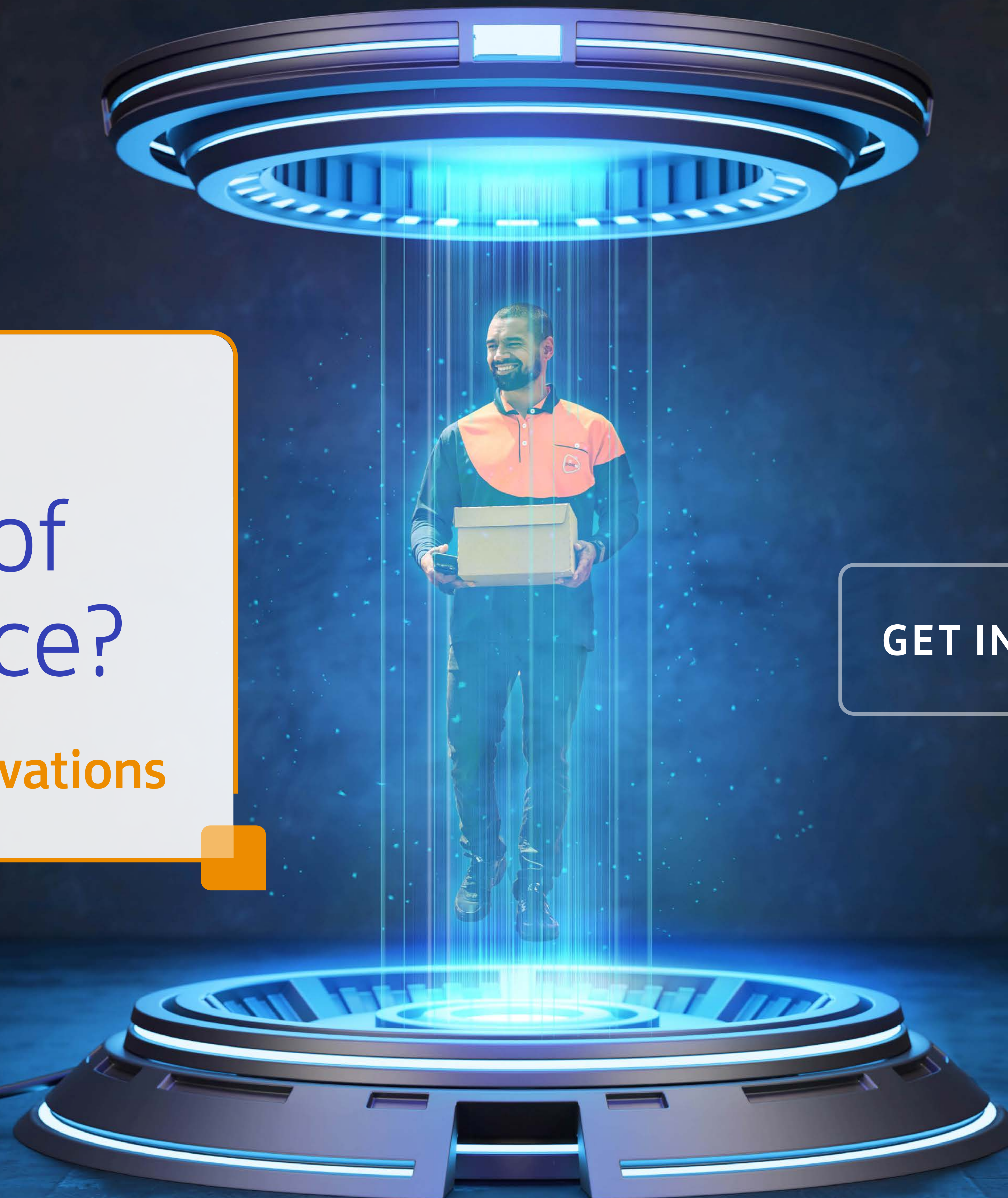




A look into the future of e-commerce?

Check out our innovations

GET INSPIRED →





‘Soon all transactions will start digitally’

‘Those who are flexible will survive’, says our Commercial Director Parcels, Carlos Mendes Aguiar. ‘The future belongs not to the strongest but to those who know how to adapt to circumstances. The corona crisis has accelerated a number of ongoing processes, especially in the field of e-commerce.’

The future belongs to those who innovate

‘In today’s age, everything changes very quickly. And whether you like it or not, you have to change with it. If you aren’t agile in your thinking and your actions and if you can’t take your systems in any direction, then you have no future. The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated a number of processes that were already underway. For example, e-commerce has taken off and digitalisation has accelerated. People are now shopping online even more. I even think that all transactions will start digitally in the future. Only then will physical transfer of the product or service take place – usually at home.’ →

Carlos Mendes Aguiar is Commercial Director Parcels Benelux and is responsible for commercial strategy and execution as well as digital platforms with logistics services.



COVID as a process accelerator

‘Because people were suddenly sitting at home, they had a lot more products delivered. Companies that already had this as their business model, often the hardcore digitals, were very quick to serve consumers well. But other parties have been forced to adapt their model. And if you aren’t able to do that, you’re quickly going to run into trouble.’

Adapting the business model

‘Here’s an example. An acquaintance of mine has a company that supplies fish to beach restaurants. With that market temporarily gone, he used social media in particular to reach consumers and deliver directly to their homes. And it worked. In the meantime, the beach restaurants are open again and he supplies both companies and consumers. This makes his company a lot less vulnerable. In short, those who exhibit entrepreneurship and creativity have a new business model. They have set up web shops, found other markets. That too is innovation.’

We facilitate the change

‘We have a network throughout the Benelux and visit every household almost every day. That means you can sell something today and have it delivered tomorrow – and sometimes even on the same day. If you want, we can deliver items chilled or install your products in your customers’ homes. This is our response to the fact that more and more services are being provided at home. Staying in is becoming the new

going out.’ ‘Food from a starred restaurant, for example, can now simply be delivered to your home. People are increasingly enjoying products and services at home, and that is where our added value is growing. We have developed many propositions for this in recent years.’

Innovating and robotising

‘In recent years, the number of parcels we’ve delivered has grown from around 120 million to almost 300 million. But the growth of our data has increased by a factor of 10! We used to have about three to four (digital) interactions with a parcel; now there are more than 20. We analyse and use all these data. We are robotising our administrative processes, but also our logistics processes. For example, picking and packing at our **fulfilment centre in Houten**. We are also testing whether we can **do sorting with robots**. And we are investigating the possibilities of **robotic distribution**’.

Co-botting

‘In these cases, I’m talking about co-botting, where people work together with robots. I think this will become increasingly important in the near future: humans and robots performing actions together. Let’s say there are six items in a parcel, then the robot does five and you do the last one.’

The delivery of the future?

‘I don’t pretend to know what delivery will look like exactly, but that it will be data-driven is certain; largely driven by algorithms that are aligned with the user’s daily life. For example, I have lights in my garden. If a light has burned out, you’re already too late. Even though such a light has a chip that can tell the supplier that its burning hours are almost up. Then a new one is ordered and I only have to agree to it. That’s the Internet of Things. The system may make purchases below a certain amount for me, and for purchases above that amount all I need to do is quickly give permission: Yes, order it. Then everything goes fully automatically and I get the lights delivered even before it gets dark in my garden.’ →





The advantage for our customers

‘One of the benefits is that entrepreneurs can move on to other, more consistent revenue models. Subscriptions, for example. Take food, clothing or the aforementioned light. How nice is it that I automatically get a new one when I need it? This way companies can work on a continuous revenue stream through a different revenue model. In fact, they can predict what will happen and order their supplies and make their deliveries accordingly. This gives the entrepreneur more and more certainty.’

Quality and convenience come first

‘As PostNL, we are a very large service provider in the field of logistics. We do this together with partners such as online retailers, web shop builders, platforms, and many more. We can help e-commerce companies move forward. After all, not every company has a large IT department. We help entrepreneurs by making our products plug & play. Simplicity and ease of use are essential. That’s why we’ve already invested a lot in our plug-ins and APIs. And we provide high-quality services. We want to be the partner that really helps entrepreneurs move forward.’ ■





‘Innovation is about connecting’

Real steps are made by working together.
Innovation isn’t just about investing in technology;
it’s about making connections.

For example, it’s very important for e-commerce to cooperate with the big platforms such as Amazon, Ocado or Bol.com. Among other things, to be able to offer the level of service that consumers expect. And that level is very high. Not because people are necessarily asking for it, but because it’s already being offered to them by these large platforms. Many entrepreneurs aren’t able to build such a high-quality platform themselves. Here I see an important role for PostNL, which can become the connector and the pioneer between the entrepreneurs, the platforms and the fulfilment. PostNL can make the investments that aren’t feasible for smaller entrepreneurs; for example, in **robotised fulfilment**. This is how the postal company is setting a new standard in service to suppliers and consumers and giving direction to partnerships. When PostNL takes the lead, the whole of e-commerce benefits. ■

Kitty Koelemeijer

*Professor of Marketing & Retailing
at Nyenrode Business University*

‘When PostNL takes
the lead, the whole of
e-commerce benefits’



Curious about other innovations and
developments in e-commerce?
[Read the interview with Kitty here »](#)



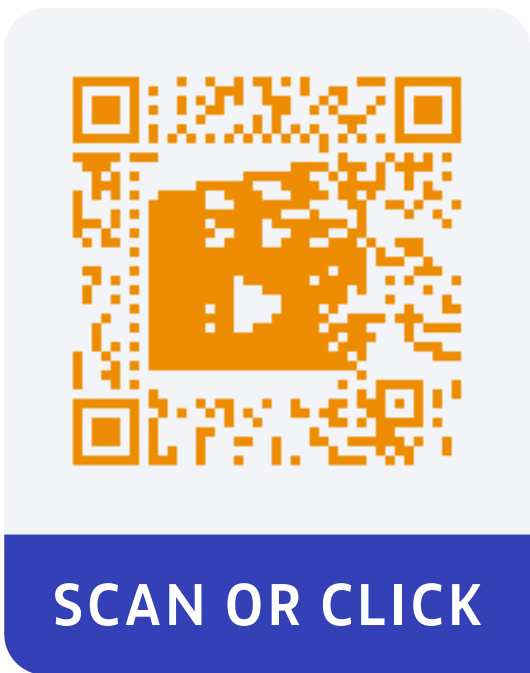
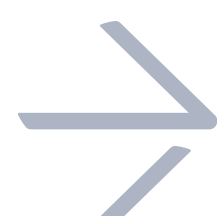
Innovation is something you do together

Innovation in e-commerce is the theme of our new magazine. In it, you can read about innovations in the e-commerce logistics sector, about pioneering services and products and about our ideas for the future.

