



## SAP brings real-time finance insight to improve business at Van Marcke

**A couple of years ago, Van Marcke embarked upon an ambitious transformation journey. As a leading wholesale distributor of bathroom, kitchen and heating products, the group had realized that change was a must to keep its business healthy in the face of digital disruption. One of the many projects on the transformation roadmap was the implementation of SAP, starting with the finance module. SAP S/4HANA Finance went live in early 2018.**

Van Marcke was established in 1929 by the grandfather of current CEO Caroline Van Marcke. With 132 technical shops in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the US and 19 showrooms in Belgium, France and Luxembourg, Van Marcke is a leader in its market. The rapid rise of e-commerce, however, urges the company to reinvent itself. The brand-new, CO2-neutral logistics complex will support that change. It is empowered by innovative technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) and big data. "IT is key for Van Marcke to grow and adapt as we move forward. That's why the IT team is increasingly involved in management decisions on the future of the company," says Michèle Adams. As a CFO, Michèle has a key role to play as well: she has to provide the management team with the financial insights they need to make decisions.

### 1 Financial results to support decision-making

"Insights weren't easy to get with our former ERP system," Michèle explains. "For decades, we had been relying on an AS/400 legacy system to support finance operations. Maintenance and updates were time consuming and, consequently, expensive. Each time the legislation changed, for example, developers had to incorporate these changes into our finance/controlling solution. More importantly, the legacy system could no longer deliver the capabilities we needed as we continued to evolve. Each month, we had to wait for the financial results to get a view on how we'd performed that month. In today's rapidly changing market, that's far too slow to support decision-making."

### 2 Experts in optimizing finance operations

Van Marcke decided to run SAP to future-proof its business and called on delaware to take finance operations to the next level. "We needed an IT implementation partner with solid expertise and references in finance. On top of that, we wanted them to be active both in Belgium, where we are headquartered, and in the US, as we have quite a bit of technical shops there. delaware met all the criteria," Michèle explains.

The delaware consultants worked closely with a team of Van Marcke business owners and key users to prepare the project and then implement SAP. "3 individuals from our 45-strong finance team helped create the blueprint, describing the scope, system requirements, milestones and deliverables," says Michèle. "Then, 6 colleagues, all of whom are very open to change, were involved in the actual implementation. To foster user adoption, we provided every single finance employee with up to 10 days of training."

### 3 The keys to a smooth transition



On 1 January 2018, exactly as scheduled, Van Marcke went live with SAP S/4HANA Finance. To ensure a smooth transition, Van Marcke chose a phased approach: SAP currently supports accounts payable and receivable processes, general ledger, controlling and fixed assets at Van Marcke's European branches. US colleagues use the SAP S/4HANA Finance platform, already integrated with SAP ECC for material management and sales and distribution. "Transitioning to a new ERP platform is never easy and it took us quite a bit of blood, sweat and tears. Yet the step-by-step approach and careful preparation helped us pull it through," says Michèle. "Our people had been working with the same system for many years. In general, people are scared of change – especially when it involves new technology. By involving key users in the preparation phase and providing ample training, we got everyone motivated, willing and able to jump on board. We went live on time without a hitch."

#### **4 Real-time insight add true business value**

As soon as SAP was running, it started delivering business value. Michèle and her team praise the standardization and real-time insight that SAP brings: "We are now using one central solution for every Van Marcke branch: processes are standardized and streamlined and there is only one version of the truth. These up-to-date insights help us optimize cash flow and improve margins, while they help the management team make informed business decisions. I'm sure that we'll be able to further raise efficiency and improve insight, as we're planning to integrate the finance platform with more SAP modules in the future."

"We've replaced our old system with a Porsche, which was a much-needed step to support our transformation," Michèle concludes. "More than that, it also boosts our employer brand: it makes Van Marcke a more attractive place to work for the digital natives that we need to drive our business forward."

