

Web shop Bestel XL handles 60 percent of Deli XL orders



Deli XL, a leading wholesale supplier to the Dutch foodservice market, offers and reliably delivers an assortment of over 60,000 food and related products and services to its 30,000 customers in the hospitality, catering and institutional markets. Deli XL receives over two million order lines per month, of which 60 percent arrive via Bestel XL, an interactive Web site based on LANSA technology. Deli XL also uses the Visual LANSA Framework for extensions to its core ERP system.

Arnold Hendriks, Application Development Manager at Deli XL, explains, "Because of Bestel XL's flexible architecture, which allows our customers to set up their own Web and order preferences, we are able to support the order process of our large institutional customers, as well as the small restaurants."

Always a Pioneer

Deli XL has been a pioneer in offering its customers online order facilities since 1999 and was at that time one of the first companies in the Netherlands to build its eCommerce Web site on the AS/400, the predecessor of the IBM i.

Hendriks explains, "We are a long-time user of the IBM midrange platform, at first using the System 38 and after that the AS/400 and its successors. Initially we developed our systems with RPG, but in 1994 we decided to speed up the development process with a 4GL. After gaining advice and evaluating the options, we chose LANSA as it was the best fit for our organization."

"From then on we developed all new applications with LANSA and replaced some hard-to-maintain RPG applications with

LANSA as well. LANSA is far more productive than RPG. Moreover we have improved the quality of our programs and reduced maintenance costs by centrally defining and maintaining the business rules in the LANSA Repository."

It was never the intention to invest in the redevelopment of RPG systems that ran without problems, according to Hendriks. That's why there is still a lot of RPG logic to maintain today. Deli XL also uses packaged solutions, such as PeopleSoft Financials and specialized systems for sales support. When the Internet started to gain popularity, Deli XL was the first in the Dutch foodservice industry to offer its customers online ordering. "One of the most important criteria was that the Web site had to be fully integrated with the back-end ERP system, allowing customers to place

their orders in real-time against the actual stock-on-hand. LANSA had just launched their first Web development tool in 1998, so we started working with that," says Hendriks.

"Fast search facilities are essential with an assortment of over 60,000 products."

Continuous Improvement

Since its initial launch, Deli XL has released a new Bestel XL version at least once a year. Initially all development was in-house, but Web development has been outsourced to LANSA partner SOLAR IT since 2004.

"The current version has a significantly improved 'Search' facility, which is essential with an assortment of over 60,000 products!" remarks Hendriks. "Customers can search within their 'personal work-list' of previously ordered products, or through the entire product range using various search criteria."

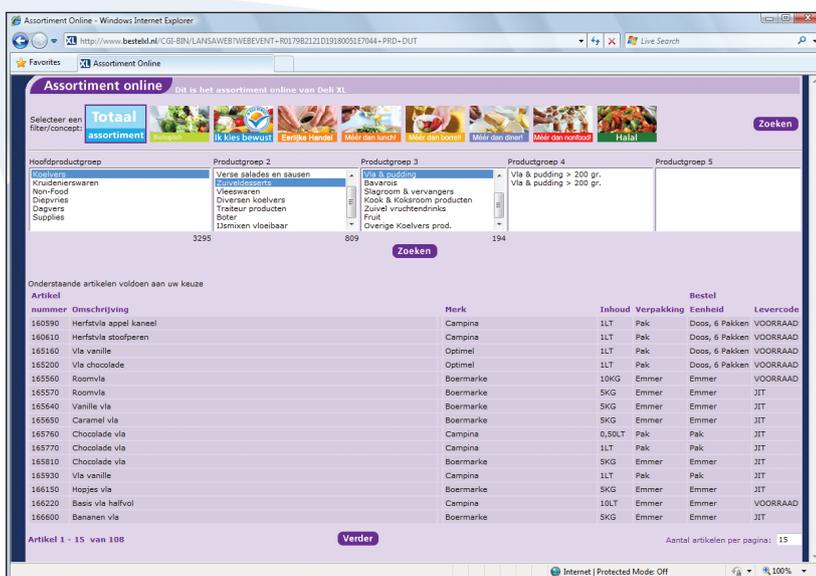
"In addition, we offer 'Assortment Online', a supplementary LANSA Web application which makes it easy to quickly find your way through the assortment," explains Hendriks. "Assortment Online very smartly clusters products in main groups and sub groups, allowing customers to explore the assortment superfast in a drill-down fashion."

