

COLOPFON

Title: Built on trust.

Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions, a story of innovation from the polder and impact in the world.

Publisher: Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions.

Editor: Huib van der Wal copywriter.

Final editing: Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions.

Photos: archive Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions.

Graphic design: Judith Hut, Dith Design. September 2025

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a story of innovation from the polder
and impact in the world.***

Contents

Foreword 7

The previous history
*'I chose metalworking
because of the smell'* 9

1 13

Back in The Netherlands,
in another world

2 18

Exports drive growth

3 22

The split

4 26

The first employee of
Verbruggen

5 28

*'Alex wrote out his
quotation on a notepad'*

6 31

'It felt like a big family to me'

7 34

The click between two family
businesses

8 36

*'At Verbruggen they have an eye for
the human being'*

9 38

At Verbruggen they work with a
Lean system

10 40

Frank Stoop's VPM-14 has had
12.5 million bags stacked since 2008!

11

44

Modern machines, few employees

17

56

The market in South America is open

12

46

*'I am proud to be able to work
in this great company'*

18

58

What customers say about
Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions

13

48

The loyalty between VPS and SEW

19

66

The world changes, Verbruggen
is changing along

14

50

The best of two worlds

20

68

*'There are great opportunities
in Southeast Asia'*

15

52

Trust, expertise and continuity

21

70

*'It is important that we value and respect
each other, everywhere in the world'*

16

54

'No one can beat us!'

21a

76

Alex Verbruggen; grateful and proud



ENGINEERING FOR THE FUTURE,
BUILDING FOR GENERATIONS.

Foreword

GRATEFUL

In our family, the family business Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions always takes an important place. It couldn't be otherwise as the undersigned is co-founder, and, 34 years after its founding, all seven children have a role in our wonderful company! You can read about it in chapter 21.

I am very happy that the history of the company has been recorded. So far we had a lot of photos, some newspaper clippings and above all a lot of memories. Fortunately, for this book

we were able to uncover many of those great stories, from employees, customers, suppliers and family.

The result is great. Striking photos, beautifully worded memories, nicely designed by the graphic designer. Nostalgia and future-oriented stories go hand in hand. It has become an impressive history book that suits a company like Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions.

I hope you enjoy reading!

Alex Verbruggen

Alex at the age of 12
in technical school



THE PREVIOUS HISTORY

‘I chose metalworking because of the smell’

As a boy of eleven or twelve years old, Alex Verbruggen cycles from Kraggenburg to the junior technical school in Emmeloord. Seventeen kilometers back, seventeen kilometers forth. Through all weather conditions. After the first general year, a subject must be chosen; wood, metal or painting. ‘I chose metal’, Alex remembers with a smile. ‘I was twelve years old when I had to choose. My motivation for choosing metal was the smell. The smell of the metal and everything around it evoked emotions in me’.

Alex: ‘As a child I wanted to be a carpenter. With my friends I was often at Houthandel Van Keulen, on the unloading quay near Kraggenburg. There was always a pile of scrap wood that we were allowed to use. My father had given me a set of tools; a hammer, a saw and pincers. In my imagination I could make anything with that. Even drilling holes was not a problem. I was already dreaming of my own business. I had already made a business plan with my friend Wim. We were going to start a carpentry business together. My business partner would be in charge, because his father drove a Mercedes and mine didn’t. And I was allowed to come and work for him.’

‘I come from a family of ten children. My father worked for the CAVV Flevo, a cooperative for Protestant farmers and market gardeners.’ Verbruggen advises and helps these entrepreneurs, many of whom are located around Kraggenburg. In 1966, when Alex was thirteen years old, the Verbruggen family moved from Kraggenburg to Emmeloord. ‘I didn’t like to

leave behind my friends and all the places in the village where I had grown up. I didn’t realize at the time that the move to Emmeloord would offer new opportunities.’

MTS

When Alex has obtained his metalworking degree, he does another two years of electrical engineering and follows the so-called T-route, a mainly theoretical preparation for the mts. ‘I could try until Christmas, my teachers said. Apparently they didn’t have much faith in it. But I passed with high grades. Only for English I had a low grade. Based on my grade list, I was admitted to the mts in Sneek!’

The young polder resident chooses to study mechanical engineering. Alex studies hard. ‘I had a fear of failure, I think in retrospect. But I had the highest grades in the class. I went to the hts for a while. I broke off that training because I had to do obligatory military service. It was better to finish the mts first and then complete the conscription.’

SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING

It is then autumn 1974. Alex wants to make well use of his obligatory time in the army. After initially serving at the Jan van Schaffelaar Barracks in Ermelo, the infantry cadre school, he was transferred to the Special Forces in Roosendaal. Out of the approximately eighty conscripts who start training to become para commands there, 23, including Alex, eventually obtain the coveted green beret at the end of March 1975. What did he learn most during that period? 'Discipline and perseverance', he answers decisively.

JOKE GRISNICH

In Emmeloord, Alex met his future wife Joke Grisnich. 'She always sat a few pews in front of me in church on Sundays.' At that time she and her family have not lived in Emmeloord for very long. Her father Gerrit works at Machinefabriek Grisnich; the company of his brother Map. Joke is going to study nursing at De Lichtenberg hospital in Amersfoort. In Emmeloord Joke had to get used to daily life, but in De Lichtenberg she likes it very much. Alex and Joke began a relationship. When Alex completed military service in March 1976, a logical question arises: where am I going to work? At Onion Trade Company Molnopex they are looking for a maintenance technician. Alex: 'I could earn 900 guilders net a month. That's a great salary, I thought. But, more important-

ly, there was a house coming with it. On the Industrieweg. A job and a house; so Joke and I could get married!'

These are, especially for Joke, busy times. She graduates as a nurse in May. In June she gets her driver's license and on July 30, 1976 she marries Alex. Joke starts working as a nurse in the Doctor J.H. Jansen Hospital in Emmeloord.

A sad event is the death of their daughter Hanneke, one day after birth. Their grief is indescribable, but they find comfort in their faith. After Hanneke, they had six more sons and a daughter.

MACHINE FACTORY GRISNICH

The work at Molnopex is fine, but it is unhealthy dusty in the onion halls. 'If I want to become something, I shouldn't stay here too long, I thought.' Uncle Map Grisnich asks Alex to come and work at Machinefabriek Grisnich. After a period as a construction fitter, he moved to the drawing office. 'I learned a lot there,' Alex summarizes this period briefly.

NIGERIA

Then, in the summer of 1981, Alex's eye falls on an advertisement in the newspaper Reformatorisch Dagblad. A technical worker is required for a mission post in Nigeria. Alex and Joke trust in God and believe in God's guidance in their lives. They write an application letter



The family (1981)



Working in Nigeria with the men from the village

and get hired. Alex and Joke resign, after which they are getting prepared for deployment to a mission post in rural Nigeria.

Alex and Joke receive a three-month training at a language school in Whitby in England. Because Nigeria is a former English colony, the people there speak Pidgin English. In Whitby they get a reasonable grasp of English. Alex will enjoy that later at the company...

‘In Nigeria we got a broader view of the world.’

In the summer of 1982, Alex and Joke travel to Nigeria with three small kids. They are going to live in Igede, an isolated rural area, several hundred kilometers northeast of the, at that

time, capital city of Lagos. ‘My main task was technical support for the mission team. Provide water, power, transportation, and shelter.’ They have hardly any contact with the outside world. The only way to communicate with the home front is by mail.

And they have a short wave radio receiver. A lot more communication is not possible. Internet and mobile telephony do not yet exist.

It is a beautiful, educational, but also very intense period. The climate is exhausting. After nine years of living and working in the tropics, they decide to return to The Netherlands. Maarten, the eldest son, is ready for high school.

What did those nine years in Africa do to Alex, Joke and their oldest children? Alex has to think for a moment. ‘We were raised in a protected way, but our stay in Nigeria gave us a broader view of the world. We were completely on our own in the bush in Nigeria. That makes you independent. Putting neighbor support into practice was the daily reality out there. Charity is deeply ingrained in our genes. I think you can also see these elements in our children and in our company’.



With five kids in Nigeria



Wouter and Maarten as young boys in Nigeria

A DIGITAL REVOLUTION HAS TAKEN PLACE

Back in The Netherlands in another world

1

In the summer of 1990, Alex and Joke and their family of now five children return to The Netherlands. They come back to another world. During the period that they stayed in Nigeria, a digital revolution took place in the western world. Internet and digital payments have made their appearance.

Alex and Joke don't necessarily have to go back to Emmeloord. Where there is work, they want to live. 'We have put our lives and our family back into God's hands in confidence that He will provide.' Alex notices, when he enters the job market, that he is technically behind. 'It was not so easy to find a job. I wrote several application letters, but that came to nothing. Until Arie

van der Knijff from ERC Machinery called me. I had an interview with him and was hired as a technical draughtsman. I picked up where I had stopped ten years before and once I was at work I noticed that I missed my freedom of movement. My new reality in The Netherlands was that of the office and drawing board. I had lost my freedom...'

Alex discusses his experiences with brother

The old and first business premises at the Constructieweg



Mart, who at that time works as a manager at Ovri in Emmeloord, where they make metal tables for the hospitality industry. Mart is also ready for something new. 'Can't we start a welding and construction company together?', Alex suggests.

In retrospect, Alex says: 'I was completely unexperienced as an entrepreneur. People around me shake their heads. What is Alex Verbruggen going to do now? It was indeed a big venture.'

VERBRUGGEN CONSTRUCTION AND MACHINE MANUFACTURING

Together they discuss the business plan and get the help of accounting firm Muntjewerff, in particular assistant Henk Strookappe. They need money as start-up capital and put that demand to Rabobank. The bank agrees, with Alex and Joke's house, at the Vrijheidsplaat in Emmeloord, as collateral. 'I didn't notice that at first', Alex recalls. 'But we were confident in our plan.' And so Verbruggen Construction and Machine Manufacturing started on October 1, 1991, in a building at the Constructieweg at the Zwolsevaart business park, which the brothers rented for five years from trailer builder Kees Bolle.

A DIFFICULT START

The first orders for Verbruggen Construction and Machine Manufacturing come among others from Ovri and ERC. Their old relationships maintain the ties. They also see that Alex and Mart are professionals and are willing to work hard. Alex: 'Our philosophy was that the light in the workshop should always be on and the phone should always be answered.' But between wanting to work and having work there is a big difference. The turnover of Ovri and ERC is insufficient. In January 1992 they receive a beautiful assignment of onion trader Jaap van der Reest from Tollebeek. He wants an intermediate storage between sorting and packaging. Can Mart and Alex make this? Yes, of course they can. It is a big assignment, which they work on for six months and they even have to hire someone. The total turnover of the contract is 200,000 guilders. But Alex and Mart know such an order will not be received every year. They realize that they must have their own product.

THE BROTHERS COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

The brothers complement each other well. Mart is the more quiet technician who likes to take care of the administration. Alex is more extroverted, likes to go out to the customers. In the spring of 1992, a salesman from Becom Marknesse came to visit and proposed to develop a machine to stack bags of seed potatoes, together with Verbruggen. There is a device at a farmer at the Burchtweg near Bant that can do this. 'Can you develop this further?', the salesman asks. 'Yes, of course', Alex replies. Not knowing what impact that answer would have later on.

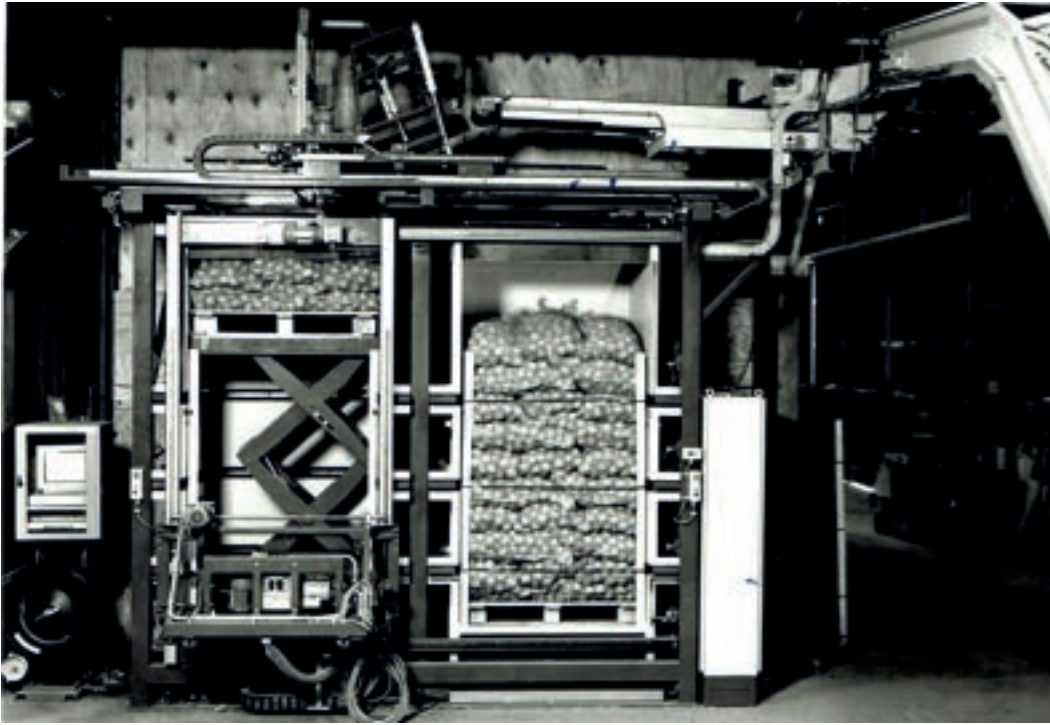
Together with Becom, they built a stacking machine. Verbruggen the mechanical part, Becom the controls. In retrospect, it was not a safe machine. But the idea was born.