But we don't innovate alone; we do it together with our partners – with other logistics parties, with e-commerce companies and especially with you. By listening to what the market thinks is important, we can create opportunities. We want to be a real partner for our customers and help the e-commerce industry move forward. Innovation is something you do together. ■



How are e-commerce entrepreneurs innovating?
Download the white paper.



Innovations in e-commerce logistics

Watch the video on innovations in e-commerce logistics here.





Reading guide

This magazine is divided into four topics. The coloured label at the top of each page shows which topic the article belongs to:



DATA & TECHNOLOGY

The enormous amount of data available worldwide and the rapidly developing technology offer great opportunities for all sorts of innovations. Whether it's a smart chatbot, extensive knowledge of your customers or the ultimate parcel trip. But technology is, of course, a tool. True progress is determined by what you dare to dream.

THE ROBOTS ARE COMING!

Robots are everywhere. And there will be many more machines to take over heavy, repetitive work from us or to help take care of peak busy times. Increasingly, they are independent, self-learning and based on artificial intelligence. For example, we are experimenting with self-driving robots in our sorting centres. We are even working on a fully autonomous sorting centre for small parcels. And that ultimately gives us the freedom to do business and... to innovate.

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

Innovation that does not make a sustainable contribution is not innovation, but a step backwards. That's why sustainability is at the forefront of everything we do. It's not for nothing that our ambition is to deliver all parcels and letters in the Benelux emission-free during the last mile by 2030 at the latest. We have only one Earth, so let's take care of it.

SMARTER PACKAGING AND DELIVERY

Innovations at the micro level often have a great impact at the macro level. Those who ship parcels with a little less air in them often save dozens of delivery trips every year. A smart parcel safe at people's homes ensures that parcels are delivered the first time, thus increasing customer satisfaction. And medical transport using a drone transcends micro or macroeconomic thinking: It helps the entire healthcare sector move forward.





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Want to know more about innovations in e-commerce and data-driven logistics?

Go to postnl.nl/succesopbestelling



‘We are an extension of the customer journey’

Innovation is very important to us. If the world around you changes but you don't move with it, you won't be able to provide the service that customers expect. That's why we are increasingly transforming from a postal and parcel company to an e-commerce partner.

This means that the structure of our company is changing. On the one hand, our operations are changing: We have rearranged functions and are working more and more agile, for example. On the other hand, as a company we are becoming more and more digital towards our customers. One example of this is a digital front end: parcels that are registered with us immediately receive a **digital twin** that contains exactly the same data as the physical parcel. Thanks to these data, we can not only track the parcel, but also increasingly predict its journey.

The better we can predict, the better we can handle peaks. Forecasting is enormously complex. It involves a lot, such as digitalising our supply chain and recording our processes in algorithms. →

Marcel Krom is CIO at PostNL and is responsible for the IT strategy, data services and digital transformation of the postal company.

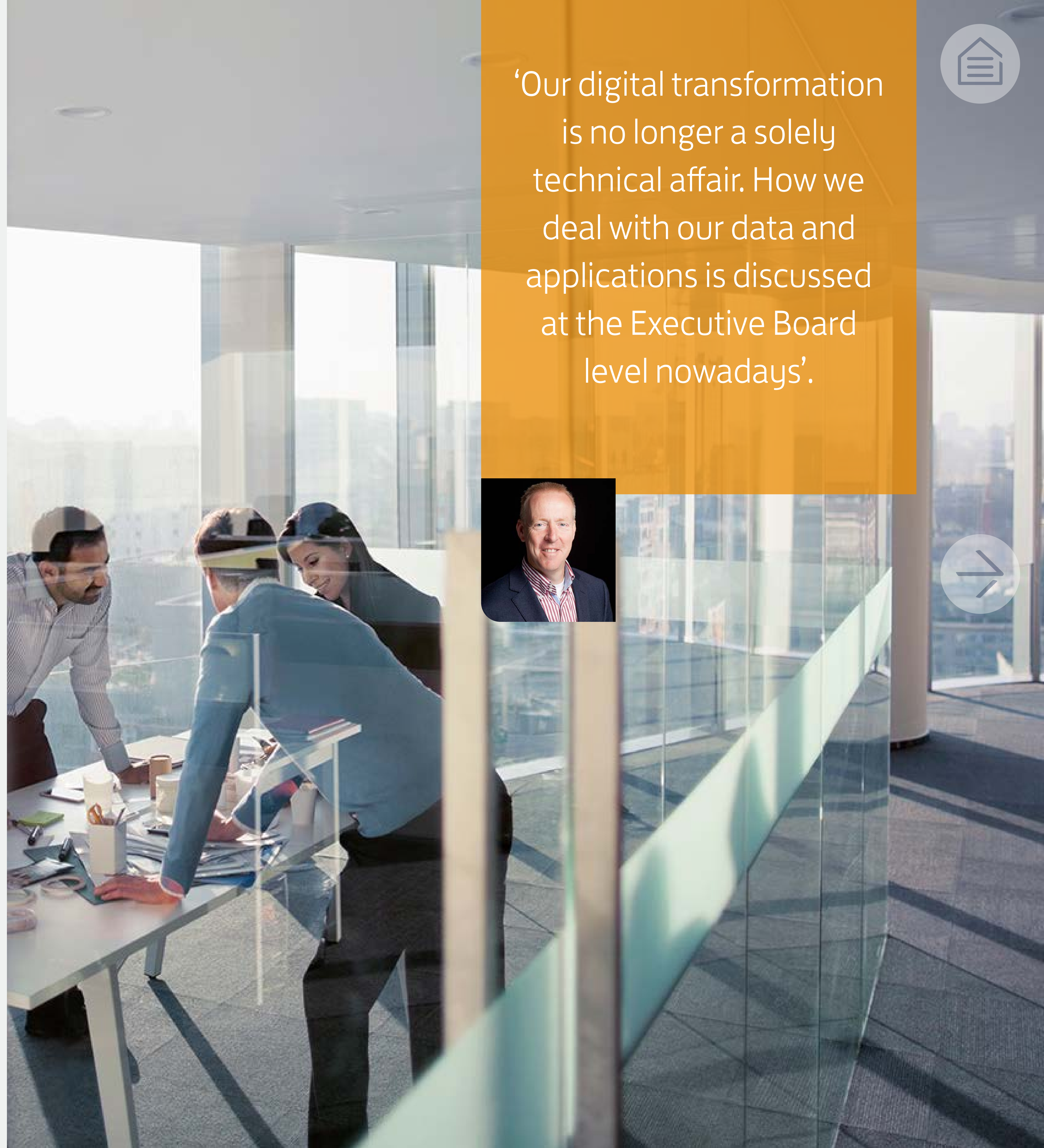
With all the data we collect, we can anticipate what will happen tomorrow and the day after. Or rather, if we know how many parcels are coming, we can handle peak times much better.

‘We innovate in the interest of our customers’

The major developments are in artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT). For example, tracking roller containers so we can further optimise utilisation of our lorries and make transport increasingly sustainable. But analysing our data for reports with insights for our customers is also a part of this. Or developing smart services for consumers.

The most important thing for our customers is that we can improve service to their customers. We are an extension of the customer journey. The better we do, the more satisfied the recipient is. That is why we are constantly adding more delivery options and working on a precise system in **our app** that allows recipients to track exactly where the delivery driver is with their parcel. Because everything revolves around the customer experience. This is essential for our e-commerce customers: satisfied customers return. And that is our motivation for innovation. ■

‘Our digital transformation is no longer a solely technical affair. How we deal with our data and applications is discussed at the Executive Board level nowadays’.





The future of the perfect parcel

The perfect parcel is ordered, shipped and delivered in one go. From A to B. It should be that simple. Behind the logistics of a parcel, however, is a whole digital world full of interaction with the sender and recipient. By optimising the digital parcel journey, we have a much better chance of successfully delivering a parcel at the agreed time and place in one go. And that contributes greatly to customer satisfaction. However, for this we do need direct contact with the recipient via email or our PostNL app. ➔



SCAN OR CLICK

Watch the
video on
innovations in
e-commerce
logistics.

Data-driven logistics make
e-commerce successful.



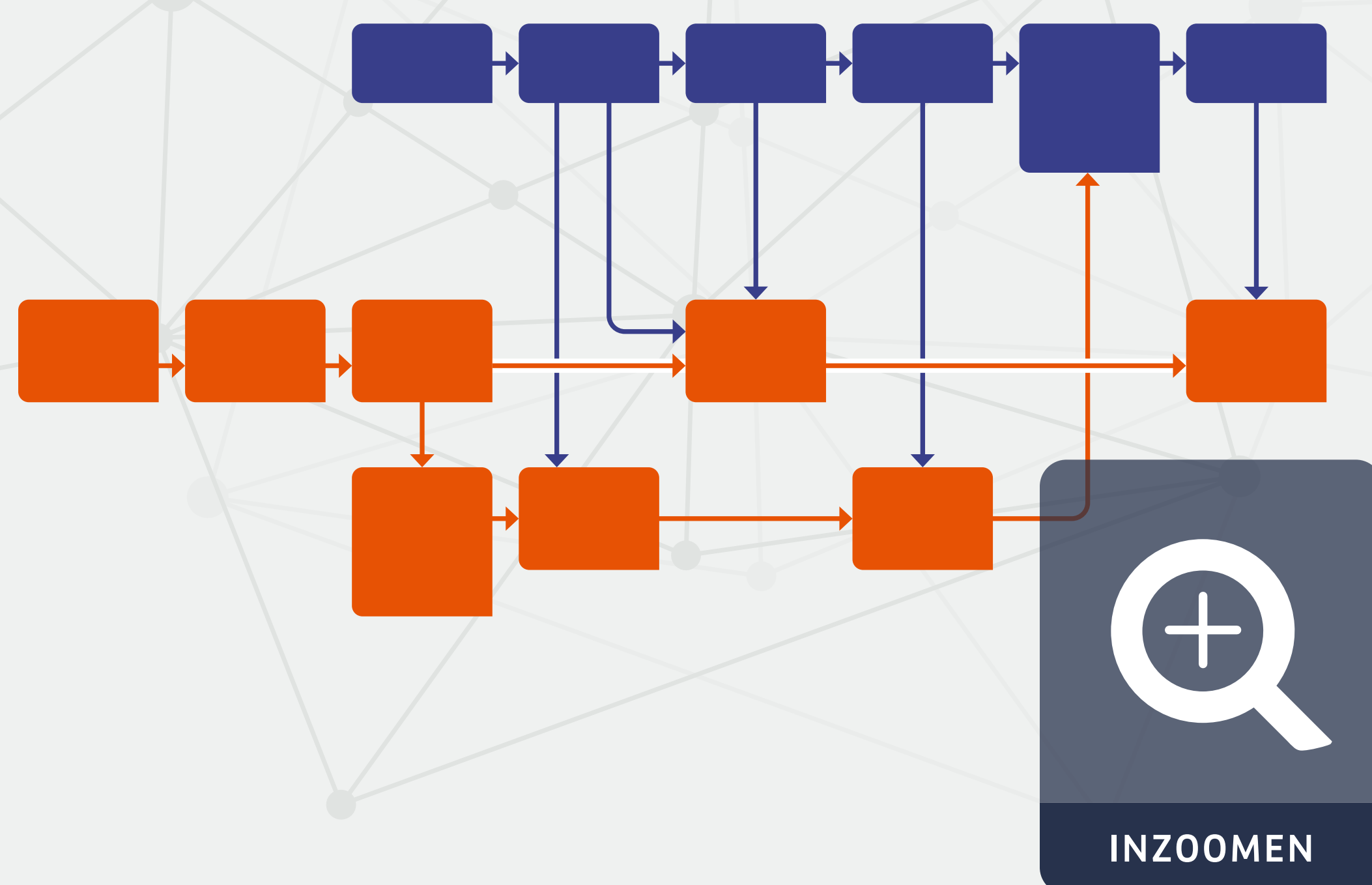


Good advance notice, better delivery

As soon as an order has been placed in the checkout of the web shop, the digital journey begins for us: the recipient can choose from a variety of delivery options, increasing the likelihood that the parcel will be delivered properly at the first attempt. The sender then pre-registers the parcel so that we know what kind of parcel is coming and what the customer expects from it – and we choose the optimal route in our network. In order to inform the recipient as accurately as possible about the progress of the delivery, we require a correct email address. This way the recipient always has real-time insight into the status of the parcel.



