



Launching a fresh business model with Factory Historian

How data acquisition and dashboarding with Factory Historian supported water supplier Ekopak in its transition to a new Water-as-a-Service business model.

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Meet Ekopak, Belgium's first renewable water supplier. To support its new 'Water-as-a-Service' business model, the company required a scalable software platform for process data acquisition, machine monitoring and dashboarding. In two years' time, [Factory Historian](#) has become an essential part of Ekopak, with a notable positive impact on every aspect of the business: from process improvement to sales and invoicing. "We could not be happier with our choice", says CEO Pieter Loose.



About Ekopak

Ekopak is a Belgian water supplier that delivers drinking or process water to industrial companies, mainly obtained from renewable water sources. Its core mission is to make industrial water management much more sustainable, while drastically lowering production costs. Companies such as Waterlink, Borealis and Eastman are only a few of its over 700 customers.



Despite drought affecting people all over the world, about 50% of industrial process water goes to waste, often even before entering the factory. Fortunately, Ekopak now tackles this problem with a range of filtration technologies and a more sustainable approach.

How it works: the renewable process or drinking water is contained in a buffer tank from which water is pumped to Ekopak customers, without any water waste. Clients are invoiced per cubic metre of water, delivered within the agreed-upon quality parameters.

"Factory Historian allows us to follow-up any installation online. It gives us a perfect insight into how our installations are running."

Tim De Maet

Operations Manager at Ekopak

Why they chose our data historian

Whereas Ekopak used to focus exclusively on building and selling water treatment installations, today, its business model focuses entirely on selling water by volume. "To support this **business transformation**, real-time data acquisition and visual insights are crucial", CEO Pieter Loose explains. "Factory and its Historian software have proven to be the perfect partner and ideal tool to support the



launch of our new strategy. They played – and continue to play – a critical role in our transition.”

"We investigated multiple systems and could not be happier with our choice: Factory Historian meets all of our needs and we are eager to take it even further."

Pieter Loose

CEO at Ekopak



Real-time data acquisition

In addition to the design, construction and financing of its water treatment installations, Ekopak also takes care of the entire operational aspect. According to the CEO, “this means we need to **monitor our installations very closely**. Mobile maintenance teams keep our installations up-and-running. Those are supported by Factory Historian’s data collection, both real-time and historical”.

“More specifically, [Factory’s Historian](#) software helps us to remotely monitor our instrumentations, schedule **preventive maintenance** and extend the lifespan of the installations”, Operations Manager Tim De Maet adds.

“Collected sensor data, from water quality parameters to pressure levels, is sent to the cloud in real time through Factory’s OPC-UA collectors running on a [Revolution PI](#) device. Next, the data is securely stored in [InfluxDB](#) and visualised in dashboards with [Grafana](#). This allows us to follow-up any installation online hassle-free, create graphs and zoom in or out on certain parameters. It gives us a **perfect insight into how our installations are running**”.



Key features

- Real-time and historical process data acquisition
- Centralised and scalable system with no artificial limits
- Data integration with sales and invoicing department
- Collected data is securely stored in the Factry cloud
- Remote machine monitoring and email alerts

Process insights at lightning speed

“As soon as certain parameters show deviations, we are **notified instantly**, which enables us to respond much faster”, CEO Pieter Loose says. “Moreover, all of our Service Level Agreements imply a guaranteed water delivery. Without instant interaction between the system and our people, this would not be possible. Therefore, Factry Historian is an essential part of our business.”



“Within a long-term contract, our customers pay a fixed price per cubic metre of delivered water. But imagine, for instance, we misjudged pricing levels. Without Factry’s Historian, it would take a lot longer before we would notice those estimates were wrong. If this were the case, the process data gathered by the Historian would enable us to immediately **adjust pricing levels for new contracts.**”



Data visualisation in dashboards

Ekopak employees and management use the Historian software to get valuable insights for their specific roles in the company. **Process engineers** can access and visualise high-resolution data and use it to analyse what exactly happened in the process, in real time or within a certain time frame in the past.