Other recently introduced improvements include showing product images; being able to work with fixed quantities; extended order history; enhancements to avoid double ordering; and wherever possible, displaying both per item and per kilo prices. Moreover, Bestel XL now remembers the user's preferences, for example a specific sort sequence or whether to show prices including or excluding GST, removing the need to set the preferences for each order session.

Hendriks explains, "Because of Bestel XL's flexible architecture and because users can work according to their own preferences, we are able to support the order process of our large institutional customers, as well as the small restaurants."

Better Customer Service

The Deli XL Customer Contact Center is responsible for the application management



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of Bestel XL, from a functional point of view, making sure that relevant customer comments and suggestions are applied in the next version of the site.

Maarten van Riessen, Customer Contact Center Manager at Deli XL, explains how Bestel XL has improved the relationship with customers, "Our overall contact with the customer has become more profound as the superficial routine of going through the order list is now taken care of by the site."

"Traditionally we were the order entry department. Now we are the Customer Contact Center and Bestel XL forms a completely integrated part of our customer service. We improved customer service significantly. The focus is on the customer and how the customer places their order is only one of the topics of conversation."

"Accuracy has improved throughout the entire sales process. We now have less than ten per thousand erroneous order lines. That's including errors caused by the customers themselves, so it is an extremely low error rate."

"The 24x7 availability of Bestel XL is also of importance. Some of our small hospitality customers only know in the evening what they want to order for the next day. Using Bestel XL, customers are always up-to-date with the latest assortment changes and inventory. There is no other media that contributes so much to customer satisfaction."

Complaints Management

Deli XL recently implemented a new Complaints Management System (KMS). The KMS, developed with Visual LANSA Framework, is deployed on Windows rich-clients and uses an IBM i database server.

The KMS supports the entire process of registering and resolving a complaint, providing access to every staff member that may need to get involved, from corporate accounting to branch delivery.

In the last few years, as the order entry workload in the branch offices has evaporated, Deli XL has been gradually working towards a central Customer Contact Center, but the deliveries still take place from local branches. Without a smart Complaints Management System that is accessible by staff throughout all departments and branches, it would be impossible to solve urgent problems quickly.



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Customer complaints are now centrally reported and registered. The customer automatically and instantly receives a KMS generated email message as a confirmation that their complaint has been registered. At the same time, email alerts, explaining the problem and the desired solution, are sent to the responsible branch or department. The KMS is instantly updated with any status changes to the complaint and its resolution.

Van Riessen explains, "The KMS also supports us tremendously in gaining a better understanding of complaint data and statistics. Some of our customers receive weekly KMS reports. This is especially useful for our bigger accounts where the head office wants to know what complaints their branch locations have reported to us. This overview of Key Performance Indicators is a high quality additional service that we can now offer our customers."

"We deliver a total food and drink service and many customers are completely dependent on us for being able to serve their guests the right meal. Being able to resolve complaints quickly

and fix potential problems is of the utmost importance. Complaint management equals customer management. Our annual customer satisfaction survey clearly demonstrates the appreciation our customers have for the new efficient KMS," says van Riessen. "We receive on average 2,000 customer calls per week regarding issues that are worth formally registering. With that kind of volume it may be interesting to offer online registration as an alternative. However, even in the online scenario, our thinking is always to follow up with a personal phone call."

A Fantastic Score

"In addition to collecting 60 percent of our orders via Bestel XL, another ten percent arrives via XML," says Hendriks. "So altogether we receive 70 percent of our orders electronically. That's a fantastic score, positioning us well ahead of the pack. The benefit of Bestel XL above the XML order method is that the site immediately shows whether there is enough inventory, and in case there isn't, it will propose a comparable alternative."

"We have provided our customers with a choice of efficient ordering methods. We now consider offering additional functionality via the Web, such as online inquiries to invoice and account details," concludes Hendriks. ■

COMPANY AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Deli XL employs over 2,000 staff at 18 branch offices across the Netherlands and its head office in Ede. Deli XL has over 30,000 customers, including hotel chains, leading restaurants, fast service companies, hospitals, retirement homes, detention centers, company restaurants, catering companies, recreation and theme parks, convention centers and petrol stations. Deli XL is a member of the Bidvest Group, an international trading and distribution organization headquartered in South Africa.

For more information visit www.delixl.nl