

**Active Ants**

Nieuwegein, The Netherlands

# Four times more efficient with less floorspace thanks to AutoStore®

**Active Ants provides warehousing services to various webshops in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. This e-fulfilment company from the Dutch city of Nieuwegein stores and packs goods for its customers and handles distribution. This mostly involves small items that require a lot of storage space.**

**Due to their constant growth, Active Ants needed more storage space. The company built a new warehouse fitted with AutoStore®, a compact storage system for small goods. Not only has AutoStore® optimised their use of available floorspace in the warehouse, it also brings goods to their operators automatically.**

**Challenge**

Increasing growth, manual processes and limited space were the drivers for Active Ants to seek for a new compact storage solution. It needed to hold the 22,000 different SKUs from the catalogue – such as DVDs, T-shirts, books or toys – more efficiently than classical small parts warehouses and manual picking including long walking distances should be eliminated.

**Solution**

AutoStore® was specially developed for the storage of small goods as they are distributed by Active Ants. Therefore the company now works with a system of 57,500 bins arranged in a predefined grid in the warehouse where bins are stacked as closely together as possible to maximise the use of floorspace. This gives up to 75% more storage capacity per square metre.

The AutoStore® robots automatically pick the right bins and take them to the operators. The operators pick the right goods and continue processing the order.

Since AutoStore® was installed, the company has enjoyed a fourfold boost in efficiency over the previous system based on manual product scanning. In addition the company is also working more cost-efficiently, thanks to automatic order picking.

**Implementation**

The storage system needed to be not only compact, but also and especially ergonomic. The order pickers no longer need to lift the bins or clock up miles going from rack to rack.

Bin stacking also offers other benefits: the products stay clean because they are protected from dust, and the system also helps prevent theft.

**Targets**

- Automated and cost-efficient system
- More storage space per sqm
- Expandable for future growth
- Safe storage of goods



AutoStore® is attractive in terms of future scalability. The system has been installed 2016 and as the E-commerce fulfillment Company could grow the business much quicker than expected, the AutoStore systems is going to be massively enlarged by mid 2018.

The AutoStore® concept is also easy to integrate with other systems. For instance, Active Ants incorporated a packing machine into the logistics process. The company can also continue working with their own ERP system developed in-house. The interface with AutoStore® works excellently.

### The Process

The AutoStore® system for Active Ants features two picking stations, each equipped with six packing stations. A Pick-by-Light system indicates the bin segment where the picker will find an item and the order bin where the item should go.

Once shipments are ready, a smart bin transport system takes them to be weighed and photographed. Some shipments are first taken to another part of the warehouse, where Active Ants add large or bulky items to the shipping parcel manually. AutoStore® handles around 90% of all goods: the rest is picked manually.

The order bins end up at the packing tables, where they are automatically scanned and the packing instructions appear on the display. The shipping label and the order form are printed so the packer can complete the order. The empty bins go back to the picking stations and the shipments go to Shipping.

For the design of the packing stations, Active Ants collaborated with the experts at Dematic to find the most efficient, ergonomic and economical solution. The stations will be easy to expand in the future and during peak loads.

**“Dematic is a reliable partner to count on.”**

Jeroen Dekker,  
Managing Partner at Active Ants

### Result

The benefits of AutoStore® are obvious to Active Ants: It was the best system for their order processes and they are already attracting more clients thanks to innovative operations, which is naturally a welcomed development.

Implementing AutoStore® was a learning process for Active Ants, but the system is excellently suited for this. Now that the foundation is already there, it's easy to adjust and expand the existing system.

### Customer Benefits

- Compact and efficient storage solution, with up to 75% more storage capacity per square metre
- Easily expandable system to meet future growth
- Cost saving since fewer people are required for order picking and less theft
- Very ecological and sustainable system
- The products are stored free of dust
- Reduced maintenance and operating costs

### Technical Data

- 22,000 different SKUs in stock
- 4,000 order/day and 6,000 order lines/day
- 16 level grid with approx. 57,500 bins
- 24 robots and charge points
- 4 picking stations, 2 replenishment stations
- Throughput: 670 bins / hour

### About the AutoStore®

AutoStore® is a unique and internationally patented warehouse system that is ideal for managing small goods in any warehouse – whether old or new. Thanks to its standardised bins stacked in a grid, it is by far the most compact goods-to-person order picking system on the market.

In addition, it can double your storage capacity without increasing your footprint. Dematic is the global partner for AutoStore® with a very high knowledge and experience base.

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