

SCAFFOLDING CONSTRUCTION COMPANY VAN DER PANNE GETS  
DOWN TO BUSINESS

# NO SUCH THING AS CAN'T!

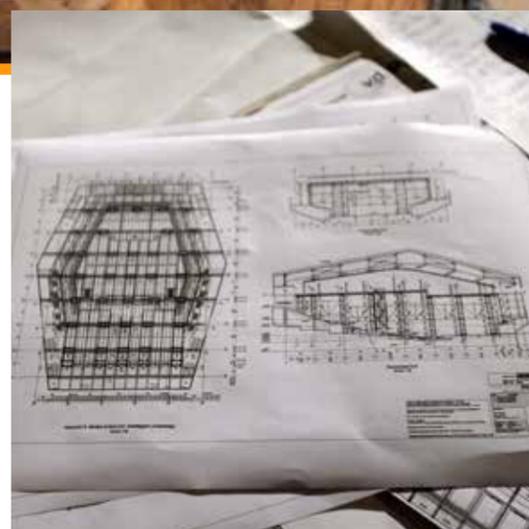


Vla Flora (grote foto en inzet)

Dick Koster, Managing Director of Steigerbouw Van der Panne



Project surrounded by scaffolding



Drawing view Modex towers

At the end of last year, Rotterdam-based scaffolding construction company Steigerbouw van der Panne achieved no mean feat in close collaboration with 4PS consultants. In just six weeks the plant management, the company's logistical nerve centre, was placed under Microsoft Dynamics NAV 4PS Construct. According to Dick Koster, CEO of Steigerbouw van der Panne, this implementation, which was unheard of in terms of speed, was down to the flat organisational structure of his company and the fact that its modus operandi largely coincided with the standard configuration of the 4PS Construct plant Management module. The flat organisational structure with its short lines ensures that valuable time is not lost in endless discussions and deferred decisions. We're in Rotterdam, the city that flourishes on its no-nonsense attitude, pragmatism and the rolling up of sleeves. You can achieve anything if you are prepared to do your level best. Or as they say in local parlance: 'No such thing as can't!'

The business premises of scaffolding construction company Steigerbouw van der Panne are located on the Stadionweg in Rotterdam, a little more than a stone's throw from the Kuip, home grounds of Feyenoord Football Club. In the wardrobe, a little to one side of the other clothing, there's an old sailor's uniform with gold stitching. 'In the past we had an entire room full of all sorts of old things from the Holland-America line,' Dick Koster recalls. 'It was the previous owner's passion. But we have grown so much recently that we needed all the space we had. This uniform is all that is left.'

**COWBOY TIMES A THING OF THE PAST**  
The person behind the name, Wout van der Panne, started out as part of a harbour 'lashing' company. 'Lashing' is the securing of loads so that they cannot shift. It is specialised work which comes with a tremendous responsibility. 'Wout van der Panne started a scaffolding construction company because he sometimes had people sitting around with little to do,' Dick Koster explains. 'It's harbour-related work, so it's mainly done in shipyards. That was around 35 years ago.'

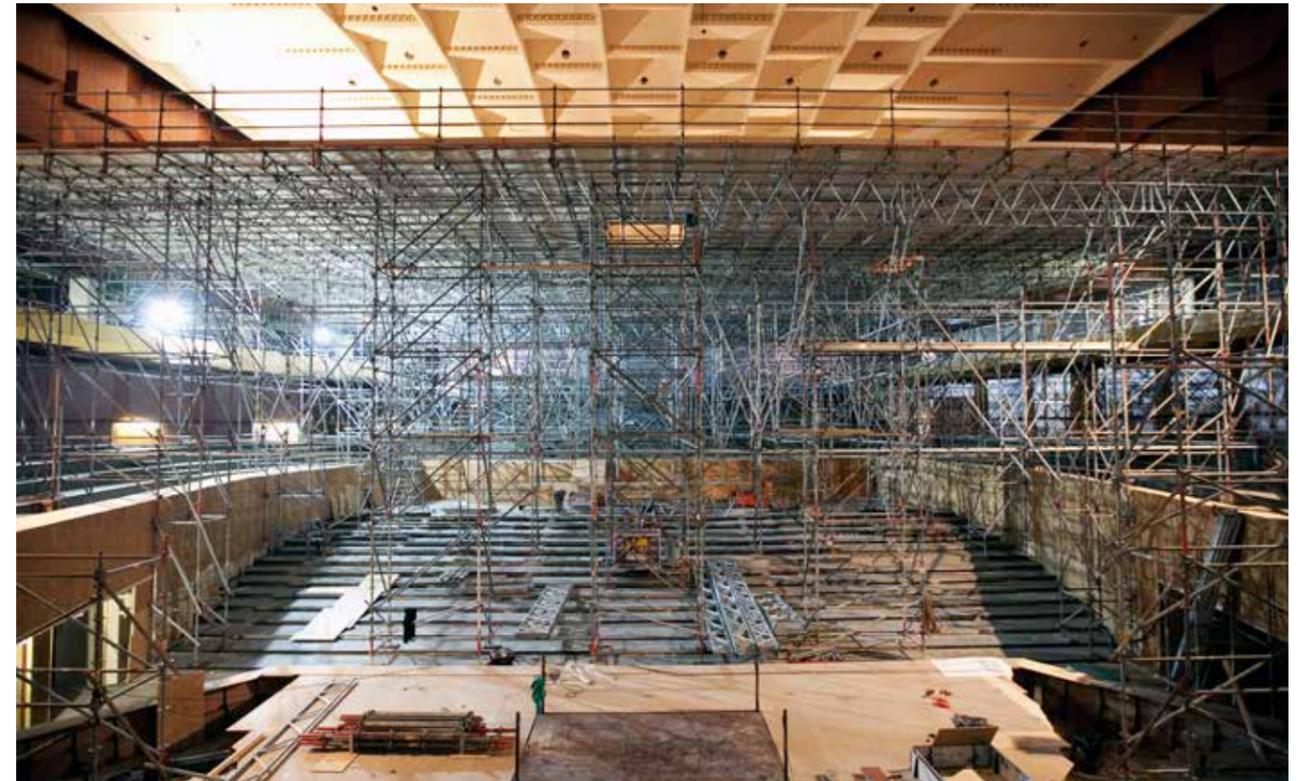
Not long after, Rob Bos, a former employee of Wout van der Panne, took over the scaffolding operations. Bos recognised the