The route of the perfect parcel



Track your parcel down to the metre

We currently inform our customers about the delivery within a certain time frame. In the future, this will become a lot more precise and the recipient will even know up to the minute when a parcel arrives. By digitising the entire process, it will even be possible to literally follow the route of the parcel on a map, right up to the front door.

If the recipient suddenly has to leave home, he/she can use our app to reschedule the delivery to another time or location up to the last second. What's more, the recipient can send a personal order directly to the delivery driver to put the parcel in the shed or in the **digital safe**, for example. The delivery driver then takes a scan or photo of the delivered parcel and sends it to the recipient.

More satisfied customers, more repeat purchases

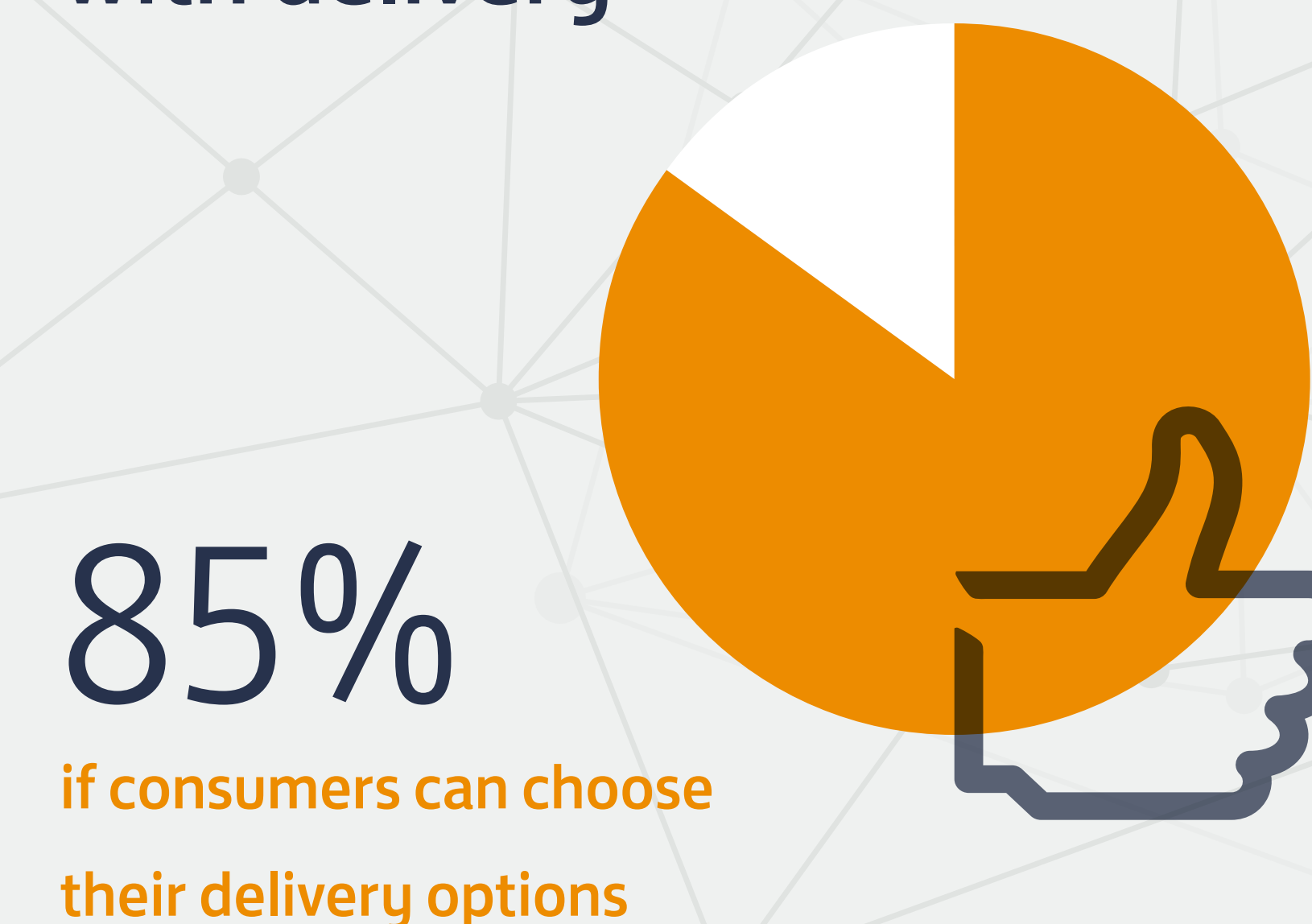
Thanks to the digital process, we avoid repeated delivery attempts and disappointment on the part of the recipient. But digitalisation goes even further: The more we know, the more we can predict the behaviour and wishes of recipients and adapt our delivery accordingly. This way, parcels are increasingly delivered properly at the first attempt. The result: happy, optimally informed recipients who return to the shop more often. ■

A successful first delivery attempt

First time right is what they call that. A parcel that is delivered properly the first time. This has many advantages. Not only does the recipient have his/her order earlier *and at the desired location*, we also don't need to drive back and forth as frequently, which is better for the environment. We can also eliminate the 'we missed you' notes, which ultimately saves a lot of paper. And we don't have to ring neighbours' doorbells. But what is perhaps most important of all: customer satisfaction shoots straight up!



Customer satisfaction with delivery





The route of the perfect parcel

Physical parcel route >



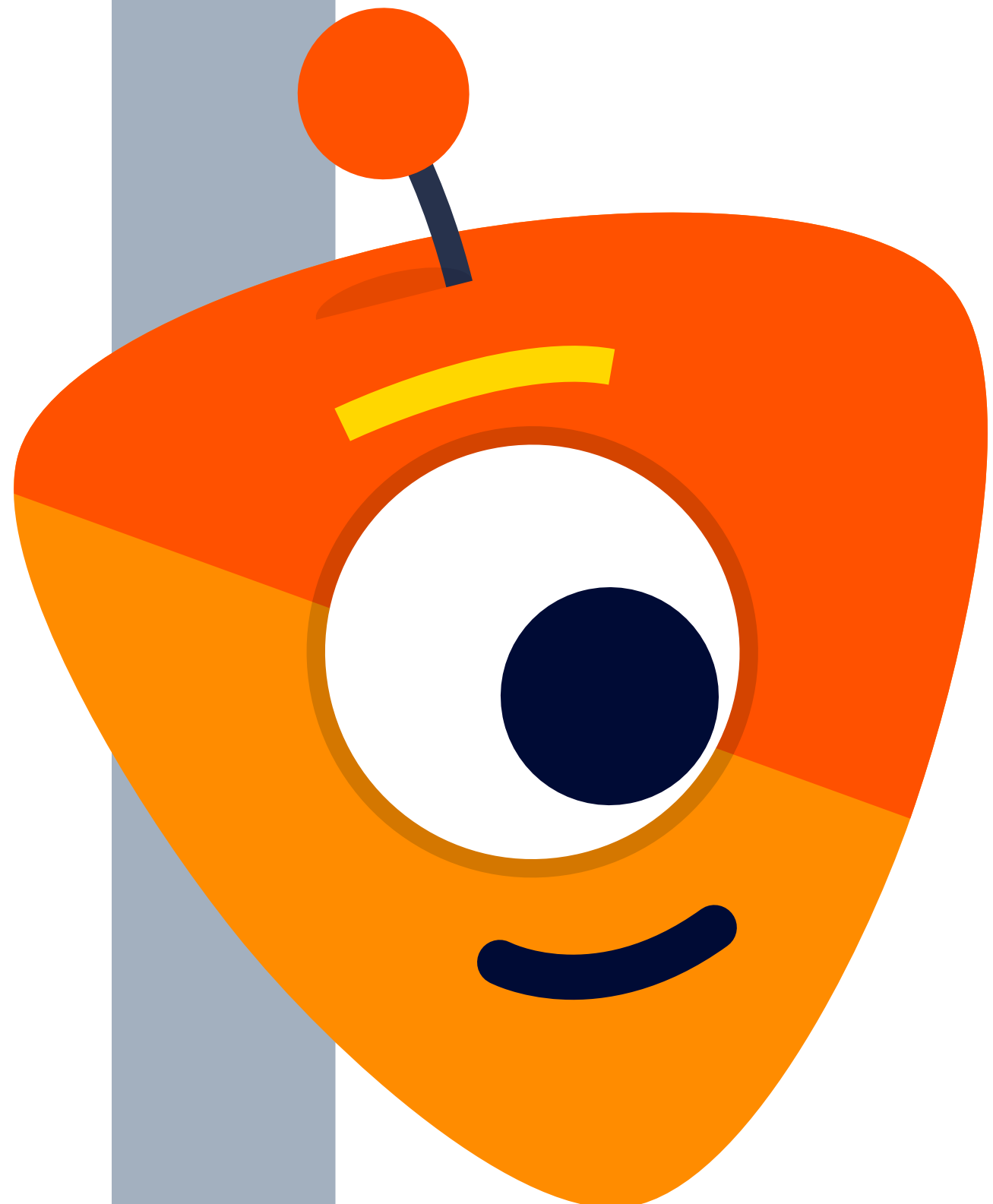


‘Can I help you?’