Photographer Pim van der Maden takes a beautiful photo of it for a flyer. But sales comes to a standstill. Until two years later, Alex visits an onion trader in Dronten who asks him to adjust the concept for stacking onions. The starting point they determine is how stacking is done by hand. Onions are stacked in a stacking bin and strapped before exiting. Otherwise, the pile will fall over. That first machine is an immediate success.

Alex: 'When fellow onion trader Frank Stoop from Waarland (see pages 40-41) saw that machine, he shouted enthusiastically; I want that too. Put it in your order book. Later on let me know what the cost is! And Jan Boone from Waarde wants one too. He showed his arms and then said very humorous: look, they are stretched twenty centimeters.'

WHAT A LOGISTICAL ADVANCE!

Demand is increasing. In three years' time, Verbruggen builds eleven palletizers, all for onions. A second model is designed for stacking 50 kilogram bags of seed potatoes. To achieve sufficient capacity, the bags are brought to the machine via a supply belt. The machine can stack 600 bags per hour! Software is being developed. Soon the computer-controlled machines can run several stacking programs; for bags of 5-25 kilograms. Up to, if necessary, a container height of 2.40 meters. Previously, this was all done manually. The market is enthusiastic. What a logistical progression!



One of the first palletizers (photo ABOVE and BELOW)



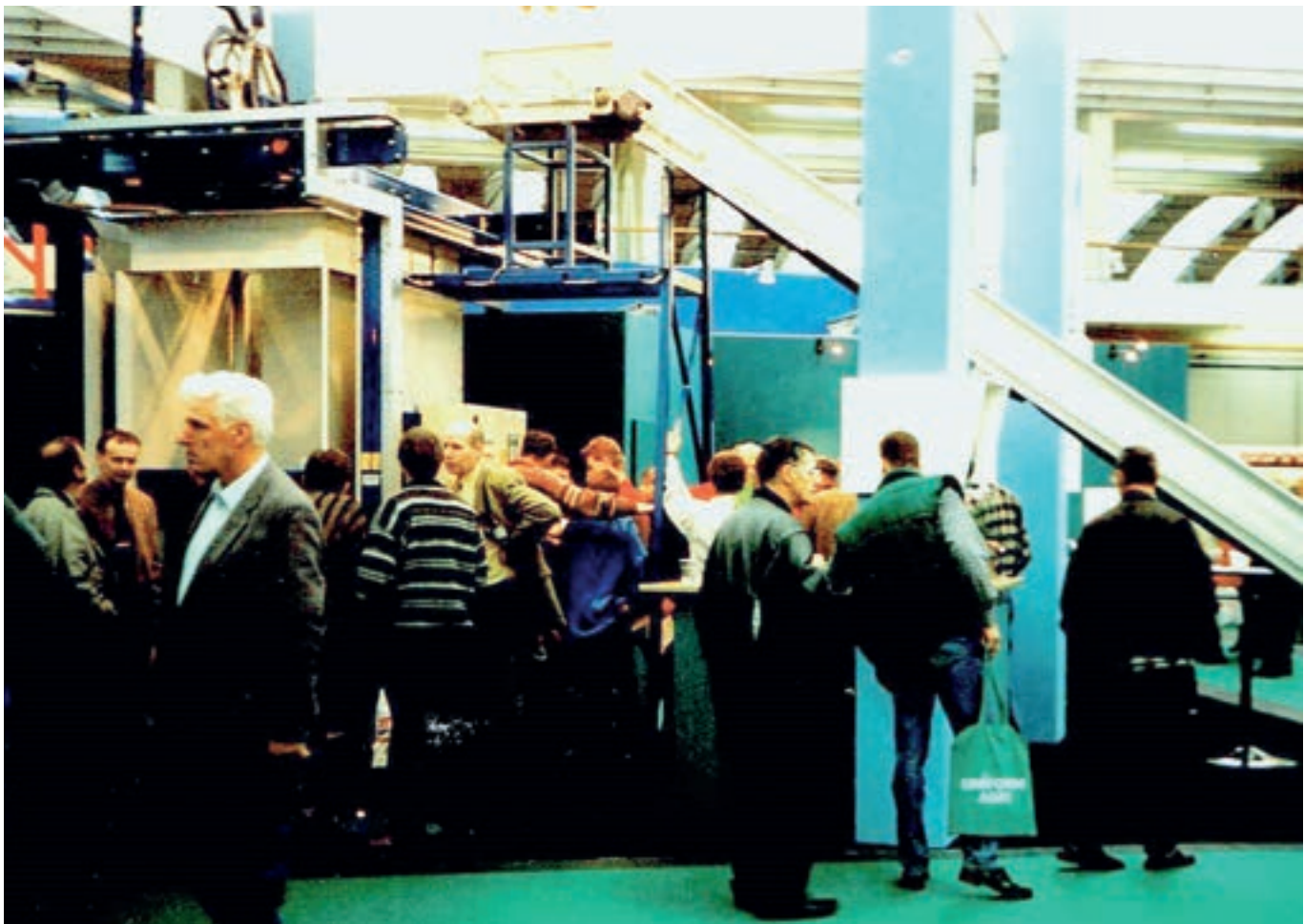
The first flyer in collaboration with Becom





New accommodation at the Dukaat

At the LandbouwRAI in Amsterdam



Demand is also growing because the storage facilities of seed potato growers have grown substantially. In addition, more and more seed potato growers are opting for the 25 kilogram bag instead of the 50 kilogram bag, also due to increasingly strict health and safety legislation. That means even more manual work, and so a palletizer becomes even more interesting. Another development that plays in Verbruggen's favor is that of faster logistics. Trading companies want their trucks to be loaded faster and faster, and also expect

from their growers more quality, flexibility and speed.

Storage sheds with a few thousand tons of seed potatoes are no longer an exception. In addition to its own seed potatoes, these barns often store and sort for third

parties. These growers are also becoming service companies, that respond to the demand of their customers. Delivering well bagged and neatly palletized is one of those activities. Putting bags on a pallet for days and sometimes weeks one after another is a wear and tear for the grower and his employees in the long run.

A good mutual bond, a good atmosphere. Alex has always felt this to be important.

Thanks to Alex and Mart Verbruggen's palletizers, labor is only still needed for sewing up the bags, replenishing the empty pallets and driving away the full pallets with the forklift.

A NEW BUILDING AT THE DUKAAT

If also a grant can be obtained through the Ministry of Agriculture for the purchase of a palletizer, aimed at reducing physical strain, Verbruggen gets even more wind in its sails. More employees are hired, the lease with Kees Bolle is terminated. Alex and Mart buy a plot of land, a little further at the Dukaat, and build a new factory building over there. It was put into use in 1996. During the open house, Alex and Mart sell another two palletizers. The production area at the Dukaat is expanded to 2450 square meters in a few steps in the following years. In 1999, the hundredth palletizer is sold!

THE RIGHT PEOPLE

What Alex realizes from the start is that he has to gather people around him who have knowledge that he and Mart do lack. And those need to have the right character. That strategy worked out well. Many employees remain with the company for a long time. Alex knows the home situation of many of them. A good mutual bond, a good atmosphere; Alex has always felt this to be important.

RIGHT The back side of the first flyer
BELOW Two joyful facts



**THE NETHERLANDS IS TOO SMALL
FOR VERBRUGGEN CONSTRUCTION
AND MACHINE MANUFACTURING**

Exports drive growth

2



In the mid-nineties, Alex and Mart realize that they have developed a wonderful range of palletizers, but that The Netherlands is too small for such a specialized product. Alex, the commercial man, is not afraid to go out into the world after all his experiences abroad. He signs up for a trade mission trip to the north of England organized by the Chamber of Commerce. That is not an immediate success: 'But I had taken the first steps for our export. Later on I went to Scandinavia, Belgium, France and Germany. I left our brochures everywhere, but they didn't immediately result in any orders.'

LEFT Installation abroad

RIGHT One of the first brochures

Alex also meets other entrepreneurs from The Netherlands on his travels. 'I once rode along with someone from Hettema, who was later visited in Emmeloord by an entrepreneur from Israel. That man from Israel was looking for a stacker and came to see us via Hettema. He invited us to

continue talks on a fair in Paris, but on my proposal we did that in Israel. That takes time and money, but works much better. There I was able to ob-

'The United States became our most important export country.'

serve the situation and based on a good plan, make a quotation. Exactly as we did in The Netherlands. We were given an order. That was in fall of 1996. The first export order was a fact.'

THE UNITED STATES

In the same period, Alex brings a visit in the



United States and Canada to two former colleagues whom he worked with in Nigeria. Together they visit a bag trader in Ontario (Canada). Alex is also looking around for sales opportunities, but nothing happens. In 1998, Maarten Jansen, a farmer from the Noordoostpolder, who once did an internship in the US as a young boy, comes to visit. He brings an acquaintance of that period from Washington State in the US who wants to sort and package onions and buy the necessary packaging machines in The Netherlands. Alex: 'We were



ABOVE 1999 - 100th machine for P. Boudeling Swifterbant

RIGHT Installation abroad

RIGHT PAGE Article Aardappelwereld 1997

given an order. I went to the US for consultation and had the machines installed over there by our employees. This company, Easterday Farms in Pasco, WA, now has fifteen palletizers, making it our largest customer in the US."

Alex can sell more machines, but when he is in the US he realizes very well that providing service is inseparably linked to sales. 'If a machine unexpectedly comes to a standstill, you cannot provide that service from The Netherlands. We partnered with a reseller. We sold dozens of palletizers there in a number of years. The United States became our most important export country. The relationship with this reseller ended in 2011. At that time, we had sold more than a hundred machines in the US.'

It is a search how Verbruggen can proceed



in the US. Alex: 'I didn't know for a moment. In the summer of 2012, I made in quick succession two trips to Washington State with a colleague. I wanted to start my own service and sales center, but was looking for confirmation that this would be a good strategy. That confirmation came in late 2012 when we received a wonderful order from Hartley Produce in Prosser, WA. On July 4, 2013, on Independence Day, we opened our own service center in Pasco, WA.'

Grotere capaciteit en arbeidsvriendelijker werken:

Automatisch palletiseren wint terrein

Grotere hoeveelheden pootgoed sorteren en afzakken, eventueel voor derden, en de verwachting dat de 25 kilo zak steeds meer terrein zal winnen, zijn belangrijke argumenten om over te stappen naar automatisch palletiseren. Er is subsidie beschikbaar.

Door grote investeringen van telers in bewaarfaciliteiten de laatste jaren zijn bewaarloodsen van een paar duizend ton geen uitzondering meer. Naast het eigen pootgoed wordt in deze schuren vaak voor derden bewaard en gesorteerd. Dit heeft tot gevolg dat zo'n teler een dienstverlenend bedrijf is geworden, dat zal moeten inspelen op de wensen van zijn klanten. Het goed afgepakt en gepalletiseerd afleveren van partijen is een van de activiteiten. Dagen- of soms zelfs wekenlang met de hand de zakken op het pallet leggen is op de lange duur een slijtageslag voor de teler. Palletiseermachines spelen op deze ontwikkeling in door volledig automatisch de zakken op te stapelen. Arbeid bestaat dan alleen nog uit het dichtnaaien van de zakken, het aanvullen van de lege pallets en het weggrijpen van de volle pallets met de vorkheftruck.

ARBEID

Wanneer Alex Verbruggen, van de gelijknamige machinefabriek te Emmeloord, over de mogelijkheden van palletiseermachines praat, noemt hij als eerste het vervangen van arbeid. Een ontwikkeling die Verbruggen vaak signaleert, is dat vroeger vader, moeder en een zoon hun eigen pootaardappelen sorteerden. Maar nu vader wat ouder wordt, moet zoon de steeds groeiende hoeveelheid af te zakken poters alleen verwerken. Op zo'n moment wordt de aanschaf van een palletiseermachine overwogen. Zeker als wordt bedacht dat (door ARBO-richtlijnen) ingehuurd arbeid niet met de 50 kg-zakken hoeft te sjouwen. De ontwikkeling naar 25 kg zal de vraag naar palletiseren nog groter maken. Bij Oldenhuis te Ulrum wordt benadrukt dat 25 kg-zakken zwaarder zijn dan 50 kg. Daarmee wordt natuurlijk niet het gewicht bedoeld maar de arbeid die verricht moet worden om de zakken te verwerken. Sjaak Wijnia pootaardappelteler te Espel geeft aan dat een palletiseermachine de bedrijfsvoering flexibeler maakt. Naast zijn eigen pootaardappelen wordt door Wijnia ook veel voor andere telers afgepakt en op pallets afgeleverd. Wanneer hij bezig is zijn eigen poters te sorteren en af te zakken en er komt een spoedklusje tussendoor, dan stort hij deze gesorteerde pootaardappelen in een aparte bunker

WAAR AAN DENKEN BIJ AAN-SCHAF

- Welke capaciteit is nu en in de toekomst noodzakelijk
- Hoe hoog moet de machine kunnen stapelen
- Kan er een voorraad pallets in de machine worden gezet
- Welke palletmaten zijn er nodig
- Welke patronen zijn gewenst
- Hoe flexibel is de programmatuur
- Opstelling in de schuur. Past de machine bij de (bestaande) installatie of komen er extra kosten bij voor aanpassingen
- Logistieke traject in de schuur (rijrichting e.d.)
- Betrouwbaarheid
- Duurzaamheid
- Prijs

en kan deze, via de naaistraat, palletiseren. Zijn eigen poters blijven dan in de bunkers en worden weer verwerkt wanneer de andere klus voorbij is. "Veel telers kunnen wel zelf sorteren, maar willen niet langer het zware palletiseren uitvoeren. Zeker als pallets containerhoog (2,40 m) afgeleverd moeten worden", zo benadrukt Wijnia.

CAPACITEIT

Teler René de Rond te Creil vindt dat de aanschaf van een palletiseermachine

Sjaak (r) en Wierd Wijnia bij hun Verbruggen palletiseermachine. Let op de dichte stapelkool, waardoor de zijanten strak zijn afgewerkt.



