

“Thanks to Sofon,  
our Engineers have  
more time and attention  
for our customers”



Rob Luiken  
MANAGER ENGINEERING & CALCULATION

Schneider Electric is a global specialist in energy management, with branches in more than one hundred countries. They offer integrated solutions for energy production that is safe, reliable, efficient, productive and green, for multiple market sectors.

Schneider Electric has leading positions in energy & infrastructure, industrial processes, automation of buildings and data & network centers. They also have a broad presence in housing construction applications. In 2010, more than 110,000 staff achieved a revenue of more than 19.6 billion euro. With their motto ‘make the most of your energy’, Schneider Electric helps private citizens and companies get the most out of their energy. Now Sofon helps Schneider Electric get the best out of their sales process. Rob Luiken (Manager Engineering & Calculation) discusses how they achieved this.

## Sofon deals with complexity in construction supply

### MORE EASE AND MORE SUPPORT

As a specialist in energy management, Schneider possesses a very wide range of products; ranging from the production of electricity to delivery to your wall socket. “Many of our products are not complex by themselves, but most products are difficult to combine into a correct solution”, says Luiken. Schneider Electric possessed calculation software that gave them some support in their calculations. “The program was developed under our supervision, but it no longer satisfied our current wishes. Furthermore, program maintenance was inefficient, its user-friendliness left something to be desired and it was very difficult to implement new product groups. It was therefore time to look for new software that provided more ease and support – not only for calculations, but also in the whole sales process. Sofon won on flexibility from competing systems.”

### PROJECT TEAM

Schneider Electric was going through a very busy time during implementation. “Our need for a system like Sofon actually became more urgent the busier we became and you typically have to free-up time to introduce a new system. However, the Sofon consultant challenged us on this in a good way. He was quickly at home in our material and he helped us to implement a solution that

reflected the realities and challenges of our business. Two of our own support engineers – Marco Bijwaard and Hans Mooijen – completed the project team. Hans has extensive product knowledge; he knows almost every nut and bolt. With all his experience and product knowledge, he was a real walking encyclopedia for Marco, who took care of the implementation. Marco is a bit further from the material, his affinities lie with IT and he is an analytical thinker. Really useful characteristics in this kind of implementation!”

### LIVING SYSTEM

The project team first put the knowledge of the most common product series into Sofon. “Of the twenty product series, we started by implementing five. Using these, we could produce 80% of all quotations. In this way, we got some experience while we were implementing the other product series. Now we can produce 95% of all quotations with Sofon. Sofon functions as a living system. We collect wishes people have, think about them and put them into the Sofon model. We also think about the previous choices we made. What seems logical in the beginning may no longer seem so logical at a later stage. We can now really back our model, because we made it ourselves. We don’t even need consultancy for changes and extensions.”



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### MORE TIME AND ATTENTION FOR CUSTOMERS

Customer requests to Schneider Electric are very diverse. “It could be about requests from installers – a list with an overview of materials needed – but we receive (architectural) plans from installers more often. We translate the drawings and specifications from the plans into the products needed. In Sofon, you indicate what the width and length of e.g. a cable carrying system is, how many times it branches off and where these forks are. We now have more time and attention for the customer because we no longer have to concentrate on what kind of nuts and bolts, braces, and clamps we need to use. Sofon does this for us. There is an immediate test of the input and the combinations made. Our Engineers no longer need to look up information and they need to commit fewer details to memory. With Sofon, they can concentrate on the difficult issues. Even new staff can start working quickly and independently because this knowledge is stored in Sofon.”

### COMPLETE QUOTATION AND MATERIALS LIST

The data provided is the basis for a quotation. “Multiple installers ask for a quotation for the same job. These quotations all differ, even if just by a little. However, basing ourselves on one quotation, we can now quickly produce the others. In the end, one of the contractors will get the job. Often there are then a few changes to be made in the quotation. That used to be a hassle. What that really meant was: starting over. A revised quotation is now much quicker

to produce, just change a few choices in Sofon – which maintains version control of our quote. When the quotation becomes an order, there are two situations: we get the order for the total delivery including all kinds of engineering. Or the installer in question buys our products via a warehouse. We then generate a list of materials with Sofon. In this bill of materials all amounts and article numbers are summarized; if desired all articles are totalized per product group, or a detailed list is included per drawing (e.g. per building layer). This makes ordering easier for the installer.”

### SKEPTICISM ELIMINATED

Now that Schneider Electric migrated away from the old system and is live with Sofon, Luiken takes a look back: “The initial skepticism in the organization has completely disappeared. In the beginning, I would still sometimes hear some criticism: ‘This kind of system can’t handle the complexity of construction supply.’ This was not the case with Sofon, we have achieved all of our goals! Thanks to the many possibilities in Sofon and a new way of thinking gained during implementation, we were able to solve all of our complex challenges. If you think of the way a customer specifies a question, you find a lot more is possible than you originally thought. Our quotation cycle time has been shortened and the risk of errors has gone down. Apart from that, maintenance is much more efficient. Changes are made in one place and quotations are immediately up-to-date. So we have plenty of reasons to further extend the use of Sofon in the future.”

## WHAT DID SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC ACHIEVE WITH SOFON?

- Complexity in construction supply handled
- 95% of quotations can be produced with Sofon
- (Revised) quotations error-free and produced quickly with user-friendly system
- Possibility of generating bills of materials; list of all articles totalized per product group or a detailed list per drawing
- Information no longer in people’s heads, but in Sofon
- Automatic testing of data entered and combinations made
- More time and attention for customer
- No consultancy needed for extra wishes and extensions