Chatbots Dan, Norma and Sam are at your service 24/7

Meet Dan, our customer service department’s online colleague. He learns new things on a daily basis, becoming a better point of contact for consumers. And he’s a success: chatbot Dan now handles some 75,000 calls per week. That’s why his family has recently expanded. For example, little brother Sam speaks to Belgian consumers, and business customers also have their own bot, called Norma. Reason enough to talk to the team working hard behind the scenes on these technological innovations. ➔



Do you have a Track & Trace code?

What is your postcode?





The creation of Dan

In early 2018, the team that would eventually build Dan faced a major challenge. This Online Service & Bots team wanted something that had not been done before on a large scale in the Netherlands. Esther Baud – the team’s product owner of the team – explains: ‘As a team, we had a number of requirements for our chatbot. The combination of these requirements meant that we had to build something that was unique by Dutch standards. For example, we wanted the bot to be able to make a connection between the website and the customer service systems. This meant we had to do a lot of research ourselves. Thanks to the cooperation between various suppliers and teams within PostNL, Dan saw the light of day on 1 November 2018.’

Customer service embraces its digital colleagues

The customers that Dan, Sam and Norma are unable to help themselves they forward to their colleagues in the customer service department, who also experience the advantages of chatbots. ‘In that process, they first ask the customer a few questions and automatically transfer the answers to the colleagues’ system. This allows the colleagues to take over the conversation with the information they need’, Esther explains. ‘This gives employees an expert role. The chatbots can do the simple things themselves. If it becomes too difficult, colleagues get involved.’ Esther’s team keeps the lines of communication with customer service short, so they can pass on suggestions or problems immediately. ‘The nice thing is that the customer service employees have determined the character of the chatbot. They, of course, knew best how a digital colleague should behave.’ →

‘Your parcel will be delivered this afternoon between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m.’

Dan, Norma and Sam work through the Google Home speaker, the Google Assistant app and on postnl.nl.

‘When will my parcel be delivered?’

‘We built something that was unique by Dutch standards’



From consumer to business

TDuring the busy holiday season, our business team came to us with a request to have Dan help out there as well. Since last December, the chatbots have also been answering business questions relating to Track & Trace.

That's where the idea was born for a new chatbot with its own personality, built especially for business customers. Esther Baud, channel manager of the chatbot, explains: 'We like to offer our business customers the service they have come to expect from us. Many corporate customers have a dedicated service team. So when customers are referred to customer service by the chatbot, you want them to immediately end up at the right team.' With that in mind, business chatbot Norma was recently deployed in **My PostNL**. 'That's the very place where she can add a lot of value. If someone is logged in there, we already know certain data. So we don't have to ask for them anymore, which makes it much easier for a customer.'



'The numbers don't lie: of all the consumers who talk to Dan, no less than a quarter are already being fully assisted by Dan. They don't need any further contact.'



SCAN OR CLICK

Watch the video about PostNL customer service's digital colleague

Dan - The digital colleague of PostNL's customer service



Wanneer wordt mijn pakket bezorgd?



From technical tour de force to international success

Meanwhile, the team is reaping the rewards of their hard work. 'After the campaign in which Dan introduces himself, we were invited to a chatbot conference in Madrid', says Esther. 'Facebook, Google and Nestlé were also in attendance. And we were allowed to talk about Dan. Other companies now also know how to find them. 'Since the launch of Dan, we've regularly exchanged knowledge with companies such as T-Mobile, NS and Zilveren Kruis Achmea. It's great to see how each company, in its own way, raises its service to a higher level. We think it's cool to help others set up their chatbot and we learn every day. That's how we keep innovating!' ■



SCAN OR CLICK

Curious how it works?



Data are only valuable if you can make them work for you

How America Today and PostNL are combining online and offline data

America Today collects data from various sources through a well-designed IT landscape. They then cleverly convert the insights they gain into what should lead to a better customer experience. Read more about how Martin Bless, product owner of America Today, and Patrick Vink, business development partner at PostNL Data Solutions, use smart data solutions in the checkout phase of the customer journey. Online and offline. →



A smooth customer experience

Martin says: 'We get data from everywhere. From the cash register system on the shop floor to the number of visitors in the web shop. This is how we can see where we should improve.' Not just for more conversion, but above all to create the best customer experience, he emphasises. 'With data, we can make the shops and the online shop merge with each other seamlessly. This way ensure that it also feels smooth for the customer.'

That's why America Today switched to a partnership with PostNL Data Solutions. 'With the address check at checkout we can immediately show our customers that their address has been recognised. Trust is everything when ordering online, and the address check helps a lot.' It saves a lot of work at the backend, too, Martin notes. 'It's also indispensable for us as a web shop. We now have far fewer wrong addresses in our system, which means we have to correct less.'

Avoid unnecessary returns and increase your customer satisfaction

The address check automatically completes the address in your web shop's checkout. This way your customer goes effortlessly through the checkout process, which increases conversion. As Patrick explains:

'You optimise your customer journey with the address check. So that you can avoid unnecessary returns or it being at the expense of your customer satisfaction. Internationally, too. In the Netherlands, for example, you start with postal code and house number and the address check fills in the details. For Germany, starting with an address makes more sense. And then the check fills in the postal code automatically. Of course, we discuss this with our customers!'

Martin adds with an example: 'We had a funny gadget called the Social Distance Zipper. It wasn't allowed to be sold in America, but Americans ordered it en masse because you could enter American postal codes in the German postal code field. That became quite a hassle at the distribution centre, with orders that had to be cancelled and e-mails sent to customers. We won't have to deal with that kind of hassle anymore with the international address check, which filters it out!'

Put on that French e-commerce cap!

Martin: 'You think so much from the Dutch point of view when you go into e-commerce in another country, but you really have to put on that French or German cap.' Patrick adds: 'It's really a quest. First and foremost, America Today must win over that customer. And when a customer is at the checkout, you have to guide him/her through it silently.' →

'With the address check at checkout we can immediately show our customers that their address has been recognised'

AMERICA TODAY

TIPS

Patrick Vink, business development manager at PostNL Data Solutions, shares 4 tips for the ideal checkout:

- 1. **Ensure you have a clean database** → Garbage in, garbage out
- 2. **Make choices in countries** → select the correct country
- 3. **Adapt your fields** → set up a customised format per country
- 4. **Gear your checkout to conversion** → each excess field causes dropouts
- 5. **A/B testing is a must** → both at the front end and the backend

Next steps: linking online and offline data

After the successful implementation of the address check, more is in the planning. Patrick gives us a hint: ‘Putting the customer first is a no-brainer, but it’s harder than you think! Not so long ago, you had a physical shop and could determine what customers wanted by asking them questions and looking them in the eye. Of course, a lot can be done online in terms of analytics and historical data. But does online represent all customer behaviour? Because offline and online reinforce each other. The offline data can help improve the online customer journey.’

We are starting a project with America Today in which we will link their data to our data from the offline world. ‘Think of addresses, residences, spending power and dozens of other characteristics, all in accordance with privacy laws, of course.’

Martin continues enthusiastically: ‘We’re going to set goals and run campaigns for that, and then we’ll see what it yields. We’re not just looking for that piece of data, but looking at the whole chain. Who is that online, offline and hybrid customer? And PostNL is a real partner for us in this, a partner with whom you can spar and get tips from.’ ■

Want to be successful in business with smart data?

What’s the key to collecting valuable data? Working with the right partners. That’s why America Today chose PostNL. As the largest logistics service provider in the Benelux, PostNL is on every street and knows its customers like no other. This knowledge leads to practical insights that help entrepreneurs grow. Not only by checking and confirming addresses, but also by drawing up clear customer profiles. This is how you get to know your current and new customers. PostNL therefore combines the familiar face on the street with data you can rely on as an entrepreneur.



SCAN OR CLICK

Do you also want to get started with smart data?



Get started with the My PostNL portal

How to get the most
out of your business





A personal, user-friendly self-service environment

where you as an entrepreneur can take care of your own affairs

Isn't that what everyone wants? That's why we are continuously improving and optimising the online environment for e-commerce customers, says Anouck van Wijck, Chief Product Owner of the business customer environment. 'As a web shop owner, you constantly ask yourself the question: How can I make my business more successful?'

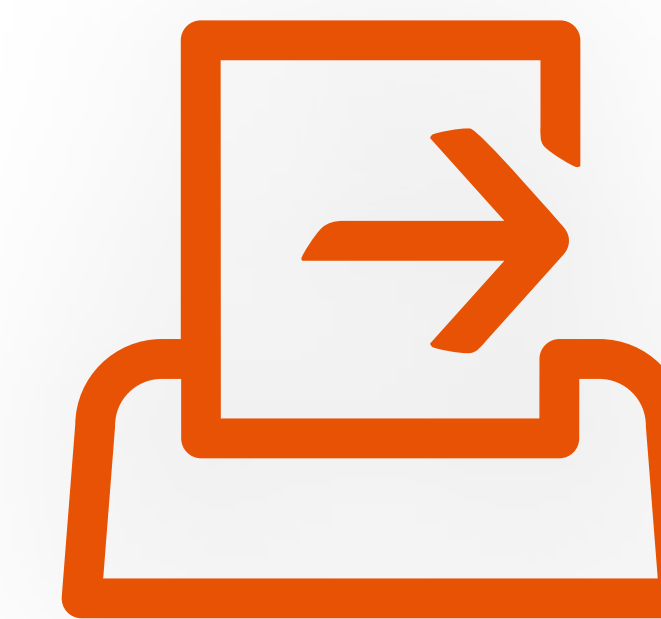
We help by making the steps relating to the logistics of e-commerce businesses as digital as possible and providing ever more real-time insights. We do this in My PostNL. Anouck explains how we continue to innovate with this environment.



Are you already using these optimisations?

'The e-commerce entrepreneur increasingly wants to be in control through a digital self-service portal. That's why we are continually developing and expanding new functionalities in My PostNL. We do this in cooperation with customers through pilot groups, interviews and online feedback tools', Anouck explains. →

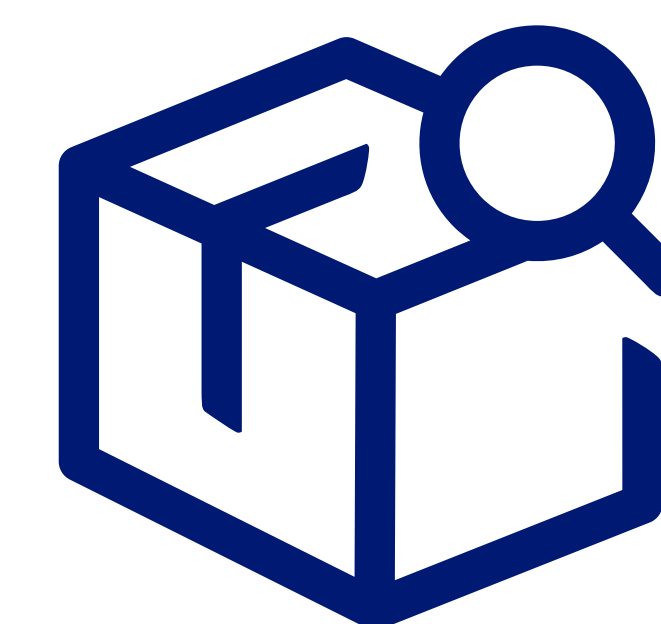
What developments are being worked on?