huge potential and turned Van der Panne into one of the first real professional scaffolding companies in the Netherlands. 'Rob Bos built the company from practically nothing,' Dick Koster notes with sincere respect for his predecessor. 'Bos was a real pioneer in the field of offshore scaffolding construction. And our offshore operation still constitutes 40 percent of our turnover.' The remaining 60 percent is distributed across industry (40) and construction (20). Over the last couple of decades, scaffolding construction has developed to become a mature industry. 'Fortunately, the Wild West days of the early years have long since passed,' says Koster. 'As a sector, we are now at the stage when recognised scaffolding construction companies will soon have to provide personal certification diplomas. Previously anyone could call themselves a scaffolder and there were huge discrepancies in the quality of their training. Now we have our own training company.' Koster is on the board of the training company and the sector association. Many professional scaffolding companies have since joined the sector association.

**SERVICE PROVIDERS, NOT SCAFFOLDERS**  
Dick Koster took up the baton from Rob Bos six years ago, together with Rob's

## OUR WAY OF DOING THINGS IS VERY PROCESS-ORIENTED AND STRUCTURED

son Pascal Bos: 'Bos felt that the time had come to pass the leadership on to someone else. In itself this is very unusual because most company founders tend to carry on way too long. Not he. He said to me: "I was able to build up the company the way I saw fit, but my way of doing things is now outdated". His way was to be closely involved in everything, he was right on top of things; you could compare it to an old-fashioned one-man business. But Van der Panne had since grown to become so big that his way of doing things didn't work anymore. And he knew this.' Dick Koster and Pascal Bos are focussing their efforts on further professionalisation



Scaffolding Construction in De Doelen in Rotterdam

of the organisation: 'Our way of doing things is very process-oriented and structured. Despite the fact that we have no academics in our team, we have managed to shape our processes and to set them up effectively. We look at the results that we would like to achieve, we have included all kinds of interim measurement points and we score when it comes to tenders. In short: for each step, for each part of the process, we keep a record of all the key performance indicators.

Koster also introduced a new corporate philosophy: 'We say: we are not scaffolders, we are service providers! We make sure that clients can do their work safely. So there's a good reason why we project ourselves as safe, flexible, reliable and customised. That's what we want to convey and our people are very well aware of this. So we don't go for the segment of the market that is looking for the lowest price, but we go for those companies that are looking for the best product.'

Van der Panne focuses fully and exclusively on scaffolding construction, but within this market they are up for every challenge: 'No so long ago, we put the entire interior

of the big hall at the Rotterdam Doelen under scaffolding in ten days. It was extremely complex from a technical point of view, particularly when you take into account that everything had to be carried in by hand. Our motto is: there's no such thing as can't! Recently a ship sailed into port needing repair, which meant they had to be put under scaffolding as quickly as possible. We're in a hurry, they said. It has to be ready by the end of the week. Well, then you're not really in a hurry, was our response. For us, "in a hurry" means by the end of the afternoon!'

### PRIMARILY LOOKING FOR A PARTNER

The new modus operandi bore fruit. Turnover at Steigerbouw van der Panne has practically doubled over the last 6 years. This rapid growth did, however, mean that the software that Van der Panne was using to control the flow of incoming and outgoing materials was no longer up to spec. 'That package was so old that it virtually fell apart,' Koster tells us. 'We simply needed something new, and preferably quickly. So you have a choice: you can either start on an extensive and time-

## THAT PACKAGE WAS SO OLD THAT IT VIRTUALLY FELL APART

consuming selection process, or you can ask related businesses how they tackled the problem. I knew of one large company that had recently gone through just such



Offshore scaffolding



Dick Koster in a meeting



## OUR ORGANISATION IS AS FLAT AS A PANCAKE

an extensive selection process. I put our case to them and simply asked: what would you do? They recommended 4PS.' After that, things went quickly: 'I invited 4PS to come and visit the company and told them exactly what we needed. Obviously we wanted a good product, but we were mainly looking for a partner. Of course, the underlying technology has to

be good and reliable, but we were looking for that good feeling, the spark. And we felt it, straight away.'