René de Rond bij zijn Lignie machine



**METAL CONSTRUCTION AND
MACHINE MANUFACTURING**

The split

3





Report open house Verbruggen and Vecomach



A nomination for Flevopenningen in 2013

Joint open house of Verbruggen and Vecomach in 2014



The future of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions BV is regularly discussed within the family of Alex and Joke. Alex increasingly sees that metal construction and the development of machines and software are two completely different disciplines. To do metal construction professionally, you need professional machines. To make professional machines profitable, you need volume. There was not enough of that. Alex's vision was that by splitting these disciplines and turning them into two companies, you would open the way to growth.

TO THE BOUWERSKAMP

Due to a lack of space at the Dukaat the warehouse at Bouwerskamp 13, owned by Rabo Vastgoed, was leased in 2008 for five years. The metal construction remains at the Dukaat, and starting in 2008 the assembly and shipping of the machines take place at Bouwerskamp 13.

The cooperation between Verbruggen and Vecomach is off to a healthy start.

SPRING 2011

In the spring of 2011, the broker comes to tell us that she has been commissioned to sell the property. Alex: 'I discussed this with Mart and suggested whether this was the time to make it two companies. After all, we had been working at different locations for four years. Also,

Mart's ambition was more on metal construction and my ambition was machine building.'

Alex: 'During the summer holidays of 2011, Joke and I asked the kids how they see the future of our company. And is it wise to buy real estate together at an advanced age? Or is it a good idea to split the company and prepare it for transfer to the next generation? In the end, a plan was made to split the company with which we went to the bank for the financing.'

THE SPLIT

As of April 1, 2012, there are two companies; Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions B.V. and Vecomach B.V. Alex: 'Vecomach became our supplier. We outsourced the production of metal components and powder coating to Vecomach.'

The collaboration between Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions B.V. and Vecomach Metaalbewerking is off to a healthy start. Both companies publish a brochure together and jointly organize an open house.

BENNY STEEN REDEKER, 001

The first employee of Verbruggen Palletizing

4

Benny Steen Redeker occupies a special position at Verbruggen Palletizing. He is the first employee hired by Alex and Mart Verbruggen in January 1992. If you are still working for this company in 2025, your nickname is rightfully 001.

Benny Steen Redeker



Benny knows Alex Verbruggen from ERC Machinery, where Alex worked for a while after his return from Nigeria. 'When Alex heard that I was looking for another job, he asked me to work for him. They did obtain a big project; a storage bunker for onion trader Van der Reest. We manufactured it entirely. There was a lot of drilling to do.' But there is no stable workflow yet and that is why Benny is loaned by Verbruggen to another company. For that company, he has to repair a gantry crane from an aerial platform. The aerial platform is pushed over by the gantry crane. Fortunately, Benny survived, but ended up on sick leave and was not able to work fully again until five months later, in January 1993. During that period, Verbruggen made a number of storage bunkers for onion trader Stoop in North Holland as well as a palletizer, by order of Becom in Marknesse. Verbruggen builds the machine, Becom adds the PLC controls. Yet there are still slow periods. Mart also works for another company for a few months.

Some regular customers in that period are Bakkerij Schipper and French fries producer McCain in Lelystad. 'At McCain, every Saturday we did the maintenance of the machines for the potato reception. I remember that Maarten Verbruggen often went along. He was so playful, jumped up and down everywhere. We had to keep a close eye on him. For Bakkerij Schipper, we worked on tracks in the rising ovens, among other things. In Emmeloord and in Bergentheim.' 'In 1994 we started making palletizers for stacking bags, both for the industrial packer and for the farmer who sorts and packs its own products. TSG from 's-Gravenpolder made the control cabinets and the associated operating software, but Verbruggen was the principal.'

RELOCATION

Verbruggen continues to grow and moves to the Dukaat in 1996. In addition to sales, Alex does a lot of drawing work. Later, Patrick Spans takes over with a 2D program. Benny also regularly goes along to install the machines and then becomes manager of the assembling shop, but he does not yet see the potential of the palletizer. 'I don't come from the agricultural sector. In those first years, I had no idea what was possible. Later on that became clear to me.'

Benny soon gets a new challenge at the Dukaat. He is placed in the engineering department. 'In that department, I worked, among other things, on improving machines, drawing up projects, adapting the machine to the desires of the customers.' When Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions continues to grow, part of the company moves to a rented building at the Bouwerskamp in 2008. At the Dukaat they continue to do welding and painting, among other things. When in 2012 the companies Verbruggen and Vecomach were created after the split, Benny became a work planner at the Bouwerskamp.

STORMY PERIODS

These are turbulent times. The financial crisis, which spread wildly in 2008, also affects Verbruggen. The number of orders is declining. Not long after that there is also the split between the departments of Alex and Mart. Erik Bruggink is appointed as the new manager after the split. Benny has good memories of him. 'I sometimes missed the outspoken appreciation at Verbruggen. It was nothing but hard work on every project. When that was done, we immediately stepped into a new project. Erik Bruggink did express his satisfaction. And was a skilled manager who, in my opinion, pulled our company out of the doldrums. In retrospect the fact that we sometimes went through difficult periods at Verbruggen is not so strange, of course. We were still a young company, which had grown considerably in a short time.'

HAPPY AT WORK

Benny is now 57 years old. He is still enjoying himself at Verbruggen and is going to retire in Emmeloord. 'I have another position now. In short, I make the translation between the drawing system and our ERP system. Once that's done, the other colleagues can continue with the project.' Benny is very optimistic about the future of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. 'All export opportunities are far from fully being exploited. I am thinking in particular of the South American and Asian markets. In the new building, we will undoubtedly take new steps in our development. It's nice that we have everything back under one roof again. This will make communication between all departments even smoother.'

‘Alex wrote his quotation on a notepad’

5

72-year-old Henk van der Linde still gets up at five o'clock every morning to go to work at half past five in the company of his three sons: Taco, Paul and Eric. ‘I can’t stop that rhythm’, Henk laughs. The potato trading business started by his father has been expanded considerably by him and his three sons. Taco now mainly trades in Big Bags, Paul manages the washing, storage and trade in winter carrots, while Eric has specialized in the storage and trade of consumption potatoes.

This family business, based in Emmeloord, is one of the first customers of Verbruggen’s palletizers. And still is customer! Henk can still remember the first contacts with Verbruggen. ‘I knew Alex Verbruggen from the MTS in Sneek. He studied metal, I studied electrical engineering. After school I lost sight of him. Around 1995 we needed a machine in our company that could help us with bagging potatoes and stacking the bags. My father, I and a few employees did this manually. Very heavy work. Bad for your back. There were already machines on the market, especially from mechanization companies, where a small robot placed bags on the pallet. Since we mainly try to do business locally, we talked to Alex Verbruggen, who also had such a machine and was developing it further. That was still in the old building at the Zwolse Vaart business park.’

ON A NOTEPAD

Son Taco joins us. As a student at the hts, he was already regularly active in his father’s company

at that time. ‘I remember when Alex Verbruggen came to our company. He wrote out his offer on a notepad. He knew exactly what all the parts cost. You could add something, cross something out and then you had a price.’

The deal is closed, the product is liked and years later, when Verbruggen just moved to the Bouwerskamp, Van der Linde BV buys a second palletizer. Henk: ‘And again Alex wrote the quote on a notepad. Just like with the purchase of the first palletizer, we got a competitive price. Alex liked the fact that there were a number of palletizers in Emmeloord and the surrounding area. He could show them to customers who visited his company.’

In 2024, the fourth palletizer is now at Van der Linde BV. Taco is down-to-earth when he talks about the relationship with Verbruggen. “The palletizer must work quickly and well and have little to no malfunctions. And if there is a malfunction, the service department must provide help quickly. And that’s what the service guys of Verbruggen do. Usually they can, because they have access to our



Taco and Henk van der Linde

Project van de Linde

PSA-VE300
+ mechanische verspanning B1
+ Lijpbanden
+ bedrijfsopstelling
+ afmetingen 2.5 meter
Basislijpbanden voor pallets 1200 x 1000/800
B2: verspanning
B3: opzetband
B4: verspanning
Houten verspanning voor kleine pallets
Basis 3 meter met 2 stuks L20
+ Houten verspanning voor pallets 1200 x 1000/800
Pallets 3 meter
Verspanning
Invalen 100 tot 100 meter
Totaal

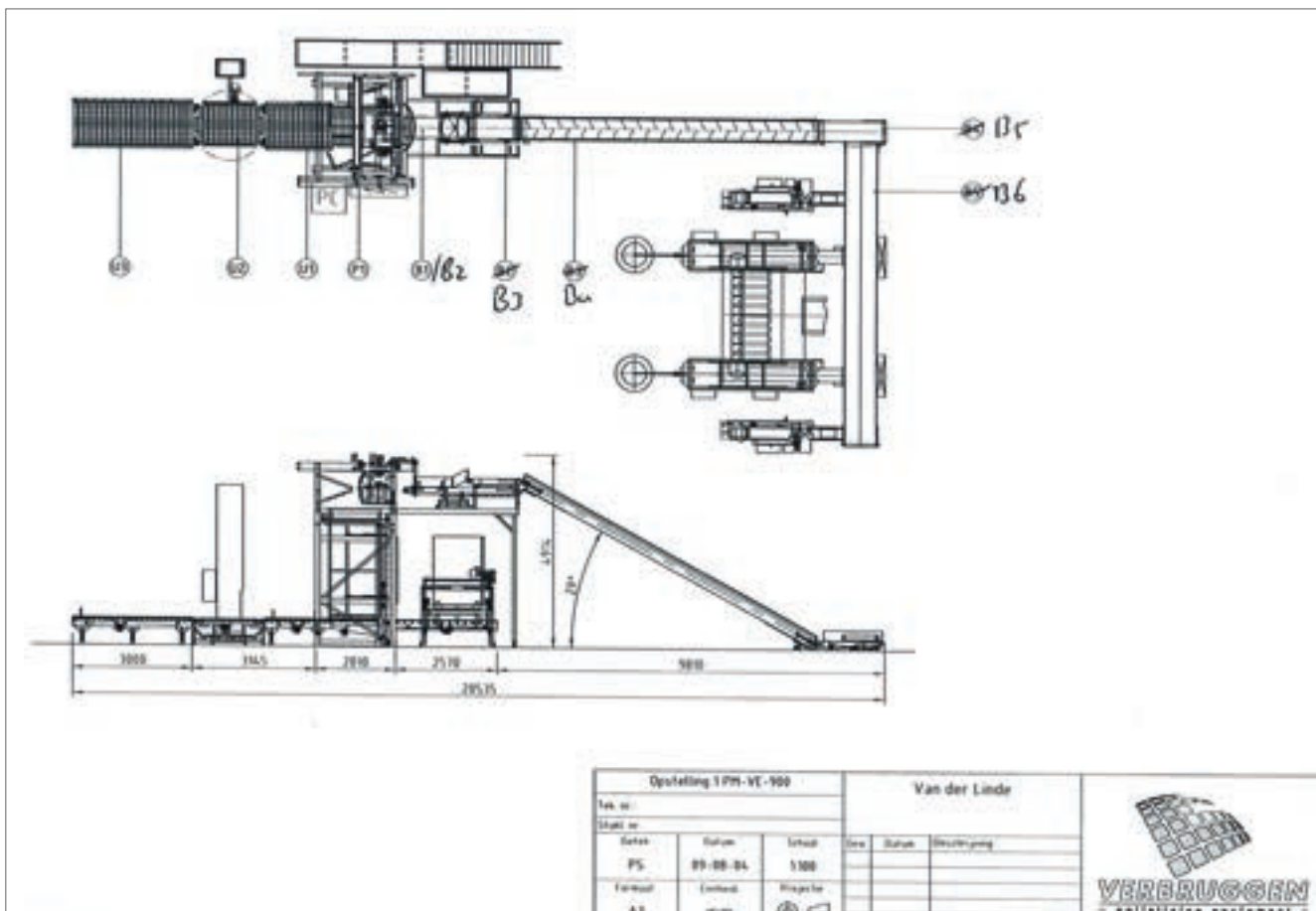
€ 100.000,-
€ 5.000,-
€ 1.100,-
€ 3.400,-
€ 2.200,-
€ 1.800,-
€ 0.500,-
€ 12.000,-
€ 0.700,-
€ 0.000,-
€ 7.000,-
€ 211.000,-

* Van der Linde BV @ 2000,-
* 1000,-
* RVS - 1000,-
* 1000,-
* 1000,-

From notepad to typed quotation

PSA 106.260,-
100/80 5.045,-
B3 2.400,-
B4 5.665,-
B5 2.200,-
B6 1.800,-
B7 6.630,-
B8 5.000,-
B9 5.172.10
B10 4.600,-
B11 9.772.50
B12 14.125
B13 3.730
B14 148.815,-
B15 3.240,-
B16 145.495,-

ABOVE AND BELOW From notepad to technical drawing found in the archive



system, quickly solve a software problem. And on the rare occasion that something mechanically is going on, it is also arranged super quickly. Where we have the advantage that Verbruggen is in Emmeloord.'

So Van der Linde BV will remain a customer of Verbruggen for a long time. 'Of course you never know', Taco keeps a business twist. 'If Verbruggen keeps up with the developments, continues to innovate, then that will most likely be the case.'

**ALIDA KOSTER-MUSSCHE, LOYAL EMPLOYEE
OF VERBRUGGEN**

‘It felt like a big family to me’

6

Alida Koster proudly takes a picture with her gift that she received from Verbruggen Palletizing on the occasion of her 65th birthday. It was a trip to Pasco in the United States, a trip she made together with Wouter Verbruggen and his wife Marije. The gift illustrates the close relationship between Alida and Verbruggen.



AFTER MULO SCHOOL TO GREVE

Alida has only had two employers in her career; Greve and Verbruggen. Greve is a Meppel founded family business whose history dates back to 1860. In Emmeloord they sold tractors and Ford cars as well as agricultural machinery.