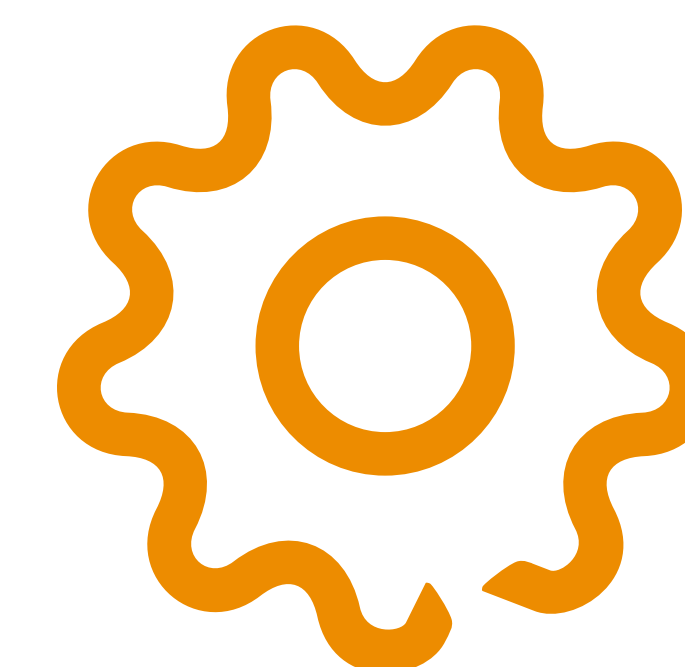
Simplification of the shipping module that allows you to create a shipping label in three clicks.



Online viewing, requesting, changing or cancelling of your pick-ups.



Optimisation of the business Track & Trace so that you can follow all your shipments in one overview.



Requesting and managing API credentials via My PostNL. For more information about our APIs and plug-ins go to postnl.nl.



A personalised business environment

Personalisation is an important topic for us, says Anouck, because customers are looking for an online environment that fits their needs in terms of content. ‘The web shop’s logistics employee has a different need – for example preparing an order – than the customer service employee, who wants to be able to track the order.’ It is therefore important to respond to these different needs. That’s why we’re developing a more personal, customised environment.

About My PostNL

My PostNL is a portal in which you, as a business customer, can take care of things yourself. In this business environment you can pre-register your parcels, view your invoices and track your parcels, among other things. ■

‘How can I
make my
business more
successful?’

How do you
create a
My PostNL
account?



SCAN OR CLICK

Future developments

The teams behind My PostNL have developed **personalised e-commerce dashboards** for our business customers. For example, as a customer you have insight into the number of roller containers requested and you can easily see how many parcels are returned. It’s a dynamic system and can be configured by the user, so that important information about shipments can always be found. With these insights you can optimise your logistic processes, which in turn contributes to customer satisfaction and the progress of your web shop.





How international regulations

accelerate digitalisation



Since 1 January 2020, shipments to foreign countries have been issued a shipping label with a barcode through our systems. This way the information can be shared in advance with the receiving country. This has a number of advantages: Customs knows which consignments are coming and can anticipate peak times, for example. They also know exactly what is in the parcel and whether the contents are allowed into the country. They have all the information digitally complete even before the parcel is imported. The advantage of this is that consignments of goods do not have to deal with long customs clearance times; it promotes rapid delivery times.

Watch the video



SCAN OR CLICK



Digital preparation of goods
What new rules apply?

Far-reaching digitalisation

In order to respond to changes in international regulations, we have **adapted our services**. All consignments of goods to foreign countries can easily be registered online in our parcels and cargo module (in My PostNL) or through the PostNL API. This also ensures that the customs forms are filled in correctly the first time. For some companies this means accelerating their digitalisation, and we are happy to help. Among other things, by setting up the system to be user-friendly way and continuing to optimise it.

Data lead to insight

The innovations have made international shipping increasingly smooth. Digitalisation ensures that the chance of errors, for example due to an incorrect postal code, is minimised. The process is thus increasingly driven by data. And delays or returns are avoided! ■

‘Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity – not a threat.’

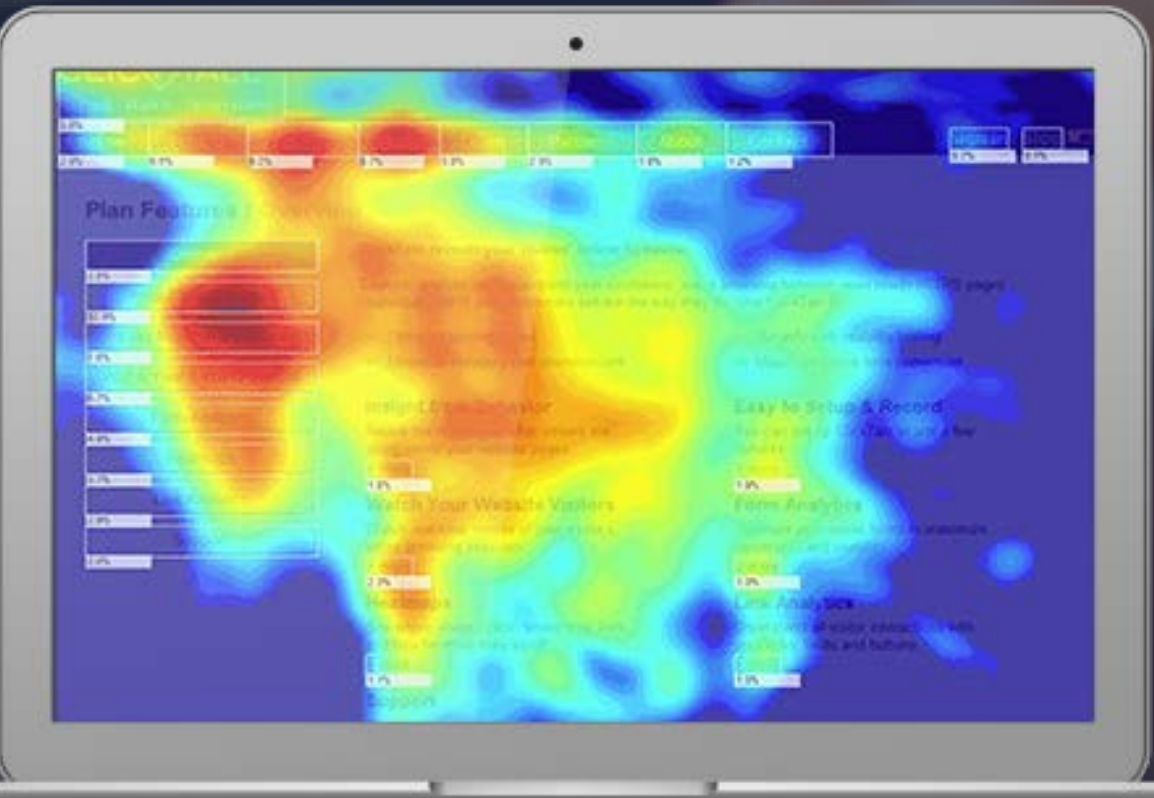
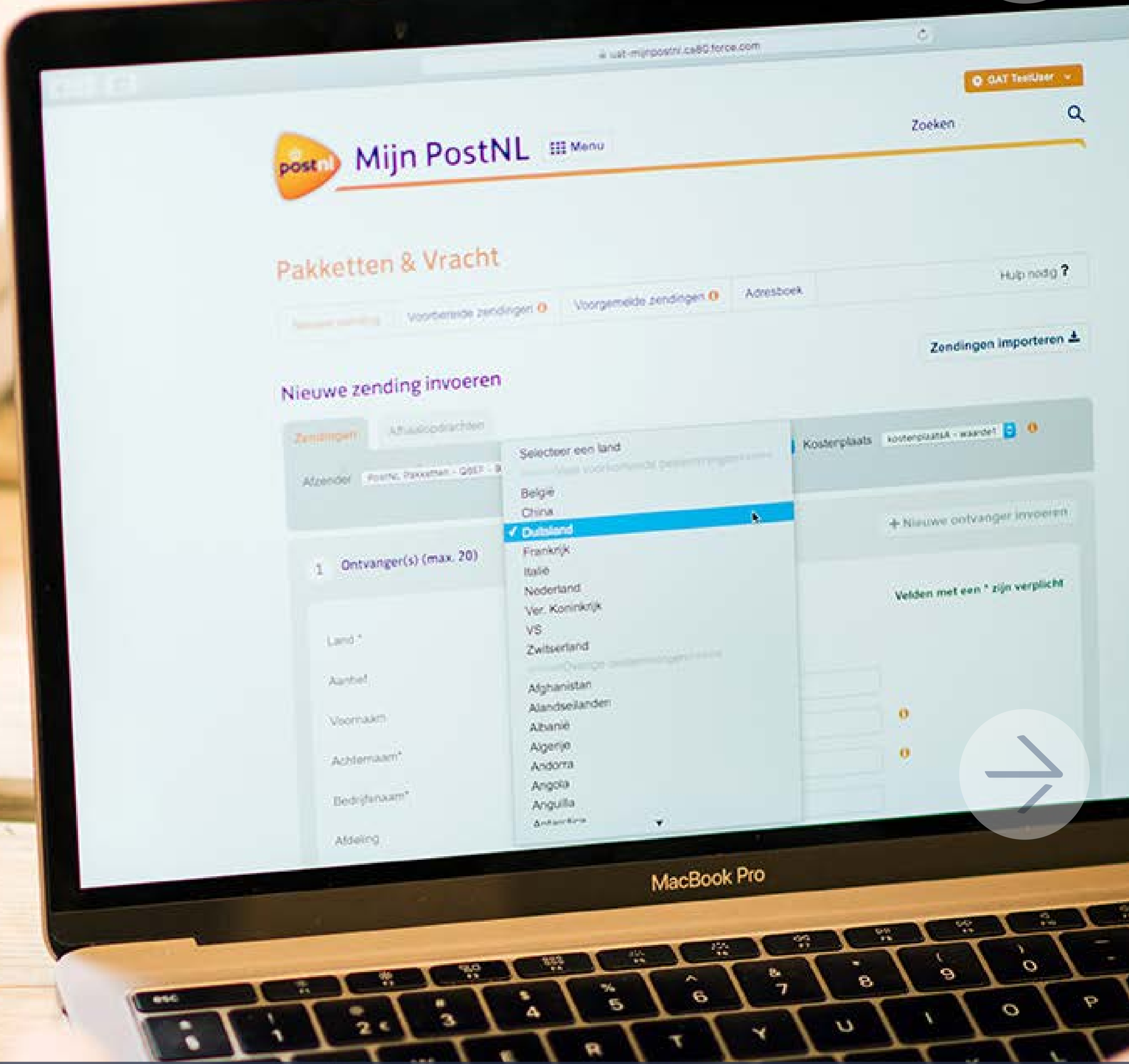
Steve Jobs



SCAN OR CLICK

Do you send parcels abroad?
Check the rules.

