
Roba Experience Report



IRONCLAD FACTS INSTEAD
OF DISTRIBUTED DATA
ROBA METALS GROUP



The Company

In addition to recycling, the core businesses of the Roba Metals Group include the trading and processing of steel, metals and precious metals. Roba Metals employees a staff of about 500 at sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom.

OVERVIEW

- Founded as a recycling company in 1937
- Around 500 employees at locations in the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Germany and Great Britain

FROM SELECTION TO IMPLEMENTATION

A ROUND THING

Transparency

Metal trading is a dynamic business in a constantly changing environment. Consequently the ERP system at the Roba Metal B.V. has developed over the years into a highly individual matter with steadily decreasing opportunities for upgrade. Thanks to the new industry software “comotor” for Microsoft Dynamics NAV, the metal trader was able to return to the standard. Now Roba Metals benefits from efficient, secure processes, a better overview and much greater information quality for its business decisions.

The Roba Metal B.V. of the Netherlands was established in 1937 as a recycling business. Over the decades the company continuously expanded its areas of business and took the plunge across the Dutch borders. Today the company employs a staff of about 500 at sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Germany and the United Kingdom. In addition to metal recycling, its core businesses include the trading and processing of steel, metal and precious metals. Roba Metals trades on the London Metal Exchange and operates its own processing works, which puts the company in the comfortable position to conduct its own frequent processing and preparation steps such as founding, milling, cutting and coating. “This allows us to ensure constantly high product quality and adapt flexibly to the desires of our customers,” points out Hendry Vis, Manager Operations Recycling at the Roba Metals B.V. Its target customers are construction firms, technical retail operations and the metal processing sector.

In 2003 Roba Metals introduced the ERP system Microsoft Dynamics NAV. The central processes were adjusted over and over to the particularities of metal trading and futures over the years. At the end, the enterprise software had become so thoroughly individualised that it would have been a tangible problem to migrate to the current version of the software. On top of that, not even the newest standard version covered all of the company’s requirements. “We were using a whole series of supplemental applications, only some of which were integrated. This created the need for a lot of manual effort, especially when it came to analyses and evaluations”, Hendry Vis recalls. For example, we were using an AS/400 application for financial management that only featured a rudimentary link using Excel macros. The company logistics utilised a specialised software while contract management relied on Lotus Notes. The result was that relevant information was distributed all across the company. “Our employees sometimes had to dig deeply and they couldn’t actually be sure that we had all of the data. We were simply lacking transparency”, adds Hendry Vis. Back to the standard



Back to the standard

These were the circumstances that led the Roba Metals Group to switch software in summer 2012. They had two goals on their agenda for the change. For one, the distributed data should be brought together and the Office programs should be replaced for the core processes. For another, they wanted to do more than collect data; they wanted to use it profitably. “Up to that point, the ratio of usable information to total data volume was pretty low. In the future we wanted to use the existing data more efficiently”, explains Fred Van Den Ham, Senior Trader and a member of the product team at Roba Metals. However, our first look at the standard scope of the then current version of Dynamics NAV 2013 showed that it wasn’t enough. “There were certainly plenty of positives, but the scope of functionality was insufficient to cover our needs”, summarises Van den Ham. As often happens in such situation, happy circumstance came to our aid: At the same time, tegos Group was looking for a pilot user for comotor, a new industry software for metal and raw material trading. The combination of both applications yielded a real chance for us to return to the standard. “We were already familiar with tegos due to the industry software enwiv. We were therefore basically confident about the quality of the software, even at such an early stage”, the senior trader clarifies.



Successful process optimisation

The project began in October 2012 with a comprehensive process analysis. The existing work processes were documented and optimised to fit the expanded possibilities of the new ERP system. In early 2013 the software was then implemented and introduced. "We didn't want to breed another highly individualised system, which is why we aligned our processes closely to the given standard", emphasises Fred Van den Ham. There were only minor changes to contract management, analyses and cost calculations. The central work area of the software is metal trading. Here comotor unites inventory management, invoicing and contract management. It also supports risk management by monitoring currency and price risks and limiting potential dangers through credit limits. "Today our employees find all of their information in one place. This makes order and contract management more comfortable, faster and much more secure", points out Hendry Vis.

Efficient and clear

About 40 employees have been working with comotor and Dynamics NAV since January 2015 at 25 workplaces. Seamless processes in company departments such as logistics, production, controlling and administration have granted the Roba Metals B.V. noticeable benefits in terms of efficiency. For example, it allows the company to reduce or workload for contract management significantly. The complete coordination process in contract management now runs digitally. The running procedures are automatically forwarded to processing, preventing any orders from getting lost between Sales and Legal. A dashboard informs employees in real time of the current status, so they have information at all times. Integrating the truck weighing bridge was especially useful. "The entire weighing process used to be handled manually. That was time consuming and quite prone to errors. We were also unable to verify results in cases of doubt. Today the entire process is transparent", Manager Vis is happy to report. From his perspective, the switch to the role tailored client was the biggest benefit to the company. Incoming orders are automatically sent to the responsible contact person. If multiple employees are involved, comotor directs the process to the next stage on its own when the earlier one is complete. "What's great is that no one needs a reminder. We don't need as much as an email to control the order. In addition, the procedures remain transparent and easy to track longterm. We've been able to partly realise our vision of a paperless office thanks to comotor", Hendry Vis highlights.

When data becomes information

Another department which benefits from the system change is Controlling, which has a lot better information now than it used to. This is exactly the place where Roba Metals wants to expand in future, explains Senior Trader Van Den Ham: We still haven't reached the end of the road in terms of analyses. The next phase will be dedicated to generating verifiable data which is relevant to decision taking". The goal is to provide employees with the necessary information in every case without them having to undertake research to find it. At the same time, a dashboard for management will be developed which presents the key performance indicators in real time.



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