Alida ended up there in October 1966, as a seventeen-year-old, after she had passed her MULO exams. She is having a good time there. She takes care of the administration. Typical of Alida is that she attaches herself to the people she works with, to the company she works for. If Ford demands innovations from its dealers, this is a reason for Greve to terminate the employment contract after almost thirty years of cooperation. This hits Alida hard.

VERBRUGGEN

She doesn't like sitting at home without a job at all. 'It made me lazy.' When she goes cycling

with her neighbor, she meets Mart and Gerda Verbruggen. 'I knew them from the Reformed Church-West. We started talking and I indicated that I was looking for a job. Mart did the administration of his company and said that he could use some support. After consultation with his partner Alex, I was offered a job for twelve hours a week.'

MICE ON THE FLOOR

It is a bit of a shock when she takes up her workplace in the building at the Constructieweg in September 1995. 'It was very old and ramshackle there. The toilet, for example, did not work properly. Mart was a bit ashamed of that. And the mice also regularly walked the floor. In addition to my work in the administration, I also tried to clean the building as well as possible. That was not easy. Fortunately, we moved to the Dukaat fairly quickly.' There are already computers in the office. 'We started



For her 65th birthday, Alida was offered by Verbruggen a nice trip to Pasco in the US

with MS DOS programs. Exact was soon purchased. I had to figure out quite a lot myself, but I was fine with that. My work included booking the accounts, keeping track of the purchase, time registration and preparing the VAT return. The accountant checked my work every month, but to be honest, this was almost always correct. I am very precise. I also liked to make coffee for the men in the workplace and then have a nice chat during the breaks. 'It felt like a big family to me.'

Alida is good at her job. Especially because she has grown in practice and is very precise. However, she is unable to cash in on that knowledge and skills with fine diplomas. 'I had started an evening course in practical accounting. But during a trip with the church to Israel, someone in the company suffered a brain hemorrhage. My husband Kees stayed there for four weeks for support. During that period, my mother and parents-in-law moved. It became too busy for me and I had to quit the training. Very unfortunate.'

THE NUMBER OF HOURS INCREASES

The production and sale of palletizers is increasing. Mart is getting busier and busier in the workplace. The company is growing and Alida's number of hours is also increasing. She works between 24 and 30 hours a week. But on Friday afternoon, right after the break, she still cleans the office and the canteen. 'I was fine with that.' When, partly due to a crisis in the US, sales drop sharply there, Alex and Mart have to lay off some employees. 'They both found that very difficult,' Alida remembers. Until 2012, Alida continued to work at the Dukaat. She still does the administration, together with Mart. And gets a support female colleague. She is no longer the only woman in a man's world.

THE STAFF IS DIVIDED

In 2012, Mart and Alex split up and two companies are created. The staff is divided. I went to the Bouwerskamp. I found that very annoying. I was used to the Dukaat. I also found it difficult to say goodbye to colleagues. On the day that I was going to start working at the Bouwerskamp for the first time, April 20, 2012, my mother was hit by a car. She survived, but it was a sad period. Mart did say; come and have a coffee with us, but I found that difficult.'

At the Bouwerskamp, Alida works with colleagues in the administration department. 'Alex also said: it is getting busier and busier in our company and that is why it is important that several people can do administration. The company became so big there that more departments were created. Maaïke de Vries became my manager. She had the certifications. We worked well together.'

TO THE US

When Alida turns 65, she receives a wonderful gift from the company; a trip to the United States. 'I flew to the US with Wouter and Marije. Visiting that country had been a wish of mine for a long time. Kees did not go along. He gets health problems when he flies. Wouter also had business appointments and I did fun things with Marije on those days. I had a fantastic trip. Wouter and Marije later settled in Pasco.'

Alida continues at Verbruggen for one more year. Actually, she wants to continue working longer, but she also understands that young, well-trained people must be given space. The department is also switching to a new accounting program. 'I said goodbye to a few people personally. But not to many either. I found that emotionally difficult. I get a kind of homesick feeling.'

A day after her official farewell, on September 12, 2015, Alida runs the Fish Potato Run. She likes to run. 'I am also active for the missionary organization Operatie Mobilisatie, I give memory training in Hof van Smeden and I offer a helping hand in a toddler group at De Zevensprong. And I am also the contact person of the PCOB. I never get bored!'

**WATERMAN ONIONS AND VERBRUGGEN
PALLETIZING SOLUTIONS**

The click between two family businesses

7

Erik Waterman



In 1998, the brothers Wim and Erik Waterman from Zeeland took over onion business Van Fraassen in Emmeloord. Without being very aware of it, they also take over a palletizer, namely a blue-gray one from Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. The Waterman-Verbruggen relationship is still there. Speed, efficiency and logistics are important in the onion trade. There are currently five palletizers at Waterman Onions!

Erik tells the following about that early period. 'Both companies had business premises at the old business park Zwolse Vaart-Oost. At the time, my brother Wim already had a lot of contact with Mart, Verbruggen's technician. Soon after our start in Emmeloord, we bought our second palletizer from Verbruggen. This machine was a bit faster.'

A LOT IN COMMON

Both companies have a lot in common. They are family businesses, the enterprising families are Protestant Christian and both companies have grown considerably in a relatively short time. Verbruggen moves to the Bouwerskamp, while Waterman moves the sorting and packaging activities to a newly built location on the Hannie Schaftweg.

'There are more companies that make good palletizers,' says Erik down to earth. 'But provided the price-quality ratio is good, of course, we prefer to do business with entrepreneurs in the region, whom you meet regularly. Entrepreneurs we know and trust. Wim and I have personally built up a good relationship with Verbruggen.'

Erik, for example, has already been to Bangladesh twice with Maarten. 'Maarten has worked in this country for a long time and we support projects there that have been set up by Maarten. We have, especially after those trips, a personal click. I sometimes jokingly say to Maarten that they make their palletizer too good. That's why they last so long. Maarten then tells me that I need to update them and

go with the new; read faster machine developments'.

SHOWROOM

The relationship is so good that Waterman has also become a bit of Verbruggen's showroom. 'Oh yes. It is a five-minute drive from Verbruggen to us. Almost every month they come to us with relations to view the palletizers. We are fine with that, although I sometimes like to suggest that they pay an entrance fee. Would be a nice extra income.'

New palletizers for Waterman Onions are on the way. Because Erik and Wim are very enterprising. New markets for onions are being opened, at all continents. Onions, ginger, garlic and shallots are increasingly being sold. And as a partner in various companies, trendy by-products are developed, such as Faiafood's ginger shots.

EXPANSION

And so the Waterman brothers are already thinking about a major expansion at the Hannie Schaftweg. The drawings have already been made. 'These are ambitious plans,' says Erik. 'We want to further improve our logistics process. In a super-efficient automated and CO2 neutral building. It's not that time yet. We still have a lot of hurdles to overcome. But this factory of the future is our dream and we will realize it one day. And when it is realized, it will also include palletizers from Verbruggen.'

KOOS LAMBREGTSE AND TON VAN 'T HOF HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR VERBRUGGEN FOR A LONG TIME

‘At Verbruggen they have an eye for the human being’

8

Koos Lambregtse and Ton van 't Hof have both been working for Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions for a very long time. Ton started in 1999 as a mechanic at Verbruggen at the Dukaat. Koos came in about a year later as a construction fitter and welder.

Koos Lambregtse

Ton van 't Hof



They keep good memories of that period. The atmosphere was no nonsense. You had to get going. Koos and his colleagues did the preliminary work, Ton and his colleagues put together the machines and took care of the testing. Koos: 'In a sense, we formed two departments, but helped each other when necessary.' Ton: 'I remember well that, when we had a quiet time, we went to Koos and his colleagues to help for example with welding and grinding work. Conversely, the construction colleagues came to help with the assembling.' It was also difficult at times. Often it was running or standing still.

PURCHASER AND ACCOUNT MANAGER

Both men still work for Verbruggen, but now in a different position. Koos is a purchaser and Ton is an account manager. Koos: 'Verbruggen has grown considerably and there was a need for new positions. I walked along in the warehouse, helped with order picking. Every now and then I ordered something and that grew into a position as a purchaser. For example, we buy all construction, basically everything that needs to be welded and coated. In addition, we buy everything for the office and marketing. I do this throughout The Netherlands and a small part abroad. It is mainly my job to pay attention to quality and price, together with the others in the purchasing department. Of course, it is important to keep an eye on the long term and to maintain purchasing relationships properly.'

Ton grew from mechanic to account manager. His sales focus is mainly on the Benelux, Ireland and Israel. 'Benelux mainly directly, Ireland and Israel I can take along since we have very good resellers there. I alternate between doing business with resellers and directly with customers.' They are both very grateful to Verbruggen for allowing them to grow so much. That is part of this company. If you work hard and adopt a positive attitude, you will get opportunities.'

CUSTOMER-ORIENTED ATTITUDE

What the customers are especially satisfied with, Ton often gets back, is the customer-oriented attitude. Ton: 'We never run away from a problem. When we have made and delivered a machine and installed it somewhere, there are sometimes problems or little issues. Some-

times a mistake has been made in our factory, sometimes a machine does not fit quite well in the customer's building. But whatever it is; We will solve that! Even if we have to come back four or five times for it.' So Ton and Koos ended up in a small company, where everyone helped each other. How is this now? Ton: 'We have had a difficult period in our company. I sometimes thought about another employer, but I had such a good relationship with the management and with colleagues. Leaving felt like abandoning things.' Koos: 'Walking away is not my style, but I also thought about leaving during that period. In that period I prayed to the Lord what the way should be in this and it did not become clear that I had to change. So I stayed and that was good.'

Koos and Ton don't think it is strange that there were problems. Ton: 'It is actually unimaginable how we have grown in the last 25 years, in size and quality. We now have large professional departments. The cooperation is going well.' Koos: 'Indeed, and what you have to learn in an ever-growing company is to communicate clearly with each other. We have made great strides in this area in recent years.'

BEING A CHRISTIAN

For Koos and Ton, there is another common thread running through their lives and through their relationship with Verbruggen: faith. 'We see that our management team is trying to practically embed the Christian way of life in our company. This is mainly about care for people. So take care of the customers, take care of the suppliers, take care of your colleagues. Don't lie. Don't curse. We have anchored this in our culture. That does a lot of good to us.'

FUTURE

Ton and Koos look forward to Verbruggen's future with confidence. 'We hope that the growth will continue. There are still so many countries where we are not active. Everywhere they want to reduce the unhealthy burden on people. In addition, we can broaden our product even further, for example by automating the supply and removal of pallets. That is why we are quite looking forward to the new factory. There we can build more machines and work on larger projects.'

**BUS INDUSTRIAL TOOLS, SINCE 1991
A RELATIONSHIP OF VERBRUGGEN**

At Verbruggen they work with a 'Lean' system

9

When Alex and Mart Verbruggen started their company at the Constructieweg in 1991, they were already familiar with the industrial technical wholesaler Bus. Because Bus had been the supplier of a very wide range of machines, tools and fastening materials to neighbor and former employer Grisnich for many years. The current account manager of Bus's branch in Marknesse, René Bangma, was already working for Bus at that time. Just like his colleague and account manager Henry Westerhof.



Henry got Verbruggen as a customer. He estimates that this happened in the year 2000. 'Before that, as a driver, I also came to Verbruggen. At the time, they were still in Kees Bolle's building, at the old Zwolse Vaart business park. The contact with Verbruggen has always been good. Growth is the red thread in that relationship. The amount of products they bought from us increased almost every year.'

About four years ago, René took over the account Verbruggen from Henry. René also experiences Verbruggen as a pleasant customer. 'We are usually in contact with Ivo Petersen, Koos Lambregtse and Luca van Dam from purchasing. We have pleasant contact with them. The lines are short. It rarely happens, but if there is a problem, we quickly seek personal contact and solve it. We have a huge stock, but we are not a box mover. We also offer knowledge, advice and service, such as repairing, validating and NEN testing of machines.'

KANBAN SYSTEM

What is special is that Verbruggen works with the KanBan system when it comes to fastening materials, an inventory system that Bus keeps track of.

René: 'At Verbruggen they work with workstations, different places in the production process. Bus ensures that the stock is replenished at each station. The KanBan system is one of the Smart Inventory Systems that Bus can offer to customers, but this system offers many more possibilities such as Mobile scanning solutions, Desktop and Vending Machines. At Verbruggen they never want to miss out and we take care of it completely. Outside the KanBan system, Verbruggen works with a "Lean" system, which is about as much efficient as possible and delivering on the date requested by the customer.'

MOVING TO DE MUNT B

What is special is that Bus Industrial Tools, as the nationally operating company is now officially called, is moving to Emmeloord. To De Munt B, near the new Verbruggen building! René is looking forward to this. 'We started preparations this spring (2025). Hopefully we can move in fall. Then Verbruggen is our neighbor. It will strengthen our relationship even more.'

The new building of Bus in Emmeloord



‘THIS IS ALMOST AN OLD-TIMER’

Frank Stoop's VPM-14 has had 12.5 million bags stacked since 2008!

10

No less than 12.5 million bags of onions have been stacked by the VPM-14 of A.J. Stoop Waarland BV. This palletizer was bought by the family business in 2008 and is still running! ‘This machine is almost an old-timer,’ laughs Frank Stoop.

The relationship between Stoop and Verbruggen is even older. Frank says the following about this: ‘My father was a market gardener, who in the winter started processing onions for third parties. Later on, trade was added. We still had a small company at the time. My father and I and a few employees still did the bagging and stacking of the onions by hand. I was visiting Wim Moerdijk of onion trader Luctor in Dronten with my father. There we saw the palletizer of Verbruggen. We should have it too, my father and I said. That palletizer was installed at our place I guess in 1994. I think it was only the third palletizer that Verbruggen produced. That machine was such an advance. The operation was simple and we could handle many more kilos, with fewer people. And we drove the pallets straight into the truck.’