Heat map user experience survey - We conducted a user experience survey among consumers for our online shipping environment. We looked at both the *clicking behaviour* and the *scrolling behaviour*. This showed, among other things, that it was unclear where customers had to click in order to execute an action. We use these insights to further optimise the online flow.





Where is my roller container now?

Track & Trace with roller container tracking



Where exactly is my roller container with parcels? You may have asked yourself this question the moment your container rolls into the lorry. Because as an e-commerce entrepreneur, you hand over your parcels and trust us to take good care of them – which we do. But we want to give you even more insight into where your goods are. In real time. With roller container tracking, we are aiming for even more accurate insight into the quantities and times to and from customers, retailers and our locations.



What is roller container tracking?

Met rolcontainer tracking plaatsen we een tracker (beacon) op een rolcontainer. Deze trackers communiceren via een bluetooth signaal. Via board-computers op vrachtwagens, hand-terminals van de chauffeurs en de modems op onze eigen locaties kunnen we precies zien waar een rolcontainer is. De data worden vanuit het hele netwerk bij elkaar gebracht in een IoT platform.

Why?

We want to offer our customers full insight into the process, so that they know what is happening and can communicate the status to their customers, for example. With real-time insight into quantities and times from and to customers, retailers and our locations.

This enables us to react earlier to supply and demand and proactively send out more or less packaging. And thanks to the expanded Track & Trace function, we can see even more precisely which parcel is on which roller container.

250,000 trackers on roller containers

After a successful pilot, in which our customers participated, we started placing trackers on 250,000 roller containers. This project is part of the major digital transformation we are undertaking. We will equip our roller containers with trackers until the end of the year. Stay up to date with our newsletter. Register now at the link below. ■

Sign up for our newsletter

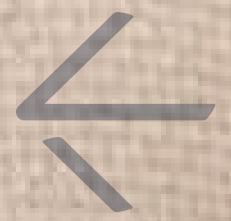


SCAN OR CLICK



Interacting with 6 million customers?

That's a piece of cake thanks
to the PostNL app →





With no fewer than 6 million downloads and 5.7 million active accounts, PostNL is a major player in the app world.

A team of developers, content specialists and designers is constantly working to optimise the app. Innovations are an important part of this, of course. On the next page we feature the top 3 of PostNL app innovations that are interesting for you as an e-commerce entrepreneur! →



SCAN OR CLICK

Watch the
interview

‘**Schuurman Schoenen** is one of the first customers to be enthusiastic about My Post. They used the activate function to move people from the app to the campaign page immediately. This reinforced the direct mail campaign with a click-through rate of over 20% from the app to the campaign page.’

Louwrens Nederlof – Head of Digital Development, PostNL

Schuurman Schoenen - An
interview with Frans Everink





1. Setting delivery preferences

Consumers can indicate in the app their delivery preference for when they're not at home. This can be at the neighbours' house, at a PostNL location or at a safe place near home. Does the consumer choose an agreed place? Then he/she can indicate a safe, dry place around the house where the delivery driver can deposit the parcel. This way consumers have more and more control over their deliveries and, as an entrepreneur, you benefit from a higher hit rate.



2. Feedback button

A pilot with a feedback button is currently ongoing. In the app, we ask if the recipient is satisfied as soon as the parcel is delivered. If so, he/she can indicate why and leave a compliment. If not, we will take action. The customer will then enter an online flow that leads to the answer to the question. Or to contact specialists who can link up directly with our sorting process or even the parcel delivery service. This is so we can respond to the dissatisfied customer within two hours, thereby leading to good results in terms of customer satisfaction.



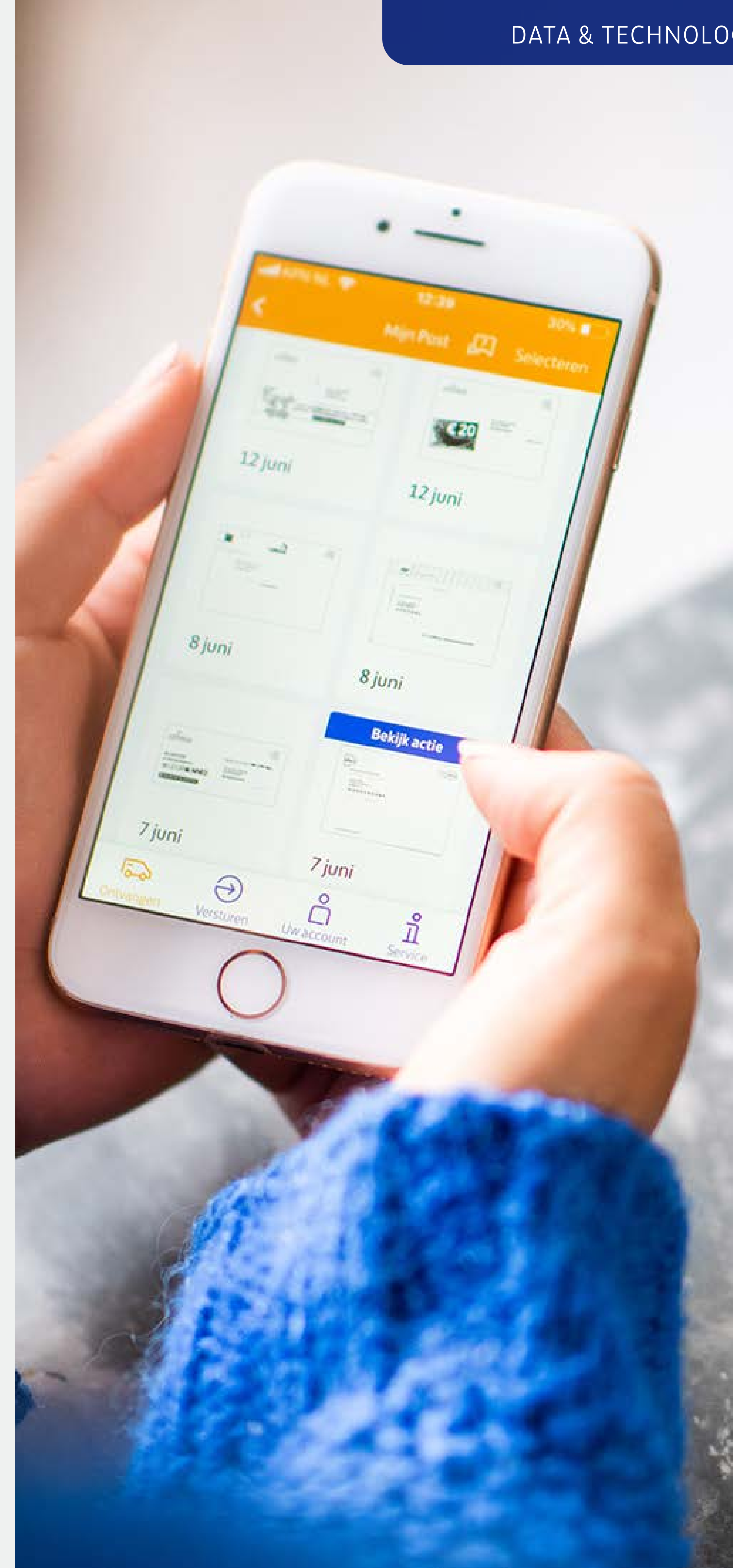
3. My PostNL

With My Post in the PostNL app, consumers know early in the morning what mail will be in their letterboxes that day. Users then see a photo of the mail item in the app. They can click directly through to a personalised offer or a calendar request. This way you can be sure that you are reaching your customers and increasing the conversion rate on mail.



4. Registering a return

The consumer can register a return in the PostNL app. The customer sees the parcel to be returned listed under delivered parcels. Here he/she immediately clicks on 'Return' and follows a few steps. The customer then brings the parcel to a PostNL point or gives it to the parcel delivery driver at the door. That saves a return label in the box. ■



‘If you always
do what you
always did,
you will always
get what you
always got.’

Albert Einstein



Do you know your customer?

Increase your lead generation and revenues with Address in View

If you don't see customers physically walking through your shop, how can you assess their needs? That's one of the challenges in e-commerce. With 'Address in View', we have the tools to better respond to this challenge. For example, the owners of Verf.nl did have a rough idea of their customers, but now they know for sure what their customers are dealing with. Like painting window frames during corona times. ➔

'We started applying those insights to our advertisements straight away.'

Rogier Goed,
co-owner of Verf.nl

verf.nl



Rogier Goed, co-owner of Verf.nl, explains: *‘Of course, we had analyses of our own. But they weren’t very in-depth. Thanks to Address in View, we now have a lot of information about our customers’ addresses. For example, that it’s a corner house, has a garden and a pointed roof. And that the residents at these addresses are generally willing to invest a little more in high-quality paint.’*

Working from home... or working on your home?

Even before Verf.nl could get started on these new customer insights, COVID-19 struck. The whole of the Netherlands suddenly had to work from home; and that was taken very literally. Especially in the sense of working on your home. Orders shot through the roof, and the company got three times busier than usual. What was striking is that the target group actually changed during this period. Rogier explains: *‘Address in View really did a nice job of identifying the fact that we had a shifting target group during the corona period. We doubled our shipments to Belgium, in any case. So it was great that PostNL kept delivering there! But we also saw a shift in the type of customer. Customers with smaller budgets who would normally go to a DIY store, for example, were now ordering from us. This was a completely new target group. ‘We started applying those insights to our advertisements straight away.’ →*

‘Address in View really did a nice job of identifying the fact that we had a shifting target group in the COVID-19 era.’

