

Ready and prepared for all e-commerce requirements

Biella increases efficiency of its warehouse and picking processes with EPG | LFS

“A tidy house, a tidy mind”, as they say – which sums up the traditional Swiss company, Biella, in a nutshell. Founded in 1900 as a stationery book and paper goods factory in Biel, Biella began an extraordinary success story in 1908 with the production of its first Swiss lever-arch file. The Bundesordner®, Biella’s best-known product, is still regarded today as synonymous with the Swiss love of order. The company has been part of the Exacompta-Clairfontaine Group for just under a year and produces more than ten million units per year at its headquarters in Brügg/Biel. Clip folders, storage folders, tab folders, suspension files and ring binders also run off the production lines and conveyor belts second after second. At its warehouse with more than 12,800 pallet spaces, Biella has been relying on the EPG | LFS warehouse management system from EPG (Ehrhardt + Partner Group) for over 20 years. With the recently implemented version V8, the company is now perfectly prepared for the increasing variety of products and the challenges of e-commerce.

Even in times of digitalization, it is impossible to imagine everyday office and school life without paper and lever-arch files, staplers, notebooks, notepads and folders. Biella is the best-known brand manufacturer in Switzerland for standardized office products and customized office and promotional items. The traditional company has around 3,000 products in its range and new ones are gradually added. From its main logistics center in Brügg, which has around 10,000 m² of storage space, Biella primarily supplies wholesalers, office supply stores, department stores, mail order companies and public authorities.

“We have a long-standing collaboration with EPG and introduced the first version of the software in 1995. To get the support and stability of EPG | LFS and therefore guarantee support and stability for our logistics, we decided to introduce V8 in 2018 as part of a system update,” explains Juha Pfister, Head of Warehouse and Logistics at Biella

Schweiz AG. Positive experience from prior collaboration was one key factor in the decision, but it was also particularly the options for process improvement with the new release that spoke in favor of the update. The changeover itself was very time-critical and had to be completed within the given time frame and during ongoing operations. “We only had about nine months from go-ahead to go-live with V8,” recalls Pfister. Collaborating as partners was one key factor, as well as training courses at the EPG | ACADEMY in Boppard, which also contributed to the project’s great success. All the team leaders completed courses, from beginners to experts, which was an investment that has paid off. Pfister is happy in particular that the company can “now map and adapt the processes in EPG | LFS ourselves – without EPG support”.

Following modernization of the server environment and the warehouse management system, Biella has optimized and partially reorganized all its processes in the warehouse. “By introducing EPG | LFS, we were able to introduce greater density into our warehouse and free up 1,500 m² of storage space. We then replaced our previous paper-based single-step picking process and introduced two-step, route- and time-optimized multi-order picking,” reports Pfister. The new system is already a success. Switching from paper documents to mobile data recording equipment has reduced the error rate for customer deliveries by around 30 percent. Multi-order picking has also increased picking performance significantly, as it allows up to 24 orders to be picked simultaneously.

The current shipping volume is around 1,000 pallets and about 100 boxes per week. “After incorporation into the Exacompta-Clairfontaine Group, the main logistics center in Brügg will become more important, as we plan to add a further 2,000 items to the existing range in the warehouse. Using EPG | LFS, we will not only be able to handle this expansion and the upcoming change of ERP very efficiently, we will also be able to make even better use of the strengths of the system in the future,” says Pfister. He also is sure Biella is now well equipped to meet future logistics requirements: “We expect booming e-commerce will also change our customers’ ordering behavior and that we will handle more lower-volume shipments in the future”. Drop shipping is an important new sales channel within Biella’s e-commerce business. This involves items sold via a retail partner’s webshop being shipped directly by Biella. This will increase the number of

small shipments for order picking and parcel shipping via parcel services. Biella is currently in discussions with EPG on a subsequent project that will manage complexity and transparency for shipping logistics, including the IT connection of various parcel service providers.

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Photo captions

Photo 1: Biella has around 3,000 products in its range and new ones are gradually being added. From its main logistics center in Brugg, which has around 10,000 m² of storage space, Biella primarily supplies wholesalers, office supply stores, department stores, mail order companies and public authorities.

Photo 2: The current shipping volume is around 1,000 pallets and about 100 boxes per week. Biella has been relying on the EPG | LFS warehouse management system for over 20 years at its warehouse, which has more than 12,800 pallet spaces.

Photo 3: Every year, Biella produces clip folders, storage folders, tab folders, suspension files and ring binders at its headquarters in Brugg/Biel second after second.

EPG – the Ehrhardt + Partner Group

EPG is a leading logistics expert and employs more than 620 people at 15 locations around the world. The company was founded in 1987. The EPG | LFS warehouse management system, deployed by more than 100,000 users for logistics management, is at the heart of the company's success. Over the years, the software has developed into a comprehensive supply chain execution suite and gives users networked control of all manual and automated logistics processes (WMS and WCS) – in the warehouse and on the road (TMS) – including resource and employee scheduling (WFM). In addition to LFS, EPG provides Lydia®

Voice, an efficient and ergonomic solution for voice-controlled processes in logistics, industry and maintenance. Lydia® Voice is a leading solution using the very latest technology, running on neural networks and AI components. Alongside these core products, the Group's complete solution for logistics is complemented by private cloud solutions, logistics planning and consulting, and all services and support related to warehouse hardware and infrastructure. EPG also has its own training centers, its Logistics Solution Centers (LSC), at its headquarters in Germany and in Dubai, delivering hands-on training and CPD for employees and logistics experts. More than 1,500 customers across all industries rely on EPG's expertise, cross-functional product range and know-how.

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