FAMILY BUSINESS

We are now almost thirty years later. Frank took over the company, which has been growing steadily, in 2000. It is still a family business. Frank’s father has unfortunately passed away, but son Geert

is now co-owner. His younger brother Teun is also interested in joining. Frank’s wife Saskia does the administration. In addition, three other employees are active. In the spacious and tidy warehouse, in the middle of the North Holland meadows, forklifts with pallets drive around the rhythmically operating VPM-14. Large yellow onions are loaded into Eagle’s orange bags, which are then stacked. ‘Eagle is our brand name,’ says Frank Stoop. ‘In addition to onions, we also process and trade potatoes and vegetables. Eagle stands for the best quality. These large onions go to England. Our customers there specifically ask for it.’

VERBRUGGEN

Frank and Geert have contact with VPS at least once a year. ‘Every year, Verbruggen technicians check our machine. Parts may be replaced. Occasionally there is a malfunction. It is always solved quickly.’

Not long before the interview for this book, Frank and Geert went to the Fruit Logistica in Berlin. ‘We want to know what’s going on, but this is always a nice trip for us too,’ says Frank. Of course,



Frank and Geert Stoop

they also visited Verbruggen's stand. They have seen beautiful machines.

Geert also watched with interest. 'There are several companies that sell palletizers. But we have only worked with the VPM and we like it very much.

I think the next palletizer will also be one of Verbruggen.'

Frank concludes the story. 'Those palletizers are such beautiful machines. They stack so quickly and so neatly. And they never get tired!'

Our History



1991



Company foundation & development first palletizer (1992).

1996



Exportation first palletizer.



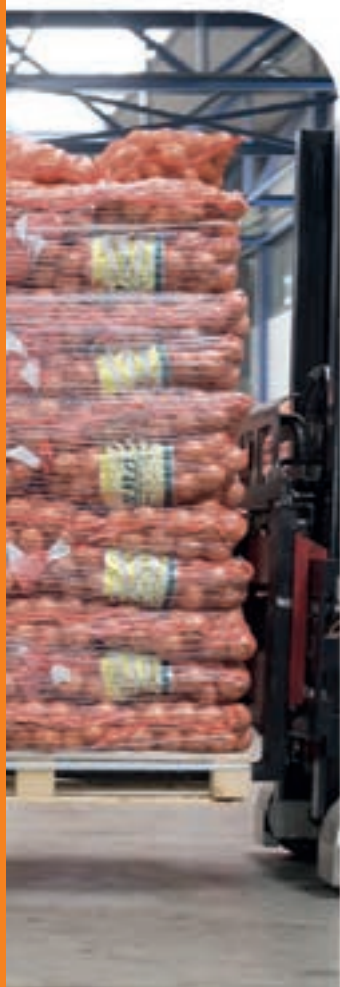
2019

Commissioning 1000th palletizer worldwide.



2023

Opening Asia Pacific branch office in Thailand.





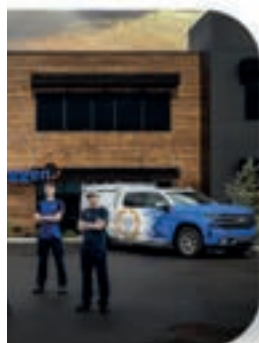
1999

Commissioning
100th palletizer.



2013

Opening USA branch
office in Pasco, WA.



2024

Opening Latin
America branch
office in Argentina.



**AB NIEUWKERK HAS SET UP HIS
BUSINESS EFFICIENTLY**

Modern machines, few employees

11

The warehouse of Nieuwkerk Aardappelhandel in Fijnaart is full of beautiful machines. Including an optical reading machine, a sorting installation with many conveyor belts, a packing line with a weigher, three packing machines and a beautiful VPM-14 palletizer. They are perfectly matched. Only four people work in this company, where all those modern machines process thousands of tons of potatoes. Owner Ab Nieuwkerk has optimally modernized his company.

Ab Nieuwkerk



BY HAND

Without exaggeration, you can say that entrepreneurship in the potato world is in his blood. 'My grandfather started already in 1932 in this arable farming region with a team of people picking the potatoes by hand on the land and scooping them from the pit by fork in winter. He had bought the potatoes from the farmers in the area. The potatoes went into sturdy jute mud bags of 70 kg, were sewn up by hand and went to various wholesalers. You had a lot of them in those days.'

Ab's father started helping out after the war. Mechanization slowly gets on the rise. A conveyor belt, a bunker, a forklift comes. And the auction boxes became cubic crates. In 1985, Ab, then twenty years old, joined the company. 'I remember that in that year we had a new sorting line installed, from Grisnich. With new bunkers. Mart Verbruggen came to help install the line.'

'With that line, we bagged 25 kilo bags for the export. Thanks to an extendable box filler, we didn't have to lift the bags, just receive them and place them in rows in the container. Back then the separate bags went in. Later on this became a little easier with a stacker from De Lignie out of Herkingen. With a pedal, the platform you stood on went up, so that you could control the bags layer by layer during falling.'

FASTER AND BETTER

But it has to be faster and better. Ab sees at a fair a stacker of bags of onions, from Verbruggen. He talks with Alex Verbruggen and they agree that Verbruggen will slightly adjust this palletizer for the potatoes, with an automatic pallet feed. 'That machine was installed in 1996 and already looked a bit like they do now.'

In 2005, Nieuwkerk Aardappelhandel moved from the center of the village to a place at the Appelaarsedijk, a spacious location, between the plots of the farmers in the area. Verbruggen's palletizer is dismantled and reassembled in the brand new warehouse. In 2012, this machine was exchanged for a VPM-14, a faster version, with a packing machine.

EVEN FASTER AND BETTER

Nieuwkerk is a wholesaler of potatoes and also a storage, sorting and shipping company. In other words: they buy consumption potatoes from the farmers, read, sort and bag. All for export, mostly overseas. And that has to be done faster and better. Every day, trucks are waiting to be loaded. That is why Ab thought it was time for the latest version of the VPM-14 in 2024, with a netting machine, the third machine. 'The old one couldn't keep up anymore. With the latest machine, the supply belts can continue to run constantly. The manipulator can keep track of two packers. This VPM-14 is so fast: more than 35 bags per minute!'

The Ab Nieuwkerk-Verbruggen relationship is good. Although Ab, once the machine is installed, does not often speak to anyone from Verbruggen. 'I can remember one time when the machine stopped due to a technical problem. You can't have that with trucks waiting on your property. Within a few hours I had someone from Emmeloord in my company, and he solved the problem. Fortunately, I can do a lot myself and the service people can now also solve many problems remotely via the computer.'

POTATO DEMO DAY

What is special in the relationship between Nieuwkerk-Verbruggen is the fact that interested parties regularly come to admire the VPM-14. 'The last time with a large group was in 2024, in September, in consultation with Rutger Verbruggen. There was a potato demo day in Westmaas, not far from here. We then organized an open house. We had all the machines running and interested parties could view them. That was a beautiful day.'

Ab is optimistic about the future of his company, which he runs together with his wife Ina. 'There is enough demand for our product. We mainly do a lot of work for large trading companies and exporters. Our children, Anne of 21 and Teun of 18, have known the ins and outs of the company from an early age. In addition to their studies, they also contribute at busy times. It is nice that our son Teun is showing interest in our company. It could very well be that in about ten years' time he will trade in this VPM-14 for a new machine,' says Ab with a smile.

**EMPLOYEE JOHAN VAN DER REEST
WAS A FORMER CUSTOMER**

***‘I am proud to
be able to work
in this great
company’***

12

Johan van der Reest provides a special story to this book. He is a former customer, but has been an employee since 2012. And can look at Verbruggen from a different perspective. ‘Typical Verbruggen? Do what you say, say what you do.’

Johan van der Reest



THE VERBRUGGEN FAMILY

Johan can still remember the first meetings with the Verbruggen family. 'My father Jaap had an onion trade and sorting company and also had sheep. Because I was quite technical and did the MTS mechanical engineering training, as a young boy I became responsible for the technical matters in our company. During that period, Marius Verbruggen, Alex and Mart's father, came to our company on behalf of the KZIJ auction to talk about contract cultivation, for onions that were not sold by the clock. My father and I have good memories of Marius Verbruggen. I have not experienced a more honest person.'

At Van der Reest they also become active in carrots and for that they buy a carrot washing machine from the KZIJ. Marius Verbruggen puts it at Van der Reest, but they can't get it to work properly. 'Well', says Marius. 'I have two sons. They are handy. They will solve this for you.' And so Johan and his father meet Alex and Mart.

In 1992, Johan and his father wanted a storage bunker installation for onions. A supplier does not want to make it the way Van der Reest wants it to. And then they remember: those Verbruggen brothers... They started their own business, didn't they? Johan: 'Alex came to our company and he wanted to build the storage bunker the way we wanted it. For an amount of 201,000 guilders. I remember this well. Later I understood that this was the order that got their business started.'

Not much later, Johan and his father buy a used palletizer. 'Alex Verbruggen was with us and saw that machine. He made videos and photos of it and was inspired. What is special is that we bought a used palletizer from Verbruggen in 2007. We had a good contact with Alex. He regularly came to our company.'

EMPLOYED BY VERBRUGGEN

In 2012, things are going badly in the onion trade. Van der Reest goes bankrupt, also for other reasons. Johan continues as an entrepreneur with his sheep. Johan: 'During that period, Alex was active in the United States. The dealer there could not provide the necessary service. The biggest prompt problem was that a whole factory did not want to run smoothly and the palletizer was identified as the culprit. Alex called me and asked if I wanted to come

to America. After one conversation with Alex, I decided to do this.'

'In America I was looked at suspiciously. They no longer believed in this machine. But I knew those machines and soon saw that the packing machines were badly adjusted and operated incorrectly. As a result, packing and sewing went wrong, the onions fell out, the bags were crooked on the conveyor belt, after which the palletizer generated an error message and stopped the packing machines. Within two days I had solved the problem and then trained the operators more in working with fully automatic machines and preventing problems. Alex wanted to hire me for the service department, as a freelancer or as an employee. I chose employment.'

SERVICE

Johan is placed in the service department. He is in the right place there. 'I have been an entrepreneur and understand the tensions that sometimes arise in a company when machines do not work properly. I have enjoyed working with Daniël Noorland. Together we served the whole world.' Because Johan has too little knowledge of programming, he is moved to the sales department by the management in 2017. He is currently responsible for sales in Germany up to and including Eastern Europe, up to the border of Russia. A large area, but Johan can handle this. 'Because we have good dealers, with whom I maintain good contact. My sales target for 2024 had already been met in July.'

MORE PEACE AND QUIET

Johan entered the company in a turbulent period. 'There was a lack of clarity in the management. There was a lot of negativity and uncertainty in the workplace. The arrival of an interim manager has done us good. Communication has improved, agreements are kept, resulting in strong growth of the company. Every quarter we now have a meeting for all staff members. There the management looks back at the past quarter and looks ahead to the coming quarter. There is clarity again and the atmosphere is very good now. I am proud to be able to work in this great company.'

ANDRÉ VAN DER VEN: 'WE ARE GOING FOR THE LONG TERM!'

The loyalty between VPS and SEW

13

Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions and SEW Eurodrive have a close relationship for more than 30 years. It is the high-quality products and the service of this manufacturer of electric engines that give stability to this collaboration. But it is the cultures of VPS and SEW, both internationally operating family businesses, that provide an extra strong connection.

André van der Ven, he has been working for his employer for 38 years, is the man of SEW who has been in contact with Verbruggen for many years. He started in technology and later moved to sales. Since 2009, he has been a member of the board of directors of the Dutch branch of SEW, based in Rotterdam. He sums up the VPS-SEW relationship in one word: loyalty.

GERMAN

SEW is a German company, founded in 1931, in Bruchsal, where it is still located. It is currently one of the international market leaders in drive technology. SEW employs more than 21,000 employees worldwide, of which around 300 work in research and development. 'We are a Dutch company with a German character. By that I mean that we deliver technically advanced products. What we are particularly good at is making our products customer-specific.'

IN THE PAST

The VPS-SEW relationship was established around the year 1992. 'When our salesman who served VPS, Ruud de Beun, retired, I took over this relationship. Actually, mainly to see which colleague I would hand over VPS to. But the contact was so pleasant that I continued to serve VPS. I have mainly built up a bond with Koos Lambregtse. A nice, reliable man.'

LESSER TIMES

As in any relationship, there are also less good times. 'For a while, our relationship was under pressure. There was discussion about the prices. That is obviously allowed. That's how it works in our world. For a while, the contact was less intense, although the relationship with VPS remained, especially with Koos. Fortunately, we always came to an agreement. Later, contact was restored.'

It was also difficult during the Covid period. André: 'What a bad time that was. The supply from our suppliers got stuck. Our factories in Germany



André van der Ven (left) with a colleague

and France came to a standstill. We could no longer meet the demand of our customers. It even became so crazy that at one point we had to decide which customers we could supply and which we couldn't. I do know that we have supported VPS a lot in this phase and have helped them to keep going. That's what I mean by loyalty. In Germany, they are so shocked by this situation that our management there has decided to expand the stock enormously. There is now stock for at least a year. A huge investment.'

GROWTH

Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions has grown considerably. So does the trade between VPS and SEW. 'I was visiting Emmeloord once and saw boxes of ours everywhere,' says André with visible pleasure. But that good relationship and the delivery of products obviously do not last by themselves. André: 'For example, we have invested heavily in our supply chain.

To be able to deliver even faster and more flexible. We are also working with VPS to better streamline the purchasing administration. We are also optimizing online support. Fun fact is that my son Steven takes care of this. And of course we think along and develop based on the need. And we provide training. Both at our place and at the customer's location.'