Rogier Goed,
co-owner Verf.nl



The advantages of Address in View



Easily select relevant target groups



Higher conversion rates thanks to the right tone of voice



Your database always up to date



Personalising customer communication

We are currently considering what our next step should be. Rogier: *'You simply have to surprise people, otherwise you won't set yourself apart from your competitors. We are the highest-rated paint shop, but we essentially aren't doing that much innovating. Although we do now have a 100% greater understanding of who our customer is. I would love to be able to link those PostNL data insights to marketing tooling; to be able to directly identify visitors to our website, segment them and approach them in a more personalised manner. Our ultimate goal is to achieve 40-50% growth.'* ■

Address in View

Address in View is one of our data solutions. It gives you accurate insight into all of the more than 7.7 million addresses in the Netherlands. Address in View clusters these data into 11 segments (consumer profiles) and 59 sub-segments. By linking Address in View to your customer database, you have access to a large number of characteristics at the address level. And real-time segmentation through an API on your website is possible. With this information you can tailor your communication perfectly to your customers, allowing you to improve your conversion rate with a personalised, relevant offer.

Know your
customer with our
customer profiles



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How robots are helping us progress

Robots can assist us with heavy physical, repetitive work.

That's why we are investigating how we can use a robotic arm in our sorting centres, for example. Another advantage is that robots are always available and can be used flexibly – which is especially useful in the late hours. Of course, people will always be needed in our processes; for example, to correct errors, solve complex cases and handle the so-called 'specials'. We are currently still in the exploratory phase of how the robotic arm can help in our processes. ■



Autonomous sorting with self-driving robots

Can you get robots to sort parcels independently? How do they affect productivity? And how do they work together with our sorters? We're investigating all this in cooperation with the automation company Prime Vision at our sorting centre in Wommelgem (Belgium). And not only on paper, but also in practice. ➔



'We're very satisfied with the results so far. It's great to see our concept working in practice, and we look forward to expanding it further.'

Bernd van Dijk,
Innovation Director, Prime Vision



‘With autonomous sorting, we can handle increasing volumes. Productivity per employee increases and the flexibility and scalability of the system are a great advantage.’

Björn van Batenburg,
Process Innovator, PostNL

Many of our sorting centres have large sorting machines, a considerable investment that isn't possible everywhere. We are therefore testing whether the use of self-driving robots is a good alternative in supporting manual sorting. We do this live, so that we can immediately learn from the process and resolve bottlenecks on the spot, where necessary.

Mobile and flexible

The great advantage of the self-driving robots is that they work completely freely and independently. They're flexible, modular and quickly deployable, whatever the location. Due to this we can very easily double or halve the capacity of a sorting centre – something that is more difficult with a sorting machine, which processes a fixed number of parcels per hour. This enables us to better respond to peaks. In addition, the robot takes over heavy work. So robots are a great addition to our current way of working and allow us to continue guaranteeing fast delivery of parcels. ■

‘The great advantage of self-driving robots is that they work completely freely and independently.’



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Watch the video about the 3 innovation trends: data-driven e-commerce, successful deliveries and robotisation.

Major innovation for small parcels

We are experiencing a period of solid e-commerce growth. To handle the higher volumes, we are scaling up our capacity. The planned investments to expand our sorting capacity are on track. One of the investments is the construction of a sorting centre for small parcels.

Many of the parcels we deliver for our customers are ‘small’ parcels, roughly the size of a sturdy shoe box. We see that more and more web shops are working more sustainably and are therefore packing smaller. By sorting these small parcels separately, we can increase the capacity of our existing network. This allows us to properly respond to our customers’ increasing demands and enable growth in e-commerce. We are going to sort these small parcels at a new, sustainable, highly automated and robotised site. We aim to open this sorting centre for small parcels at a central location in the Netherlands in Q4 of 2021. Keep an eye on [our newsletter](#) for the latest news. ■



Smart sorting using robots

A new, innovative development: The smart robots that take care of the internal transport at the sorting centre.

Sign up for our newsletter



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THE ROBOTS ARE COMING!





The robots work day and night in our fulfilment centre

Back in 2017, we installed a fully robotised fulfilment system at our fulfilment centre in Houten: Autostore. More than 20,000 bins of goods and more than 40 robotic trolleys. Specially designed for processing web shop orders. Accurate, fast and transparent. ➔



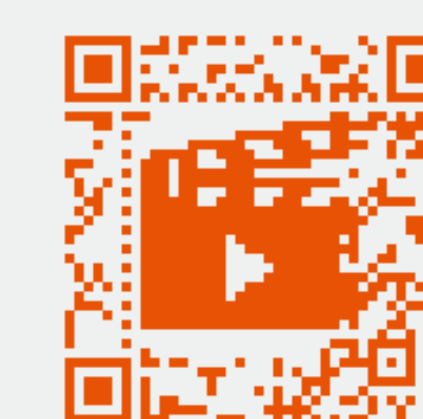
As a premium partner for platform and e-commerce fulfilment, we listen carefully to the market. To be able to grow along with the demands of the e-commerce market, we opted for the Autostore system. The e-commerce market is a unique market where accuracy and speed are crucial. 'Autostore is what we call a "goods-to-man" order picking system', says Michiel Kalis, General Manager of PostNL Fulfilment. 'It allows us to process the orders of our e-commerce customers up to ten times faster. With Autostore, our overall efficiency has tripled.'

Fast and flexible

Outsourcing order processing is a smart decision in e-commerce especially. The market is still growing rapidly, is erratic and experiences major (stress) peaks during holidays and sales campaigns. With the robotised storage and order processing system, companies are assured of 100% accuracy, even during peak periods. In addition, more and more web shops are shifting their cut-off time to the evening or want to be able to deliver on the same day. This service is possible with Autostore; after all, the robots work 24/7.

Transparency

An accurate tracking system provides insight into every step of the fulfilment process. 'We offer the transparency that web shops need. We often heard that customers were called several times by consumers about the status of their parcel. This is information that we can now share effortlessly. But because we don't want to overwhelm the consumer with emails, we send a message with a link to the Track & Trace system. Anyone who wants to know more can follow everything.' →



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[Watch the video](#)

Find out how this web shop is responding to the fast-growing e-commerce market. Watch the video: **'The success of Noshirt'**.



We hadden het eigenlijk vanaf het begin moeten doen...



Sending less air

Master data are extremely important for optimising storage, order picking, packing and transport. For example, the system measures the volume and weight of all products and takes a photo to visually record the order picking process. 'The volume and weight are essential to determine the right packaging box, so that we don't unnecessarily send air', says Kalis.

'For our entire fulfilment process, we use a state-of-the-art warehouse management system that supports us with algorithms for the most efficient way of order processing as well as packaging. With the right data and calculations, we are able to remove almost all unnecessary air from the packaging. This way we're responding to the needs of our customers and consumers.' ■

Michiel Kalis, General Manager of PostNL Fulfilment



noshirt®

'It's actually very simple. The more control our customers have over how, where and when they receive their parcels, the better it is for our business.'

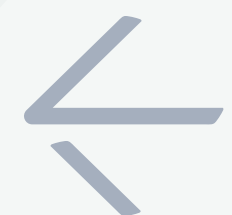
Jan Willem Onderwater,
CEO of the web shop Noshirt





Send over 2 million litres of air less?

Shoppartners packs smarter with PostNL →



Misha Kraakman, Operational Manager of Shoppartners, talks about the switch:

'I had wanted smaller autolock boxes for a long time because we can process them faster. Then we would no longer need machines to set up and close the boxes. But autolock boxes are more expensive, so we continued to ship using the large, standard format boxes.'



Less air in your parcel? Download the customer case.



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‘We save more than 427,000 kg of volume weight annually, a reduction of 27%! Or 37 full lorries and 1,800 roller containers.’

Misha Kraakman,
Operational Manager
Shoppartners

PostNL
customers.
Look here for
packaging.



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Other web
shops. Look
here for
packaging.



You name it, Shoppartners sells it:

From party clothes and toys to affordable household and garden items. With over 100,000 products in stock and 3.5 million orders a year, they ship a lot. In addition to being protective, their packaging must above all be inexpensive. Even if it means that you sometimes send one pair of sunglasses in a parcel with a few litres of air. Unless you can make an efficient move in your entire process with more expensive packaging, thereby saving you a lot on costs in the long run. Shoppartners switched to PostNL packaging, and the results are positive.

All packaging materials at PostNL

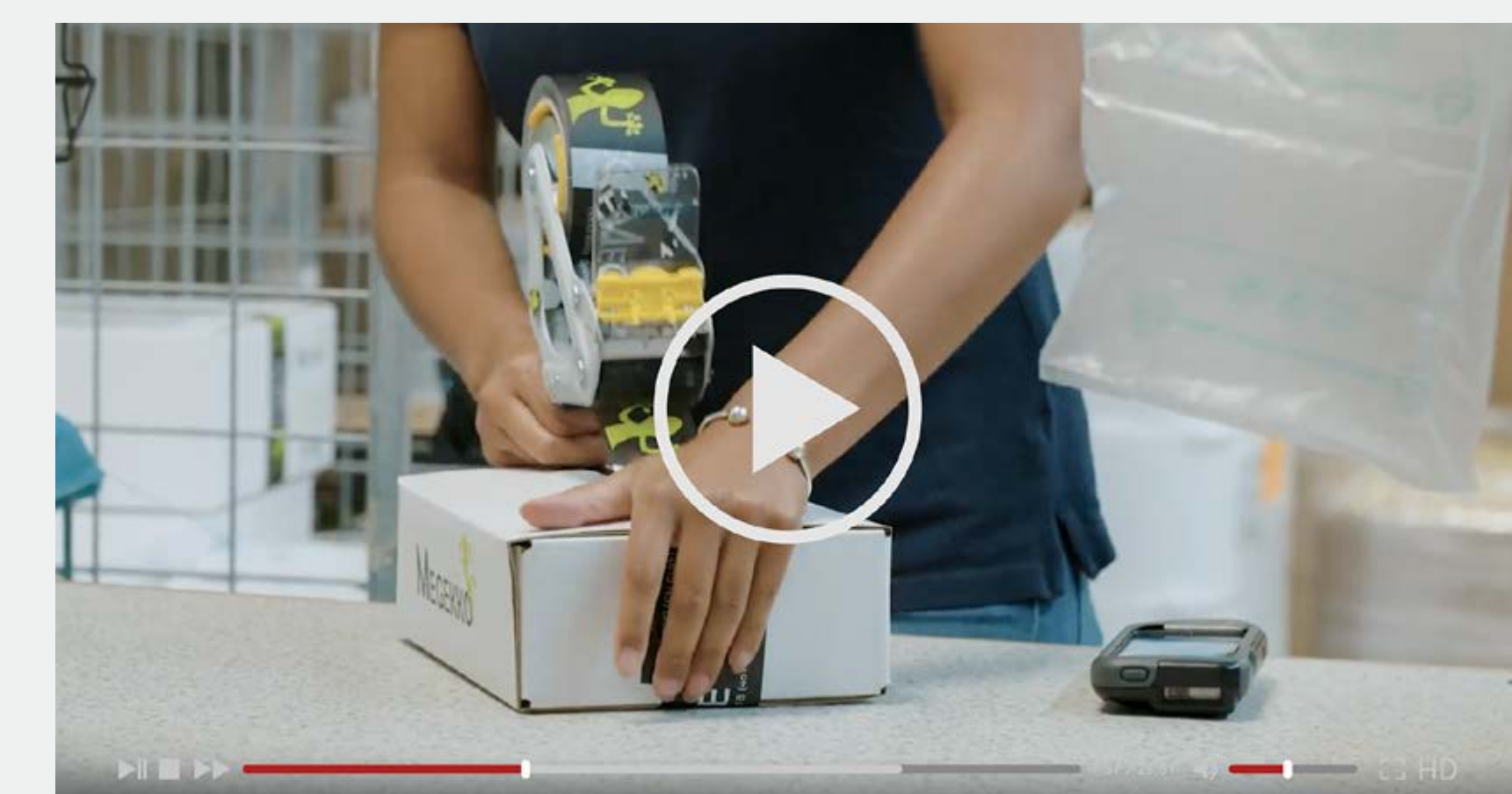
The PostNL packaging experts looked for autolock boxes that could meet Shoppartners' requirements. They also decided to order fashion packs, shipping envelopes and padding material from PostNL.