It didn't take long to sign up 4PS. 'Our organisation is as flat as a pancake. We don't have to spend ages justifying our choice to a board of directors like most big companies have to, which makes all the difference.'

Incidentally, the name 4PS was not new to Dick Koster: 'The funny thing is that I worked for a big construction company 15 years ago and was involved in an ERP selection procedure there. One of the candidates was 4PS, who had just started at the time. I can remember that my former employer was full of praise for the 4PS package. In actual fact, they had the best product. That they didn't get the contract at the time was because above all the company wanted to be sure. They felt that 4PS was still too much in the pioneering phase.' According to Koster, that positive first acquaintance with 4PS all those years ago definitely played a role in the decision to go for 4PS.

### PATCHWORK

Van der Panne decided first and foremost to implement the plant Management module. That job was done in just six weeks. Incredibly fast. 'It was possible,' Koster points out, 'because our way of working overlapped to a large extent with the standard configuration of the module.

Obviously we had to modify things here and there, but nothing major. What's more, those modifications were implemented straight away; none of that hassle with detailed protocols and having to sit through endless meetings, we just got on with it. Very pragmatic, that's us. And the 4PS consultants were fine with that. They worked hard, but kicked back and had fun from time to time too. Excellent atmosphere; very relaxed and informal.' Why did you only implement the plant module? 'As I was saying, equipment management was our first concern,' Dick Koster explains. 'Obviously we knew we that our IT was fragmented, but thanks to our flat company structure, with its direct lines and the fact that we configured our processes along strict lines, we're a strong, well-run organisation. So the further computerisation of our primary procedures wasn't high on our list of priorities. Particularly when it turned out last year that we were in the running for the Best Managed Company of 2014.'

But in some ways this nomination was a bit of an eye-opener. The fact that they didn't manage to ultimately go through to the

## THAT JOB WAS DONE IN JUST SIX WEEKS

national final was mainly due to their level of computerisation. Dick Koster: 'During the audit they went through everything with a fine-toothed comb and addressed our strengths as well as our weaknesses. Our strength was our organisation, but our IT was our weakness; a bit of a patchwork, they felt.' On the way home, Dick Koster realised that there was much to be gained: 'I went straight to the 4PS consultants and said: you've done our plant setup. What else can we do?'

### THE DREAM

And that is how it came about that, after plant management, a start has been made on the implementation of all primary processes. First CRM, which is virtually finished, and then financial administration, contract work, invoicing and purchasing. Koster is well aware that this approach would be the wrong way round for many organisations, but for Van der Panne it doesn't make a huge amount of difference: 'Our maxim has always been: first organise, then computerise. Because our organisation is as solid as a rock – which is why it was not surprising that we were

nominated – it doesn't really matter in which order we computerise our processes. And it is of course no coincidence that the way in which we configured our processes is largely in line with the underlying organisational structure on which 4PS has based its standard configuration. Often you see that businesses seize the implementation of a new ERP system as the opportunity to bring their organisation up to scratch.

## IT'S JUST THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP

Of course you can take that approach, but it will be at the expense of a lot of extra time and effort.'

Once the primary procedure have been configured, what will be the next step? 'Our people on-site are now working on iPads with applications for recording, completion, work inspections and so on, which are not linked. My dream is that our

site managers will later be able to work in a 4PS Construct shell. I think that they should be able to work in the system in an easy, intuitive and integrated way by the end of next year at the latest. That is where there is much to be gained for us! But as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't stop there. Wouldn't it be great if we could offer our clients access to the information that is important to them via portals? So that they only have to log in to check their project status, hours or invoices.' We can't say exactly how long it will take before that dream becomes reality, but that it is going to happen is a certainty. 'It's just the next logical step,' says Dick Koster with a smile.

### COMPANY

Steigerbouw Van der Panne, located in Rotterdam, is a service provider specialized in scaffolding. With 300 employees, Steigerbouw Van der Panne takes care of the scaffolding in projects for clients in the offshore (40%), industry (40%) and construction (20%).

### BRIEF FACTS

#### COMPANY

Steigerbouw Van der Panne  
www.panne.nl

#### ACTIVITIES

Specialist in scaffolding for industry, offshore, construction and special projects

#### MODULES

Customer Relationship Management, Purchasing, Sales, Document Management, Plant, Finance, Projects, Hours, Acquisition

#### NUMBER OF CONCURRENT USERS

10



Scaffolding builder



Project equipped with scaffolding