André emphasizes once again that SEW goes for the long term. 'We have the added advantage of being able to serve VPS worldwide. The quality is the same everywhere, the numbering of the products is the same. And all over the world we work customer-specific. I therefore assume that the VPS-SEW relationship will last for a long time to come'

**FREYA JENSEN, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
WORKS ON GROWTH IN NORTH AMERICA**

The best of two worlds

14

Freya Jensen

Working in the United States, for a Dutch company. That's challenging, says Freya Jensen, regional director of VPS Incorporated, based in Pasco, Washington State. 'I see it mainly as an opportunity to develop the best way of working from both worlds,' says Freya.

'EXCELLENT REPUTATION'

Freya held various sales positions in the agricultural sector in North America. She even once had sold a palletizer of VPS Inc. and knew the 'excellent reputation' of VPS.

In the Covid period, the demand for automation increased, as did the demand for palletizers. VPS was looking for new employees. 'I came into the picture and in February 2021 I joined the company. At the time, I was involved in sales and media and public relations. There are a number of reasons why I chose VPS. The quality of the product is very good and the human way in which VPS deals with its employees and other relations also appeals to me. It is a real family business. We see a lot of that in the US, especially in our sectors. VPS is also active outside the agricultural sector, for example in industry, in food processing. I find that very interesting.'

There is more that motivates Freya. 'I think it's inspiring that our machines contribute to improving working conditions for tens of thousands of people. No one can stack heavy bags all day year after year.' What else gives her energy? 'I like to build relationships, to develop partnerships, to do even better together.'

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Freya is therefore in the right place at VPS Inc. She did so well that in the summer of 2024 she was asked by the board of directors of VPS to become regional director. The challenge is

to improve the results in North and Central America, from Canada to Panama. She also took on this 'challenge'. 'I am happy with the confidence they have in me.'

Of course, she sees commercial opportunities. 'Our product is good, there is demand and the market is large. The world is a small place. Our qualities are becoming more and more known and will help us to grow. What we are very good at, for example, is the custom installation of new machines in an old environment.'

Due to the growth, there is a need for new employees for sales and service. But just like in Europe, there is also a shortage of well-trained technical staff in the United States. 'Attracting good people will be difficult, but we will succeed,' says Freya confidently. 'We find them in our own networks, among other things. And we put these people in the right place.'

CULTURE

She is building a team with 'different personalities', in a company with American and Dutch influences. Fascinating, Freya thinks. The humor, for example, is different, she has experienced. This is obviously not a big problem. It is more difficult to bridge the gap between European patience and American impatience. But that will also work, according to Freya. 'We will not stay stuck in our American bubble. We are open to other ideas and go for 'the best of two worlds', she says confidently.

**MUTUAL RESPECT IS THE BASIS OF
THE VPS AND SMC RELATIONSHIP**

Trust, expertise and continuity

15

Trust, expertise, and continuity. These are the core values of SMC Nederland, supplier of electrical and pneumatic components for machine manufacturing. These values of the company, founded in Japan, fit seamlessly with the culture of VPS. That is why there has been an intense collaboration between the two companies for more than 30 years. Guido Vos, regional team leader Northeast Netherlands, and his colleague Cor van Breemen, mentor-internal coach (and former account manager for VPS) are happy to tell you more about it.

JAPAN

SMC became big in the sixties and seventies of the last century in Japan, where an industrial revolution took place at the time. SMC now has offices all over the world, including The Netherlands. SMC has been the supplier of VPS for decades, partly for the machines used to make parts of the palletizers, but mainly for the palletizers themselves.

Cor van Breemen took over the VPS account from colleague Wibo Paalman in 2007. Cor already knew purchaser Koos Lambregtse out of a period at Technische Unie. “During that period, VPS mainly worked on a project basis and we tailored our deliveries accordingly. So they were very variable, depending on those projects.”

Guido Vos is now team leader of the Northeast Netherlands team. He is a key account manager VPS. ‘The cooperation has intensified, tells Guido, ‘especially in the last six or seven years. After

Wouter and Maarten Verbruggen have formed the management, more serial production is carried out and there is also more standardization. We now deliver our components in sets as much as possible. All components for one part of the machine are in one box for a series. This is more clear, so that there is always stock and the employee does not miss out.’

INNOVATION

Typical of SMC is the urge to innovate. Guido: ‘We want to supply the best components so that our customers’ machines run even better, faster and more efficiently. Top quality, that’s also what VPS focuses on.’

SMC’s quality is also in the logistics and the attention to the customer. Cor: ‘Our office is in Amsterdam, but the warehouses for SMC Benelux are in Wommelgem near Antwerp and in Eindhoven. We deliver the sets out of Eindhoven, individual



Cor van Breemen and Guido Vos

parts from Wommelgem. What is also typical SMC, inspired by the way of working in Japan, is the attitude and time that our representatives, sales engineers, have for our customers. This is why, if there is a problem, they can solve it quickly.'

'Being good to your employees, being good to the environment, that is also part of SMC,' Guido adds. 'It was not without a reason that Japan was the first to introduce the mass-production hybrid car, the Toyota Prius. We want to produce sustainably ourselves and also help our customers to produce more sustainably. For example, by developing components that contribute to machines requiring even less energy and taking up even less space.'

FAMILY BUSINESS

What is special is that SMC, with 23,000 employees worldwide, also has the culture of a family business. Again, this is typically Japanese. The involvement of employees with their employers and

vice versa is great. It is still common in Japan to work for one company for the rest of your life. 'We both look at the long term. Relationships matter for us and for Verbruggen', Cor knows. Guido takes with a smile a little bodysuit out of his bag, with the SMC logo on it. 'We are going to a customer who has just become a father.'

Finally, also when it comes to international operations, SMC and Verbruggen reinforce each other. Guido: 'We can also serve VPS branches abroad. And think along about specific problems. For example, about that palletizer that must be able to run even at minus thirty degrees. All this reinforces our cooperation.' Cor also sees this development and summarizes in two words what this cooperation is based on: 'Mutual respect.'

**GLENN AND PAUL WOUSLEY FROM
AUSTRALIA ABOUT VERBRUGGEN'S
PALLETIZERS**

***‘No one can
beat us!’***

16

The enterprising families Woosley in Australia and Verbruggen in The Netherlands have been doing business with each other for more than 25 years. And will continue to do so for as long as possible. Paul Woosley (formerly also his father Glenn) sells Verbruggen's palletizers in Australia. He and his father know that they have a sought-after product in their hands. 'Verbruggen's palletizers are better than those of the competitors,' Glenn and Paul state firmly. 'No one can beat us!'



LEFT First machine in Australia (Mitavite - 49 mln bags stacked!)
BELOW Rutger Verbruggen, Glenn and Paul Woosley



ATLANTA, 1997

The relationship Woosley-Verbruggen was established in 1997, during a trade show in Atlanta in the United States. Paul tells the following about it. 'I was walking around there and saw Verbruggen's palletizer. The machine stacked bags of potatoes and onions there. I was very impressed. Back home in Australia, my father and I had a company in animal feed, which we also sold in bags. We had growth plans and saw a role for the palletizer in this. But I also saw opportunities to sell this machine for Verbruggen in Australia. I talked about this with someone from Verbruggen. I'm almost sure this was Mart. The machine cost then, in Dutch money, about 75,000 guilders. I pulled out my checkbook and wanted to write a check to buy the machine. Wait a minute, said Mart. This is going too fast. You have to come to Holland.' However, it will not be Holland, but England, a year later. Alex invited Paul to see a palletizer in operation. Paul is still enthusiastic, has made his plans and buys his first palletizer.

The relationship is reinforced when Glenn and Paul visit the company in Emmeloord. They are also invited to Alex and Joke Verbruggen's home. 'That was a warm welcome,' Paul remembers well. 'We sat at the table with the whole family. I also remember that I was surprised by the hard G with which the Dutch talk. It seemed as if they were clearing their throats with that.' With many impressions and a stack of brochures, they return home. They sell their first palletizer to the Australian Food Warehouse. After processing 49 million bags, this machine has now been replaced by a new one...

TO CHURCH

After Glenn and Paul's visit to Emmeloord, Alex flies to Sunshine Coast, a town above Brisbane, where the Woosley's company is located. On Friday, Alex asks Glenn what he is going to do on Saturday. 'I go to church,' says Glenn, who is a Seventh-day Adventist. The Seventh-day Adventists have Saturday, the Sabbath, as their religious day of rest. 'Oh, then I'll come along,' says Alex. 'What are you going to do on Sunday,' Glenn asks Alex on Saturday evening. 'I'm going to church tomorrow.' 'Oh, then I'll come along,' Glenn replies.

Glenn has been retired for many years now, but has continued to serve the company for a long time after his retirement. Paul tells a nice story about that. 'My father bought a camper after he retired. He was near Perth when he called me. It was fun, that holiday. But he was bored. He saw opportunities to sell a palletizer in Perth. And he succeeded.'

HUGE GROWTH

The special thing about the Woosley-Verbruggen relationship is that both family businesses have experienced enormous growth. Glenn is now really retired. Wild kangaroos sometimes jump into his large yard. 'Then I feed them bread by hand,' he says proudly. Paul Woosley is currently managing director of the Oreco Group. They mainly do in potting soil, packed in 25 liter bags, which are sold all over Australia. The Oreco Group employs 120 people.

Sales of palletizers in Australia show ups and downs. Sometimes ten machines are sold in a year, sometimes only one. Oreco has sold a total of sixty palletizers in Australia. The Woosley's do not see a big growth happening in Australia soon. The exceptionally large country has a special geography, with a gigantic desert in the central part. The distances are extremely large, but the country has only 27 million residents. However, there is obviously a replacement market.

GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

When Paul and Glenn tell their story for this book, it is the end of 2024. They have seen Verbruggen's palletizers get better and better. At Oreco they work with 25 liter bags. Six bags per layer. The latest palletizers process thirty bags per minute! Rutger Verbruggen is the account manager who maintains contacts with customers in Australia and New Zealand on behalf of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. To illustrate the enthusiasm on the other side of the world, we conclude this story with the post Paul posted on LinkedIn in 2023: 'We recently bought two high-speed palletizers. These machines have already processed ten million bags. The total maintenance costs amounted to AUD 3,209. They are simply the best palletizers out there!'

The market in South America is open

17

In faraway Argentina, Francisco Gigliotti makes robotized machines that weigh products, especially potatoes, and then pack them in bags. The name of the company is Camet Robótica, located in Mar del Plata, a city on the Atlantic Ocean, about four hundred kilometers south of the capital Buenos Aires. When Francisco learns that a palletizer has been purchased in his area, he wants to know more about it. It is then 2020. The Covid pandemic is spreading. Everyone suffers from this and is looking for new sales. 'That's how I came into contact with Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions,' Francisco remembers it.

To make his company stronger, he suggests Maarten Verbruggen to start cooperating. Maarten is interested in that, partly because it is expensive to export palletizers to Argentina. The Argentinian government charges fifty percent import duty! Francisco: 'Maarten asked me for help in this area. I thought; We can manufacture and assemble the parts of the palletizers here. I had only spoken to Maarten on the phone a few times when I suggested this. After a few seconds he said; Yes, we're going to do it.' After Maarten's 'yes', VPS traveled to Mar del Plata in April 2024. Managing director Wouter Verbruggen, operational director Siemen Fuite and financial director Peter Miedema take a look at the situation on site and discuss the cooperation with Camet in more concrete terms. They come to the conclusion that the products complement each other perfectly. When the work of the weigher and bag filler is finished, the bags can be stacked with the palletizer. The men agree that Verbruggen will take a share in Camet Robótica.

There is also a personal click. Francisco: 'Ver-

bruggen's men are nice guys. Realistic too. And easily approachable. I now know their way of working, their company culture. That's how we work at Camet too.' Only Verbruggen is much bigger. 'Yes, definitely', Francisco laughs. 'I work with ten people, Verbruggen with about 120. I have visited Verbruggen in Emmeloord twice now. I can learn from the fact that everything happens on a larger scale there.'

MERCOSUR

When Francisco talks enthusiastically about the collaboration during one of these visits, he indicates that there are great opportunities for Camet/Verbruggen in Europe and all of South America. 'We can market Camet products in Europe. In South America, Mercosur is an economic cooperation between the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, which form a common market. In Mercosur you can export products without import duties.'

And so, via Camet/Verbruggen, a market opens wide on the other side of the world, an area where a



Francisco Gigliotti

total of about 260 million people live. But, a not unimportant question: is there demand for palletizers? 'Yes, of course', is Francisco's convincing answer. 'In South America, we lagged behind Europe for a long time when it came to mechanization, automation

and robotization. But we have found the connection. The machines in the agricultural sector and in logistics have become much better. Now is the time to come to the market with palletizers!'

**'FASTER, BETTER, USER-FRIENDLY,
LIFE CHANGING, RELIABLE, GOOD
SERVICE'**

18

What customers say about Verbruggen Palletizing

Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions has many hundreds of customers all over the world. For this book, we have collected a number of stories from customers from the very beginning, logically mainly from The Netherlands. But we look further. On these pages, we also let customers from other countries in Europe, the United States of America, Asia and other parts of the world have their say. What are their experiences with Verbruggen?

RIO FRESH, TEXAS

Eddie Barnhart of Rio Fresh from San Juan in Texas is, like many Texans, very outspoken. 'The palletizer was life changing for us,' says Eddie. On the fertile soils of the Rio Grande Valley, close to the border with Mexico, Rio Fresh mainly processes onions. Eddie indicates that it was difficult to hire and keep sufficient and reliable staff for packing and stacking the onions. 'Of-

ten we had not enough people. And sometimes we didn't see them again after lunch.' And then they discovered VPS's palletizer. 'This fantastic machine can stack our boxes, crates and bags, in different sizes. Always neat, always tight. Much faster than humans can do this. And the palletizer never lets us down. That's why I said: life changing!'

A man with light skin and blue eyes, wearing a dark grey baseball cap with the Golden Valley Farms logo and a grey polo shirt with the TMI logo. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a blurred industrial setting with blue and white structures.

