

## COMFOOR IS POISED FOR GROWTH THANKS TO IMPROVED PROCESSES AND A NEW ERP PACKAGE



A fragmented system landscape stood in the way of Comfoor's international expansion. Together with Ctac, Comfoor improved its internal processes. Ctac also supported the company when selecting a brand-new ERP package to seamlessly match Comfoor's cross-border ambitions.



For more than thirty years, Comfoor has been developing, producing and supplying various hearing protection and improvement products. The company has two main disciplines. Under the Pluggerz brand, Comfoor sells earplugs for use at home and at work (such as earplugs for flying or specialised noise-reduction solutions for use in the workplace). The hearing protectors are produced in large quantities in Doetinchem, the Netherlands, and distributed to consumers all over the world. In addition, Comfoor produces a very specific hearing aid component on behalf of hearing care professionals: ear moulds. "These ear moulds are custom-made", says Frank Winkelhorst, Finance and Shared Services Manager at Comfoor. "They must meet high standards and are digitally produced using state-of-the-art modelling software and high-tech 3D printers."

Comfoor is ambitious. "We want to maintain our high market position", says Winkelhorst. "We currently operate in 25 countries, but we want to expand even more. We want to increase our exports and work with

even more different partners, distributors and hearing care professionals around the world. We also want to develop all kinds of new service concepts. There is tremendous market potential."

### **Fragmented IT landscape**

Such ambition requires an IT landscape that can support this cross-border growth. Yet in this regard, the company was up against the limits of the systems it used. Winkelhorst: "We have grown considerably in recent years. As you grow, your needs increase, which is why new systems were added and connected together all the time. For example, a logistics system, a production monitoring system and a customer management system. These were all individual solutions and didn't offer any synergy advantages."

The design of the IT landscape at Comfoor meant that employees often had to use different systems simultaneously, which is relatively time-consuming. Winkelhorst: "We would prefer to spend that time developing products or talking to our customers, so we

decided to completely overhaul the design of our IT environment. We wanted to do it properly, so we went back to basics. What direction do we want to take with the organisation? Which strategy and architecture are suitable? And how do we want to structure our processes in order to help our customers even better?"

### The right partner

Comfoor went in search of the right partner to guide and direct that process. Winkelhorst: "We were looking for a partner that would be a good fit for us; big enough to look past all kinds of boundaries, but small enough to stay pragmatic." Comfoor selected Ctac because Winkelhorst and his colleagues felt positive about the approach they had drawn up. "But the personal click with the consultants was the real deciding factor", says Winkelhorst. "We were thinking along the same lines straight away and perfectly complemented each other's thoughts."

Together with Comfoor, Ctac's consultants first mapped out Comfoor's processes and complexity. Winkelhorst: "The people at Ctac visit many manufacturing companies, so they know what works and what doesn't. The consultants know how to nicely align all the company's layers in an open manner and without being pedantic. It's really important to find things out, to hear what the state of your processes is and what is going wrong. If you can do that, you're doing well. In addition to specific manufacturing industry knowledge, the consultants also have acumen and conceptual abilities. They are completely immersed in the business and do not need slick, meaningless presentations to make their point."

### Follow-up steps

After all the processes were mapped out, a clear overview of the process disruptions and possibilities for improvement was created. Ctac then formulated Comfoor's future processes based on the company's



strategic objectives. These descriptions formed the basis for the requirements and further selection process. Winkelhorst: "Together, we reduced the number of potential ERP providers to a short-list of two names. We ultimately chose the solution that best suited us: a modern, scalable and widely deployable cloud system which could accommodate all our processes."

### Five-year return on investment

Winkelhorst expects the company to recoup its investment within five years. This return on investment is not only driven by the optimised processes and integrated solution choice, but also by the fact that he will soon have a clear picture of what is happening within the company. "This makes it much easier to reduce errors, for example. Because we see what goes wrong, we can learn from it. This will help us solve the problem and streamline our process even more. In addition, such an integrated system will help us to respond to our customers' specific wishes and needs. Rolling out new products and services and setting up the systems accordingly will also become easier."

### Work is changing

Does Winkelhorst think his own work is changing? "That's almost inevitable. These days, I am mainly busy managing errors and solving problems. Partly thanks to Ctac, I can now focus more on the organisation's growth and developing new products and working methods. But it's not just about my work. Now that this is in place, we can get to work beyond our borders. We are going to grow, and that is the most important thing."