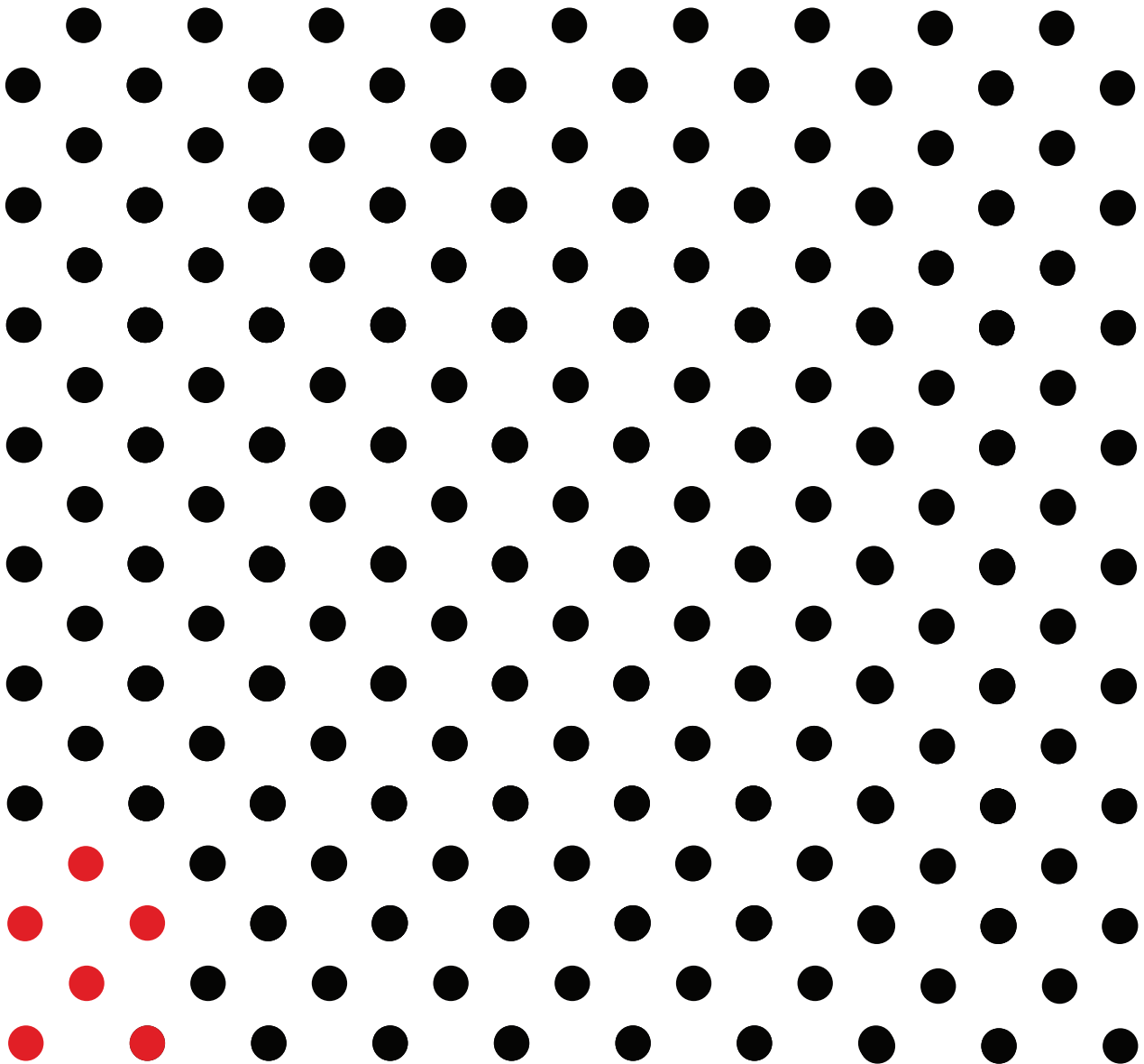


Active Ants

The Netherlands



Case Study
Revision: 2
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**ACTIVE
ANTS**

**E-COMMERCE
LOGISTIEK**

End-User: Active Ants
Industry: 3PL

Partner: Dematic
Country: The Netherlands
Year: 2015
Robots: 16
Bins: 30 000

Active Ants: E-commerce Fulfilment Specialist

Active Ants are a rapidly growing e-commerce fulfilment provider for online sellers. The progressively minded company warehouses, picks, packs and ships products on behalf of more than 70 different webshops. With their new facility located in Nieuwegein, Netherlands, Active Ants are not only centrally located in that country, but across Europe as well, making them an ideal partner for internationally focused online merchants.