GOLDEN VALLEY FARMS, OREGON

Josh Wells of Golden Valley Farms in Silverton, Oregon, is also so enthusiastic. Golden Valley Farms specializes in grass seeds. These seeds are packed in bags, after which they go out into the world to the customers. Josh: 'I had four or five people working on the stacking. What they did in three hours, two or three people can now do in an hour with the Verbruggen palletizer. And then the stacks are also much tighter and more stable. Amazing!'

**ALLIED POTATO,
WASHINGTON STATE**

Not far from the branch of VPS Inc. in Washington State, the company Allied Potato is active. This company mainly supplies consumption potatoes to the crisps and French fries industry. Those potatoes are packed in mesh bags and boxes. Dan Wooten of Allied Potato indicates that stacking the bags and boxes caused many physical problems among colleagues. They have had a Verbruggen palletizer for a number of years now. A wave of efficiency flowed through the company. The machine works faster and neater than the people. And the physical problems of the stackers are gone!



A man with brown hair and a mustache, wearing dark sunglasses and a blue and white plaid button-down shirt, is standing outdoors. He is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with some structures.

DDS SEED COMPANY, WASHINGTON STATE

Jared Druffle is the owner of DDS Seed Company, a large family farm, located in Pullman, Washington State. In an extensive area with colorful fields, DDS processes and trades wheat, rapeseed and chickpeas. Jared says that a few years ago, the family decided to process more product. However, they did not have enough people for that. The solution was... a palletizer from Verbruggen. 'Verbruggen's palletizer makes excellent stacks, very tight, partly due to the customer-specific manipulator. They are superior to the competitors! And, that's what it was all about for us, we could free up more people for other work. We now process more product, the turnover has increased. I would also like to mention that the service of VPS is perfect!'



INDECK LADYSMITH, WISCONSIN

Wood pellets for the stoves in the living room. Now that fewer and fewer individuals want to heat their homes with gas, the turnover of this product from Indeck out of Ladysmith, Wisconsin is growing. John Liazuk is the operations manager there. He was not satisfied with the robot they had and opted for a Verbruggen palletizer. 'The quality of stacking our bags has improved considerably. It looks better and it holds better.' John also indicates that he finds adjusting the machine very user-friendly. He therefore wholeheartedly recommends Verbruggen's palletizer to other entrepreneurs.

A man with light blue eyes, wearing a dark blue baseball cap and a blue zip-up hoodie, is smiling slightly. He is standing in front of a large warehouse filled with stacks of blue bags, likely ice bags. The background is slightly blurred, showing the repetitive pattern of the bags on wooden pallets.

LACONIA ICE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Derek Rudzinski from Laconia Ice out of Meredith New Hampshire is the owner of a family business which was founded in 1913 (!) by his great-grandfather. This great-grandfather cut ice from the nearby lake and sold it to customers. In Derek's company, ice cubes are produced in-house and then shipped to customers in large light blue bags. Derek bought a palletizer from Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions 25 years ago. And in 2024 he bought a new one.

He is not only full of praise for the palletizer, but also for VPS's service. 'Employees walked with us every step of the way and made sure we get the most out of the palletizer. It can now process seventy bags per minute. The pallets are stacked so tightly that they do not fall over, not even in the truck and also not with customers who take the bags off the stacks. In addition, we not only save on staff, but also on wrapping material, due to the tight stack.'

LOUR FARMS, SCOTLAND

Mike Cumming works as a manager for barley and seed potato company Lour Farms in Ladeford, Scotland. 'Our Verbruggen VPM-5 palletizer has been in our company since 2017 and is the most reliable machine in our company. He stacks the pallets flawlessly every day, day in, day out, without complaining. He is ready to go to work at any time of the day. Even after a few months of downtime, our VPM-5 starts up without any problems. To get back to work flawlessly.'

MOLINO CHABAS S.A., ARGENTINA

Arturo Luis Marasca, director of Molino Chabas S.A., based in Argentina, is happy to tell us something about the VPM-10 that is on the shop floor in his company. 'We bought the VPM-10 because we wanted to improve logistics, to make truck loading faster and wanted to better organize our warehouses. The VPM-10 works very good, and Verbruggen has supported us so well on all fronts that we have earned back the investment in three-and-a-half years!'

PRIESTON FARM, SCOTLAND

In Dundee in Scotland, Prieston Farm, a large livestock farm and potato company, has a VPM-7. John Millar tells the following about the collaboration with Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. 'The collaboration with Verbruggen is always smooth and pleasant. I definitely recommend them to others. The Verbruggen employees who have worked at our company have always been pleasant and helpful. They are a wonderful showcase for their company.'

LOVETT FAMILY FARMS LTD., NEW ZEALAND

At Lovett Family Farms in New Zealand there is a VPM-14. 'Working with Verbruggen was a simple, efficient and very well executed process', says Daniel Lovett, owner of this company. 'We started with a twenty-year-old second-hand machine from VPS, which could stack our potatoes and onions. Then we opted for a new one. The reliability of the second-hand machine was fantastic, which also gave us a lot of confidence in our new machine. Thank you Verbruggen, for the streamlined process of cooperation!'

KHAO C.P. CO. LTD., THAILAND

Somkoun Meathasan, Nakhonluang rice plant manager shares his experience with Verbruggen: 'Verbruggen palletizers have truly transformed our operations. Their advanced palletizing solutions have significantly increased our efficiency, reduced manual labor, and improved the overall consistency of our packaging process. The technology is not only reliable but also easy to integrate into our existing workflow. Beyond the equipment, the Verbruggen team has been exceptional, offering outstanding customer support, expert guidance, and a commitment to our success. Their professionalism and dedication to innovation make them a valuable partner in our supply chain. Verbruggen palletizers are well-suited to the enhancement of palletizing efficiency via the implementation of top-tier automation technologies.'



GPOD, IDAHO

People who still want to stack heavy bags and boxes of potatoes, or can persevere, are scarce. Like many companies, GPOD from Shelley, Idaho (USA) also struggled with this problem. VPS's VPM-VHV palletizer was the perfect solution. This palletizer was customized and expanded to meet GPOD's needs, including multiple lines for product accumulation, pallet wrapping, or corner carton/strapping with fully automatic operation for optimal efficiency and cost savings. The men of GPOD are super enthusiastic. 'The palletizer works at lightning speed, stacks neatly and stably and is always ready. The question was to stack 26 boxes per minute, but we can easily get up to 40 per minute! Even at the weekend or on a public holiday.' GPOD saves \$320,000 annually with the palletizer! Production and warehouse manager Clayne Bloom also praises the customer-oriented attitude of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. 'If there is a problem, the people at VPS are always available and willing to help. If one solution doesn't work, they look for another. Until the problem is solved.'

**CONTINUE TO DEVELOP YOURSELF
WITH THE HELP OF THE VERBRUGGEN
ACADEMY**

The world changes, Verbruggen is changing along

19

Continue to develop yourself - based on the vision of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions and tailored to the needs and level of each individual. That, very briefly, is the goal of the Verbruggen Academy launched in fall 2024.



Cindy Pit-Gorter

Stapelen
Building You!



**Ontdek jouw potentieel
met de Verbruggen Academy!**

De Verbruggen Academy Solutions gelooft in de kracht van voortdurend leren en ontwikkeling. Onze nieuw opgerichte Academy is ontworpen om jouw potentieel als mensen te ontwikkelen en te ondersteunen in de vaardigheden die nodig zijn om er toe bij te dragen.

Door met ons mee en word onderdeel van een reis waar we niet alleen vaardigheden stapelen, we bouwen samen aan jouw toekomst.



Verbruggen Academy is de plek waar
je een vormgeving die waarde creëert
naast een succesvolle toekomst.



*Everyone can
develop in his or
her own way.*

The woman behind this ambitious initiative is Cindy Pit-Gorter, who joined Verbruggen in September 2023. Cindy, who via the HR department ended up in the training and development department at her previous employer, was asked by CFO Peter Miedema to help set up the Verbruggen Academy. That seemed like a nice challenge to her.

‘A lot was already happening at Verbruggen, in the field of onboarding programs, training and development,’ Cindy begins her story. ‘But little had been established about that, there was little structure to it, and no one was really responsible for it.’

While personal development is becoming increasingly important for employees. New young employees are explicitly asking for it.’

VERBRUGGEN’S VISION ON LEARNING

‘Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions has a vision on learning,’ Cindy continues. ‘It is based on our core values trust, inventive, responsible, connecting and free. With these values, we want to create a climate in which employees

dare to take risks, are creative and take responsibility for their development, while also working well together and sharing knowledge.’

Cindy goes into this in more detail. ‘In this rapidly changing world with new technological possibilities, Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions believes in the combination of workplace learning, development paths and personal development. We encourage all our employees to become the better version of themselves, develop skills and keep up with palletizing knowledge and technical capabilities.’

WORKPLACE LEARNING

Workplace learning means that learning and development are part of the daily work process. Employees are challenged in their regular work, take on new tasks, experiment with new possibilities and reflect with each other.

DEVELOPMENT PATHS AS A GUIDELINE FOR GROWTH

To further promote personal and professional development, the Verbruggen Academy offers personal development paths,’ adds Cindy. ‘We use specific Verbruggen development learning pathways, but also training courses from the A+O fund and oZone. oZone is a user-friendly digital learning environment, developed for and by technical companies. There you will find basic learning material that you can use directly for training employees. With all these elements, we have created our own digital platform, the platform of the Verbruggen Academy.’

SELF-INSIGHT

The Verbruggen Academy also promotes the self-awareness and personal leadership of the employees. There are consultations for that, feedback, a talent analysis and personal development programs. Cindy: ‘The goal is to identify and use the specific talents of each employee, so that he or she can do his or her best and be of value to our organization. This benefits everyone’s job satisfaction and also takes our organization a step further.’

FUTURE

Cindy is also looking forward to moving to De Munt B. ‘Yes, the Verbruggen Academy will have its own well-equipped space. We can take new steps there.’ Does Cindy have any other plans? ‘Yes, of course. With our Verbruggen Academy, we also want to support our external relations in the near future. Think about programs that help our partners and customers to properly install, utilize, and maintain our machines. We now offer our program in Dutch. But given the international character of our company, we will also make the translation to our branches in other parts of the world.’

**SANDRINO SCHMITZ,
DIRECTOR VPS ASIA PACIFIC**

‘There are great opportunities in Southeast Asia’

20

Since November 1, 2023, Sandrino Schmitz has been director of Verbruggen Palletizing Asia Pacific (VPAP). VPAP makes the VPM-5 in Chonburi, Thailand and sells it in Thailand and surrounding countries. Sandrino is convinced that there are great opportunities for VPS in that part of the world.

Sandrino grew up in Maastricht. He graduated in mechanical engineering and met his Thai wife Saranya Boonwongsa 22 years ago. But did their future lie in The Netherlands or Thailand? It became Thailand, where Sandrino went to work as plant manager of a factory that extracted starch from, among other things, grains and rice. He then became director-owner of a company, Asia Alliance Machinery, which produced parts for machines.

COOPERATION

In that context, Sandrino visited VPS in Emmeloord about four years ago. ‘I spoke among others to Maarten Verbruggen and Siemen Fuite. The contact was immediately pleasant. From there, a collaboration arose and we decided to set up a new company in Thailand, intended to enter the market in Southeast Asia. We officially started on November 1, 2023, in Chonburi, which is about a hundred kilometers south of Bangkok.’

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Sandrino paints the bigger picture of the economy in Southeast Asia. ‘A lot of people live there and in most countries we see steady economic growth. Companies are getting bigger and more powerful. About ten or fifteen years ago, automation and robotization started here. In our industry of stacking bags we see many robotic arms. But our palletizers

work much faster than those robotic arms, which also suffer a lot from the power supply surges and drops in this region.’

‘In addition,’ Sandrino continues, ‘workers are becoming scarcer in this region and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find good people for the heavy and often poorly paid bag stacking. These are ideal conditions for the arrival of our palletizers.’

LARGE CUSTOMERS

The palletizers are obviously suitable especially for larger companies that are located in spacious warehouses. ‘Those companies are there,’ Sandrino assures. ‘For example, we have a customer who ships eighty containers of rice to the United States. Per week!’

VPAP has only just started and a few palletizers have been sold. But Sandrino envisions significant growth in the next ten years. He has the daily support of his wife Saranya, who is responsible for finance and HR.

In addition, there is of course the support of the parent company in The Netherlands. ‘VPS is a real family business, in which a pleasant collaboration is central. The mutual involvement is great. Maarten also visits regularly. If there is a problem, we look for a solution together. I am very happy to be able to work for VPS.’



Sandrino Schmitz and
Saranya Boonwongsa

**MAARTEN AND WOUTER VERBRUGGEN,
MANAGING DIRECTORS VPS**

***‘It is important
that we value and
respect each other,
everywhere in
the world’***

21

Maarten and Wouter Verbruggen are the current managing directors of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions. They form the management team, together with financial director Peter Miedema, commercial director Tom Rosier and operational director Siemen Fuite. What is the path that Maarten and Wouter have walked before they reached this destination?



Wouter Verbruggen

Maarten Verbruggen

Maarten's story begins in Nigeria. In the previous history Alex tells that the Verbruggen family spent about nine years there. Maarten: 'I have good memories of that. The weather was always nice. We played outside a lot. The nature was beautiful.' When the Verbruggen family returned in 1990, Maarten went to secondary school, the HAVO -VWO class at Scholengemeenschap Pieter Zandt in Kampen. He has to get used to The Netherlands a lot and is not having a good time at school. Maarten eventually gets his MAVO diploma and receives a split study advice: the technical school or the teacher training college. It became the MTS, the machine manufacturing training, in Sneek, where his father

also went to school. Maarten graduates without any problems and after a few years gets a nice job at a company in Utrecht, which installs medical equipment in hospitals worldwide. He travels all over the world to do his work and after a few years moves to Bangladesh with his wife Suzanne to carry out a large project. After ten years in medical technology, a 'holy fire' arises to want to make more impact. Together they decide to start a business in Bangladesh for the development and implementation of projects that contribute to economic development. Maarten: 'That became Deltadesh. We work and still do, in project development and project management in various sectors. Two of our children spent part of their

childhood in Bangladesh. At that time, I had little or no involvement with VPS in Emmeloord.'

