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Inventory availability and throughput at Stabilo International improved:

inconso fits SAP LES System to meet requirements of international subsidiaries

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Stabilo, the market leader for writing utensils in many countries, is the most popular brand of pens and markers especially for young people in Europe. The legendary "STABILO BOSS" is the most sold highlighter worldwide. Since the fall 2007 at the central production location in

Weißenburg, Stabilo uses a warehouse management system based on SAP LES that inconso AG adapted to the special requirements and implemented in close cooperation with the IT team from Stabilo. One of the reasons for selecting the SAP module was that it could also be used as a uniform software for the logistics processes internationally.

From Franken to France

The French subsidiary is responsible traditionally for one of the most important foreign markets of the company group. In this market, Stabilo holds, as an example, more than fifty percent of the marker market share – and the success of the Frankish company is noticeable even in the language: To make something in a document is called "stabiloter" in the neighbouring country.

Implementing the centrally specified solution in the modern distribution center near Strasbourg was more than a simple roll-out. Even when the product and article spectrum is mainly identical, the situation and processes in both warehouses are significantly different. This resulted in extensive adaptations being required.

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Differentiated by customer groups

Stabilo France, who received a majority of their goods from the Stabilo production locations in Germany, Czech Republic and Asia, differentiates among other aspects between two clearly different customer groups. The larger customers such as large department stores and the retail store chains are designated with „modern trade“ (MT). On the contrary, the „traditional trade“ (TT) includes the classical stationary shops. The large customers order the goods regularly in carton and pallet formats. The goods are often delivered to a central hub of the customer where the store distribution is then managed by the customer itself. The MT business is already accommodated by Stabilo France in that the large customer processes are assigned its own warehouse area containing its own goods receiving, order picking strategies and separate packing locations.

Progress in processes and special handling

The distribution center in Weißenburg operates automatically in many areas and is equipped with highly developed conveyor and order picking technology. On the contrary, manual processes are completely sufficient in the warehouse of the French subsidiary. Store-in and replenishment take place with forklifts; the order picking is path optimized according the Man to Goods principle using picking carts. Nevertheless, sophisticated strategies were taken into account and the opportunity during the implementation of SAP LES was used to achieve significant improvements both technically and in the actual processes.

The destination location determination during store-in is a multi-step process. The WMS orientates itself on criteria such as warehouse and warehouse location types as well as heights and weight classes. Within the restricted quantity of locations, the next free location is selected based on the store-in strategy relevant for the warehouse type. In addition, sorting keys assign the locations according to the best reach ability. Replenishment is then completed based on delivery demand (highest priority) and on minimum stock level (lowest priority).

On the technical side, the location was switched from paper based to radio frequency (RF) supported processes. This allowed for the possibility to implement a new picking strategy. Since the implementation of the new system, multi-order picking can also be done in Strasbourg. This enabled both a significantly improved inventory availability as well as throughput.

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Efficient realization

In hindsight, logistics manager Jacqui Entzmann is very satisfied with the entire package of adaptations even though there were worries in the team before the project began: „We had very good support from our colleagues in Weißenburg, who showed us the advantages of the SAP solution. And thanks to the efficient realization by inconso, the comprehensive project was completed on time and smoothly.“

For exactly this reason, inconso AG had developed an SAP ECC release-capable WMS template solution in Weißenburg. In this solution, the connection to the group-wide SAP ERP system - from the order advance notices through to the inventory bookings - are seamlessly guaranteed. At the same time, the existing Weißenburger solution was extended with the mentioned specific functions and requirements of a manual warehouse that is operated partly using RF technology and mobile end equipment. Special attention was given to the capability of taking over future updates of the SAP basis software and the easy implementation of SAP Service Packs. This ensures that Stabilo is always able to work with the latest SAP programs.

The standardization of the barcodes in the whole Stabilo group enables the use of the same data structures, converting routines and check number calculations. Based on a sophisticated authorization management concept, Stabilo can separate the warehouse locations with automation means, but still allow for a comprehensive management view.

(5.272 characters including spaces)

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inconso AG is one of the leading consulting and software suppliers for logistic solutions in Europe.

With 360 employees at offices in Bad Nauheim, Bremen, Dresden, Essen, Cologne, Münster, Stuttgart and Tours (France) inconso AG offers professional logistics consulting services, innovative and practical logistics software products and professional system solutions for the complete optimization of logistics processes for its customers.

The main focus areas for inconso are warehouse management based on the inconsoWMS product suite or the SAP Extended Warehouse Management (SAP EWM) application and logistics execution systems (SAP LES), transport logistics and supply chain execution and visibility solutions for trade, industry and services companies.

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