Having this fine-grained data also allows the **finance department** to easily invoice on a monthly basis, based on the water produced according to the requested parameters and chemicals used in the process. The Historian's exquisitely designed, well-organised dashboards prove an easy-reference **sales instrument** for the CEO.

Key features

- Custom dashboards for different company roles
- Web-based user interface, accessible anywhere, anytime
- Create graphs in no time through templates
- Flexible software, enabling to implement new ideas fast



Related use case

Factory Historian allows people to work together on data more easily and to gain insights more quickly.

User-friendly & centralised visual interface

"Creating basic dashboards is very easy, using a series of templates stored in the web environment", Process Engineer Joost Van der Spurt asserts. "Instead of starting from scratch when a specific chart is required, you can simply edit the parameters, select the right sensors and you are ready to go."

Adding machines to an installation takes just a few minutes. It is both standardised and on-point."

"Another big advantage of Factory's data Historian is that it is a **centralised system**", Van der Spurt adds. "Let's say a filter gets stuck in an installation. Within the same platform, both the customer and us here at Ekopak can log on to the system and take a look at a detailed snapshot of the problem. Even our suppliers can follow up on these technical issues in real time, without having to be on-site."

"Factory's Historian software creates added value for any department, from process optimisation to sales and invoicing."

Pieter Loose

CEO at Ekopak



Client transparency

On client transparency, CEO Pieter Loose notes, “We create long-term partnerships with our customers. Therefore, they have to trust what we do. For that reason, we want them to see what goes on behind the scenes. Through different levels of custom client dashboards, the software offers them **tailored insights into water quality, availability and invoicing** – without our clients having to set up or implement anything themselves.”

“IoT and Industry 4.0 are predominantly about improving efficiency”, Loose adds. “As we can fully monitor our installations remotely, clients rarely see us on-site. For many of them, this opens up a completely new world. The Covid-19 pandemic has proven once again that remote working is part of the future. Businesses no longer need a Homer Simpson, sat in front of a hundred screens for hours on end.”



Homer Simpson at "work"



Related use case

How solar screen manufacturer Helioscreen maintained 100% productivity during Covid-19 through remote working.



Implementation process

“First, we launched a pilot project to prove the software’s effectiveness, and soon decided to go ahead with it”, Operations Manager De Maet says. “We increasingly integrated the software in our workflow. Today, our data integration standards keep on evolving. This is made possible by the flexible system on the one hand, but, on the other, by the people behind it. The Factry team acts highly **proactively** and is very **responsive** to our needs.”

CEO Pieter Loose: “The development of the software has been guided by our process, making it a very manageable system. It creates added value for every aspect of our business and allows us to extract data for any department, from process optimisation to sales and invoicing. Today, I cannot carry out a single prospection without showing off our data Historian dashboards.”

"Factry Historian offers us all the data we need for predictive maintenance on a silver platter."

Pieter Loose

CEO at Ekopak

Next steps with Factry’s Historian software

“At the start of our journey, we needed a data management platform that would be both **extremely reliable and easily scalable**. We thoroughly investigated multiple systems and could not be happier with our choice: [Factry Historian](#) meets all of our needs and we are eager to take it even further.”

Predictive maintenance

As the demand for Water-as-a-Service is rapidly increasing, for Ekopak, a continuous stream of service calls is not an option. “Since we are scaling up our business, we are working towards predictive maintenance. But in order to create such a solution, you need systems and data that provide us with the right information. Factry Historian offers us all the data we need on a silver platter.”

ERP data integration

As customers pay a fixed fee per cubic metre of water delivered within the agreed parameters, high efficiency and automation is key. Through a custom-made ERP integration, it will soon be possible to automatically add up the delivered water within certain parameters over a certain period of time, and subsequently send the data directly to the ERP software for monthly invoicing.

What does the future look like?

CEO Pieter Loose: “Drought is affecting a growing number of people every year. Our goal is for the next generation to consider it absolutely normal for factories to reuse water, and no longer rely on tap water. By combining a sustainable vision with **IoT technology and artificial intelligence**, we want to make sure this becomes self-evident. We are confident that Factry and its Historian software will help us reach this goal.”



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