WOUTER

Wouter also goes to the Pieter Zandt in Kampen and gets his HAVO diploma there. He chooses to study commercial economics at Windesheim in Zwolle. 'I liked customer contacts. I also regularly went with my father when he visited customers.' When Wouter has graduated, his father reports that the company is still looking for someone in purchase. Wouter accepts this job. After a year and a half, he moves to the sales department. Koos Lambregtse takes over his place in purchasing. Wouter is having a good time, but needs more freedom, more independence.

MAARTEN RETURNS

In 2012, shortly after the split with Mart, Alex writes a letter to all his children. The subject is the future of the company. He asks his children how they think about the future of his company. Maarten: 'I'm available and will be there for you, I said. In 2013 I started working full-time for the company. The Deltadesh company later became part of the Verbruggen Group.' Wouter is also available as a successor.

These are turbulent times for the company. Alex and Mart Verbruggen have just decided to each follow a different course. And there is an economic crisis. Alex, who has just passed sixty, is seriously thinking about the succession. But the situation is complex. Maarten and Wouter are still young. Many colleagues are looking in this wobbly period for something to hold on to. After the crisis, on the other hand, there is a turbulent growth again. Manager Erik Bruggink plays an important stable role in this period.

In 2016, Maarten, Wouter and Erik Bruggink took over part of the shares, each a quarter. But things are not going well between the new shareholders. It does run nicely between Maarten and Wouter, they respect and accept each other's different characters, but there are fundamental differences of opinion with Erik Bruggink.



ABOVE Doing business in Bangladesh

BELOW Board 2025





Wouter geniet samen met zijn gezin van de prachtige natuur in de Verenigde Staten

Wouter Verbruggen:

"Als je met een goed verhaal komt is men bereid te investeren"

Drie maanden geleden vertrok Wouter Verbruggen naar de Verenigde Staten om de Amerikaanse vestiging van Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions verder gestalte te geven. Hoe is de emigratie tot nu toe verlopen?

Wouter woont met zijn gezin in Kennewick in de staat Washington. Kennewick vormt samen met Pasco en Richland de zogenaamde Tri-Cities. Hij werkt sinds 2003 voor het familiebedrijf Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions dat al ruim vijftien jaar zaken doet in Noord-Amerika. "Door de jaren heen hebben we hier ruim 150 palletiseringseenheden geïnstalleerd. Bij de realisatie van deze projecten, die voor een groot deel verkocht worden door lokale vertegenwoordigers, is ondersteuning van het serviceteam in Nederland noodzakelijk. De afstand en het tijdsverschil werken daarbij niet mee. Zo is het plan ontstaan om een Service Center op te richten in Pasco, midden in het gebied waar veel grote agrarische verpakkingsoverdrachten plaatsvinden, die gebruik maken van onze palletiseringsoplossingen", legt hij uit.



De binnen van Verbruggen in Pasco

aantragen voordat het engineeringteam in Nederland aan de slag gaat. De productie vindt nog in Nederland plaats maar op termijn zullen bepaalde onderdelen in Pasco geassembleerd gaan worden. De installatie van nieuwe installaties en de afsales coördineren we wel vanuit hier. In de meeste gevallen vliegen we nog monteurs vanuit Nederland in, maar de intentie is dat dit in de toekomst niet meer nodig is." Vanuit Pasco wordt het gehele Noord-Amerikaanse continent bediend, inclusief Mexico.

Wouter heeft een keuze

Zakelijk gezien zijn de kansen in de Verenigde Staten volgens Wouter enorm: "Als je met een goed verhaal komt, is men bereid te investeren. De prijs is veel minder een punt van discussie. Dat we als oorspronkelijke

Het sociale leven van de Amerikanen speelt zich af in het restaurant, het shopping center of tijdens een kampering. Een bezoek aan de kust bij de Pacific Ocean is heel bijzonder en dat heeft Wouter met zijn gezin dan ook al gedaan. Het is zeker nog de bedoeling om het echte Amerikaanse leven te zien van de reis na terugkomst in zijn business en welke rol dat heeft in de Nederlandse markt. Het heeft een afstand, hij is ook nog eens een kind

fabrikant lokaal" zitten, wordt als een groot pluspunt gezien. Mensen zijn hartelijk, ondernemend en zelfvoorzienend. Nederlanders zijn heel kostengericht terwijl Amerikanen meer gericht zijn op oplossingen en gemak. Deze grote kansen hebben ook een keerzijde. Hij heeft inmiddels ervaren dat achter die schijnbare welvaart, wat men volgens hem graag etaleert, veel sociale en financiële problemen schuilgaan. "De overheid heeft minder bemoeienis met de burger, maar wil wel alles weten en vastleggen. Of Nederlanders iets van Amerikanen kunnen leren en andersom? Amerikanen nemen meer risico's, durven breder te denken en zijn minder afhankelijk. Aan de andere kant zijn Nederlanders veel efficiënter en denken zij eerst na voor er een beslissing wordt genomen die grote gevolgen kan hebben."

Wouterbureau is een must

Het gezin woont sinds juli 2015 in de Verenigde Staten. Het plan is vooralsnog om twee jaar te blijven. Daarna zullen zij overwegen of langer nodig en wenselijk is. De voorbereidingen op de emigratie hebben enkele maanden in beslag genomen en kosten volgens Wouter de nodige inspanningen. Hij merkt op dat het proces tot verkrijging van een visum met behulp van een visumbureau wel vrij soepel is verlopen. "Zo'n bureau is echt een must. Met hun ervaring weten ze precies welke documenten aangeleverd moeten worden en wat de do's en da's zijn in zo'n proces. Een woning en school voor de kinderen waren ook snel gevonden. De huur is groot en je moet bereid zijn te betalen, want de sociale voorzieningen en overheidssubsidies zijn hier minimaal." De grootste uitdaging tot nu toe is de integratie. Hij vertelt dat het sociale leven er minder hecht is. "Je moet hier echt je eigen weg in zien te vinden. Het duurt bijvoorbeeld wel een paar maanden voor het eerst zagen. Ze waren wel blij dat wij er kwamen want nu zijn er eindelijk andere kinderen in de straat." Het valt hen verder op dat Amerikanen minder beschaafd lijken te zijn. "Neem het ongeremde benuttingsklimaat en hoge snelheidsritten. Gelukkig neemt het bewustzijn om dit te veranderen wel toe. 70%, Europeanen, kunnen hier goed bij helpen met onze zuinigere auto's en machines, natuurlijke producten en hoge innovatiedrang." (CS) ■

wouter@verbruggen.nl

Wouter in the US (2015)

WOUTER TO THE US

Wouter is much less affected by these tensions. He left for the United States in 2015. Wouter: 'The potential there was and is enormous. But we needed a more professional organization, especially sales and service had to be more powerfully supported. It was actually building

a new company there.' Wouter moves with his wife Marije and their three children to Pasco in Washington State. With only two permanent employees next to him, he works as hard as possible, while Marije is at home for the kids.

Good results are being achieved in the US and Wouter is getting to know part of what is happening in Emmeloord. In 2020, just before the Covid crisis, he returned to The Netherlands permanently.

TENSIONS

In Emmeloord, the tensions between Alex, Maarten and Erik Bruggink have increased. A very cautious analysis by Maarten is that the manager Erik Bruggink was a different person than the entrepreneur Erik Bruggink. In 2021, clarity will finally come. During a meeting at Alex and Joke's home, all information is put on the table, feelings are expressed and in the end it is decided that it is best that Erik Bruggink leaves the company.

THE CHILDREN TAKE OVER

For their renewed entrepreneurial journey, Maarten and Wouter come up with an acquisition plan. They want to take over the company with their four brothers and sister. Alex and Joke agree.

The shares are neatly divided into seven equal portions for the children and one portion for Alex and Joke. This will be implemented on 1st of December 2023. Of the seven children, four are active in the company, Maarten, Wouter, Reinier and Rutger, two are active in a supervisory position, Erik-Jan and Sander, and sister Maaïke is with Rutger active in the foundation that donates ten percent of VPS's profits to charities. For this purpose, an independent foundation has been set up with the name 1 Petrus 4:10

(www.stichting1petrus410.nl), referring to the Bible text that teaches us to serve the other with the gifts we have received. In recent years, we have been able to support many socially relevant initiatives worldwide. We hope to be able to further expand this support in the future and give people we reach some love, help and hope. This is laid down in the family charter.

REFORMING OF THE LEADERSHIP

Part of the new takeover plan was the reforming of the management. Wouter and Maarten both feel comfortable in their roles. The daily management is in the hands of Peter, Tom and Siemen. Wouter and Maarten oversee this and keep their hands free for the various projects that come their way, such as the new construction project De Munt B, the internationalization of the company, quality management, etc. Wouter: 'Our style of leadership is that of servant leadership.'

As leaders, they have started working on professionalization on all fronts, improving mutual communication and developing a Verbruggen corporate culture. Maarten: 'We are a company of relationships'.

THE FUTURE

The future of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions
Wouter and Maarten do not want to package in

terms of revenue targets, but in an ambition: VPS wants to formulate an appropriate answer to questions in the field of palletizing for everyone in the world who needs it. What does the market need in a particular region? What does this specific entrepreneur need?

Maarten adds: 'We want to be the preferred partner worldwide for palletizing in the broadest sense of the word. This means, among other things, that we want to realize a worldwide network of distributors who can offer these appropriate end-of-line solutions.' Wouter: 'We can only achieve this if we explicitly take into account the local culture, local demand and local purchasing power in each country. And also that we try to understand, appreciate and respect each other as good as possible, anywhere in the world. We want to embed all of this deeply in the DNA of our company. To achieve all these objectives, we need our new, spacious and well-equipped business premises.'

And finally, are there new entrepreneurs coming to the Verbruggen family? Maarten and Wouter's answer: 'We feel like stewards. We were able to take over the company from the previous generation. The next generation will also have the opportunity to continue the business. Our kids and other nieces and nephews are given time to think about this. And then everyone makes his or her own choice.'

The colleagues are present when the first pile is driven



Business transfer December 1, 2023 - family photo



Alex drives the first pile



**‘I CAN NOW DISTANCE MYSELF
FROM THE COMPANY’**

Alex Verbruggen; grateful and proud

21a

Grateful and proud. That feeling prevails when Alex Verbruggen is asked in early 2025 to look at the current Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions on the occasion of this publication. ‘The company is in good shape. I am grateful and certainly proud of Maarten and Wouter, the other kids and the employees, for bringing the company into this stable situation.’



As the story of Maarten and Wouter also shows, VPS found itself in a difficult situation about ten years ago. Alex: ‘I had handed over literally, the baton, but gradually saw that it wasn’t going well. I couldn’t put my finger on it. What happened? What’s wrong? Once it became clear what was really going on, the knife had to be put in. That hurt me enormously. But it was necessary. Maarten and Wouter have energetically tackled the reconstruction. Since then, the company has undergone a true metamorphosis. There has been an enormous modernization and professionalization. Big compliment to these men.’

‘In the end, a new transfer plan was drawn up and ownership of the company has been trans-

ferred to all seven kids. It is characteristic that the kids have given the purchase holding the name Verbruggen Legacy Holding BV and Villicus Holding BV. One name means heritage, family property, and the other means steward. During the transfer on December 1, 2023, I said; From now on you can manage this family property as stewards. You have a reputation to uphold. Do this together. Together with the people who work here.’

AT A DISTANCE

Alex is now following the developments from the wings. ‘I can now distance myself from the company. Also because I know fewer and fewer people there and because I am less able to follow technical



Alex and Joke on holiday in Albania

developments. My involvement remains, of course. And sometimes I also worry a bit about certain developments. But that seems normal to me as a father of entrepreneurial children.'

FRIED FISH ON THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

What Alex still does for the company is to follow the construction process on De Munt B. 'Oh well, that's not that much. I bought a construction helmet and boots with a steel front cover, put on an orange vest and walk around the construction site a few times a week. It is good that someone from the Verbruggen family is regularly present there. And it's fun to follow the construction and do something for the construction workers every now and then.

The other day I treated them all to fried fish.'

HIKING

Alex enjoys his free time. He has bought a camper with which he and Joke go into Europe.

Hiking is one of Alex's great hobbies. And this summer he will walk the Nijmegen Four Days Marches for the tenth time. Four times thirty kilometers! Just think about it as a 72-year-old.

Alex's thoughts then regularly go to his wife Joke, their kids, grandchildren and their company. 'We feel richly blessed. There is a lot to be grateful for. Soli Deo Gloria. Glory to God alone.'

Our new 'Stack'!

In mid-2025, we moved into our new premises on the industrial estate De Munt B in Emmeloord. Below are some photos of the construction, which started on September 13, 2024, with the driving of the first pile.





Epilogue

You have come to the end of, we hope, a few hours of reading pleasure. We are pleased that, with the agreement of father Alex and mother Joke, we started this book project mid-2024. Our company is not that old, but already has a rich history. This book is a tribute to the founders of our beautiful company and to everyone who has worked hard to grow VPS.

Working on this book, together with writer Huib van der Wal, was a joy. It is wonderful to see all those stories come together, about the past, about the present and about the future. From the archives we took old photos and yellowed newspaper clippings. The nostalgia drips from it. A lot has happened in the past 34 years. A lot has changed, but also a lot has not changed.

New markets have been opened, new people have been hired and new techniques have been developed. What has not changed is the involvement of family members and employees in the company and the passion with which they do their work.

We have also built close relationships with customers and suppliers. Some tell their story in this book. The stories of employees, customers and suppliers also reflect the stories of other employees, customers and suppliers.

History has been recorded. On the basis of this shared history, we continue to build the future of Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions.

[Maarten and Wouter Verbruggen](#)