

Autosport Tepper

Autosport Tepper takes on changing market with e-commerce platform for 220 dealers.

Autosport Tepper is a wholesaler in automobile accessories, selling everything you could need (over 65,000 products) to turn a normal car into something very special to look at and to drive. The company has been trading in accessories for tuning cars in the Netherlands since 1932, buying up several other companies along the way and growing into the biggest player in its field. Now its task is to maintain its position at the head of the pack.

The car accessories market is highly dynamic. Driven by a number of films and TV shows related to fast cars and tuning, Autosport Tepper has enjoyed a long period of great success. Its customers include small car companies as well as large retail chains such as Maxeda, Gamma and Hubo that sell car accessories.

In 2002, following the acquisition of competitor Service Best (which supplies in bulk to major car accessories dealers), the company decided it was time for a serious automation drive. The trade ERP platform Unit4 Business World (formerly Unit4 Agresso Wholesale) was adopted, which increased awareness of order streams, improved logistical efficiency and provided an insight into stock levels. The company continued to grow in the meantime and in 2006 introduced the Unit4 e-commerce solution allowing wholesale customers to place their orders online. This improved delivery times and avoided order selection mistakes that previously resulted from mistyped order details. As a commercial pioneer, Tepper knew that this was the future and began to use the technology more extensively.

Immune to crisis for so long

Following years of growth, Autosport Tepper began to feel the effects of the financial crisis in 2011. "The crisis didn't affect us initially," says Herman van de Kamp, ICT Manager at Autosport Tepper and Service

Best International in Veldhoven. "Many people asked us how we had remained immune to the worsening economic situation for so long. The reason is simple. Our target group – young car buffs, still living at home – would spend a significant part of their income on tuning their cars. But the crisis began to affect them too, with many finding themselves out of work. Modern cars are also supplied with many more features as standard, like air conditioning and navigation, lowering the demand for car accessories," adds Roberto van Bockel.

Web store for dealers

Bearing these trends in mind, and to recover lost income, Tepper took a close look at its own processes in early 2012, checking for areas in need of optimization. Logistics was one of those, while electronic ordering could also improve efficiency. There was a web store for consumers to order from and although the dealers received a partial reimbursement for each order placed, they were not altogether pleased with this way of working, preferring to approach consumers directly and cut out the intermediary. As this had never been the intention of the web store, Autosport Tepper closed it down after a year.





“They can also choose whether to have the product delivered to the dealer’s physical shop for collection, or to their home address. We organize the shipments and send an invoice to the dealer. This complete process is efficient and entirely digital. We intend to have 220 dealers signed up to our e-commerce platform by the end of the year.”

Roberto Van Bockel,
Autosport Tepper

A new e-commerce platform was chosen to replace it, set up especially for the dealers. 180 web stores have been deployed at www.autostyle.nl, one for every physical Autostyle dealer. Each one links back to the Unit4 Business World central database, with the same product range available at every store. All dealers have their own unique home page and web address. Van Bockel: “Consumers landing on Autostyle.nl can enter their postcode to find a local dealer. They can then choose to go to that dealer’s web store, place orders and settle the payment immediately.

Mountain of data

Autosport Tepper’s E-commerce Manager is happy to talk about how the platform runs now, though its creation was somewhat of a challenge. The major challenges were to:

- properly import the huge mountain of data from Unit4 Business World into the web stores;
- properly import the orders into the ERP system for logistical processing;
- send the shipment to the right address; and
- send the invoice the right dealer.

Clear agreements

Writser Werkman, Senior Application Manager at Autosport Tepper, explains that there were a number of initial challenges to make this enormous operation a success. Some of these were technical in nature, while others related to agreements around the distribution of responsibility. Roberto van Bockel: “I would advise any wholesale traders wishing to set up an extensive b2b e-commerce platform to set out clear agreements on who is responsible for what in advance. This is the quickest way to success and we have learned a lot from the process.”

Great experiment leading to future opportunity

“We were pioneering this approach within our field, launching a platform of two hundred web stores linked to our central ERP system via an Enterprise Service Bus (ESB),” continues Van Bockel. “There were no other examples to look to, but nevertheless the implementation was a success. The websites are live, populated with information from Unit4 Business World. Orders are sent from the web stores to the ERP application and logistically processed into physical deliveries. We are very enthusiastic about this achievement. Customers can now place their orders easily and efficiently online, which are fed through to the Unit4 solution.

The dealers are benefiting from it too; customers place their orders via the dealer’s own website and they don’t have to lift a finger. Plus, the logistical process at our end is much more efficient than for orders sent through by e-mail or fax. We have also linked all current Autosport Tepper’s products to the ESB, and there are plenty more dealers eager to join our platform, like TomTom and Pioneer. The

solution would allow them to reach a broader market segment and fill many more web stores with their products, offering further opportunities for our own development.”

Working in partnership

Herman van de Kamp: “The collaboration between Unit4 and Tepper is very good. We engage Unit4 in strategic consultancy once or twice a year. We also switched to the Worry-Free ICT concept a year ago, meeting Unit4’s consultant once a month to discuss the ICT and support key users and application managers. We have made great strides through Worry-Free ICT compared to our previous situation, in which we ourselves were responsible for supporting our entire ICT environment. The costs and responsibilities are now much clearer. We engaged Unit4’s support on a per-incident basis at first, but now we meet more regularly to proactively avoid major problems.”



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unit4.com

Unit4 N.V.

Stationspark 1000

3364 DA Sliedrecht, Postbus 102

3360 AC Sliedrecht, The Netherlands

T +31 (0)184 44 44 44

F +31 (0)184 44 44 45

E info.group@unit4.com

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