The Need for Automation

Due to the rapid year-on-year growth of Active Ants, there wasn't enough space in their existing warehouse to keep up with company expansion. The company's leaders, working with Egemin Automation, an automation specialist, explored the possibility of installing a fully automated warehousing system.

Aside from storage density improvement, Active Ants also was enticed by the opportunity to improve picking productivity and fulfilment speed greatly. They observe that while same day delivery is still a luxury, it is easy to foresee a future where it will be the new standard.

Why AutoStore?

Active Ants immediately recognised the value of AutoStore. Continuing on a path of due diligence, however, they evaluated mini load and other automated solutions. AutoStore ultimately won the group over, however, based on the strength of its industry leading product density, ergonomic design, throughput capacity, and fulfilment speed. While Active Ants have over 70 webstore clients, the system is compatible with any product that will fit in the AutoStore bins.

Another important consideration for future growth included the ability to expand capacity without the need to shut down the system. The clean, no dust environment, and state-of the art technology also were identified advantages of AutoStore.

The entrepreneurial Active Ants team took AutoStore a step further, however, by recognising its marketing potential. They chose to brand the AutoStore robots in their unique Active Ants style, making the AutoStore system and its branded ant robots a showcase for site visitors, including fulfilment customers and prospects.

How AutoStore works at Active Ants

“AutoStore is specially designed for the storage of small goods,” says Jeroen Dekker, Managing Partner at Active Ants. “We stack the bins and place them as close as possible so that we can maximize the floor area. Thus, we have up to 75% more storage capacity per square meter. AutoStore robots automatically pick the right bins and bring them to the operators. They take out the right goods and process the order further.”

The Active Ants AutoStore system utilises around 30,000 bins, 16 robots and four carrousel ports - two for replenishment and two for picking. The containers are stacked 16 high and stored in a compact frame structure.

Incoming products are scanned and placed into bins at one of the replenishment ports for putaway by radio-controlled robots, which drive over the top of the frame to put bins into storage, and later to retrieve them as required for picking. All containers and items are traceable at any moment.

Selected bins are brought to the edge of the frame and lowered to an ergonomically designed picking carrousel port. A pick to light system guides pickers to select the ordered products. Items that are not compatible with bin storage are added manually. Completed orders are weighed to verify order contents, and photographed, before being sent to packing. Empty AutoStore bins are returned to service.

Active Ants runs two shifts daily and has the potential to operate 24/7 if volume dictates.

“We are now processing 240 order lines per hour. We can increase that number by combining, for example, the most popular products. That only requires a small adjustment of the system. In addition, we also work more efficiently because the order picking happens automatically.”

Jean Lahay, Managing Partner at Active Ants.

Benefits Realised Through AutoStore

Active Ants has enjoyed several benefits from AutoStore system, including cost savings of €500,000 annually. Regarding labour, one picker can now do the same work as ten manual order pickers, who in the old system were required to lift bins and travel for miles between rack locations daily. And as the company continues to grow, the surplus employees were quickly absorbed into other job functions.

Of course, storage capacity is significantly enhanced, with secure future scalability. The tight bin configuration ensures that products remain clean because dust cannot settle on them, and the system prevents theft.

One surprising bonus for Active Ants resulted from the progressive fulfilment provider being featured in a frequently broadcasted national television commercial by Rabobank, which had provided a loan to Active Ants for the purchase of the AutoStore system. The campaign provided widespread exposure, which was further amplified through social media platforms. The energy efficient and state of the art AutoStore system has delivered on providing the best in fulfilment automation to Active Ants while also proving to be a powerful marketing tool in its own right.



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