Misha explains: *In addition to saving costs, it's very efficient to have a single point of contact. Instead of 12 suppliers for packaging materials we now have only two.* →

Watch the
video



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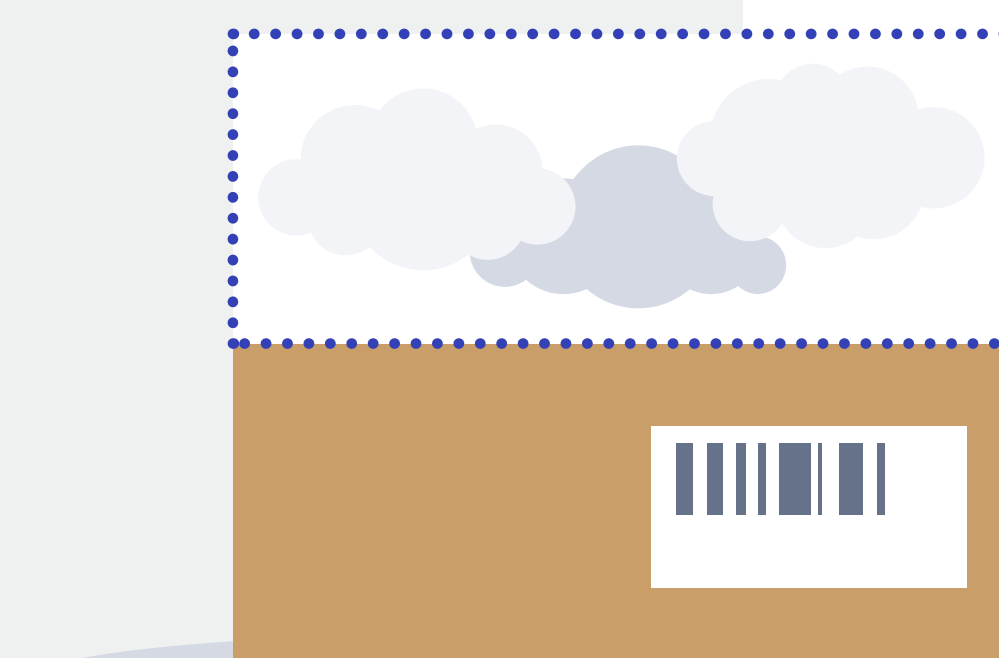
Megekko case - Nienke Nijhuis
in an interview with Megekko



50%

of the average parcel we deliver is air*

*Research carried out by thuiswinkel.org



24%

of Dutch people want to receive orders in sustainable packaging



45%

of consumers surveyed thought that too much packaging material is being used



46%

of consumers surveyed thought that the boxes used are too large for the items ordered

Smarter packaging with less air

Sending less air wasn't even on the agenda at first. It was only when the results of using the new boxes became clear that Misha was pleasantly surprised: *'We save over 427,000 kg in volume weight annually, a reduction of 27%! That's over 2 million litres of air, or 37 full lorries and 1,800 roller containers. I had expected some savings, but not that much!'*

Satisfied customers and a step towards sustainability

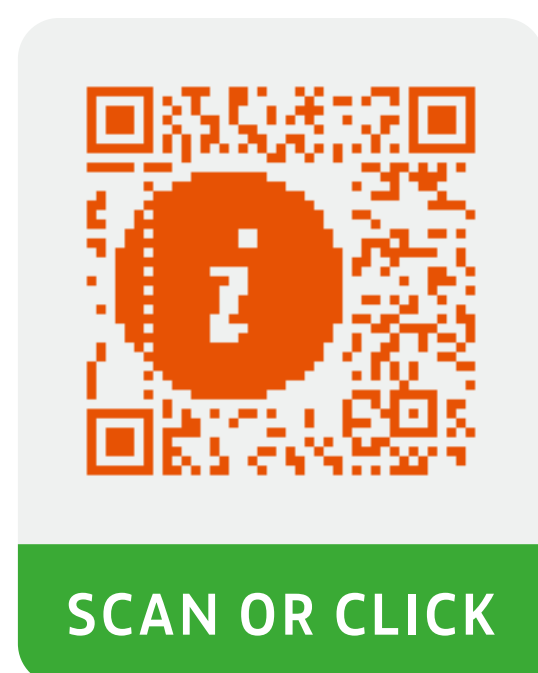
Misha is very pleased with the long-run cost savings. But that isn't the only advantage. He continues: *'For the consumer, it's also nicer to receive the sunglasses in a small parcel without a mountain of padding. In addition, we are now working in a much more sustainable way, which is a good thing, of course. All in all, we are really very satisfied with the change we've made. The only remaining wish we have is for us to get a discount from PostNL, for example, for sending extra small parcels. That makes it even more attractive for us and other parties to remove air from our packaging!'* ■

'Choose the right packaging for your product, at the lowest possible cost and with the lowest footprint.'

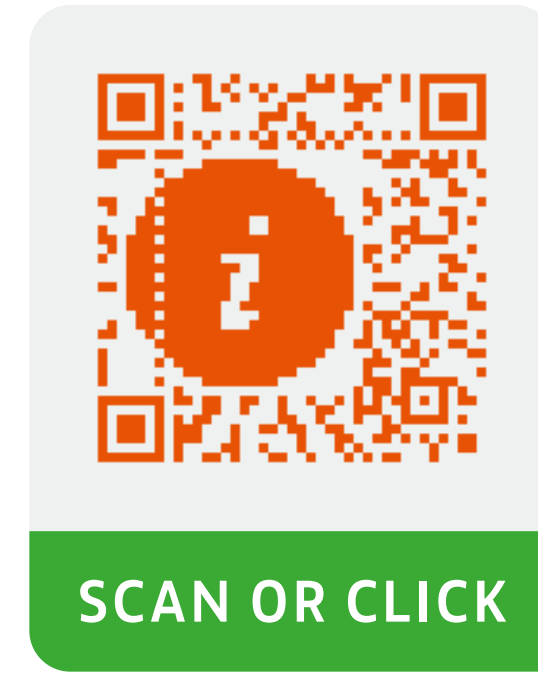


The Netherlands is working from home more often The demand for plants is skyrocketing

The COVID-19 crisis had an enormous impact on growers and cultivators of flowers and plants in the spring of 2020. Flora@Home saw a sharp increase in the number of online orders during this period. ‘Normally we can predict quite well when people will buy flowers and plants’, says Dax van Velzen, Manager Operations at Flora@Home. But it was different in that period. ‘We suddenly had eight times the usual number of orders.’ ■



Check out the advantages of selling flowers and plants with Flora@Home.



And all those flowers and plants? We also deliver them green. Curious how Flora@Home and Botanically manage it? Download the case.





How do we reduce the pressure on our inner cities?

Less traffic with sustainable urban logistics →



Our inner cities are becoming congested. If we want to increase the liveability of inner cities, we must look for sustainable options for logistics and transport. We are working hard on this, for both business and consumer deliveries. For example, we want to have emission-free deliveries to consumers in at least 25 Dutch city centres by 2025. Pursuant to this, we also want to make business logistics in these cities more sustainable, for example by using city hubs.

City hub for bundled business transport

‘We’re already working with city hubs in a number of cities. Together with local logistics entrepreneurs, we’ve also set up city hubs on the outskirts of cities such as Nijmegen, Tilburg, Utrecht, Amersfoort and in South Limburg. That’s where business goods are bundled before we take them into the city in electric lorries’, says Suzanne Debrichy, Commercial Manager for Urban Logistics at PostNL. She deals with sustainable urban logistics and explains that this is a complex interplay of forces: ‘We work together with all kinds of local and national parties such as companies, municipalities and experts. That means we have a lot of meetings in order to get everyone on the same page. After all, the more parties participate, the greater the chance of success. In The Hague, we now ensure – together with Business Partner Djinnny – that all facility flows of the national government are delivered in a sustainable manner. From printing paper to cleaning products. Those goods are delivered to the hub by different suppliers, and then we take them to the government sites in one go.’

Which industries
and customers
are already using
urban logistics?



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From one hub to 70 locations

The city hub is a success, Suzanne explains: ‘From the hub in The Hague, we now offer bundled deliveries to some 70 locations in the city. We do this not only for the government, but also for the municipality, several ministries and organisations such as Shell, TNO and Nationale-Nederlanden. The big advantage is less contact for our customers, with only one delivery driver at the door instead of several per day. Moreover, there are fewer delivery vans driving through the city, and the emission-free delivery makes the air a little cleaner.’ →



Sustainable in logistics



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Want to know more
about urban logistics?
Watch the video here.



Read the full roadmap towards sustainable urban logistics in our white paper “Sustainable Logistics as the New Standard”.



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Less traffic in the city centre

Approximately 5% to 7% of the logistical transport movements in an inner city originate from the delivery of mail and parcels to consumers. ‘While business logistics are responsible for many more movements’, says Suzanne. ‘We saw the establishment of city hubs as an opportunity to contribute to sustainability and reducing business logistics movements.’

The city of the future

‘We’re also looking at deliveries to consumers. Look, the number of orders is not going to decrease any time soon, and logistics are becoming more and more important. But how do we get the products delivered sustainably and with little nuisance in the city centre? How can we deliver the washing machine to the city centre sustainably and with minimum nuisance?’

These are issues that we deal with on a daily basis.’ In the city centres, we will increasingly make deliveries using light electric vehicles, such as cargo bikes. And in the surrounding area we will use electric vans. However, electric driving does bring new challenges. ‘For example, we are looking at good charging facilities – a charging infrastructure – for our own delivery vans and the vans of entrepreneurs and the LECVs (light electric cargo vehicles). All have different charging requirements. There must be physical space, but also an energy network.’ Suzanne expects a mix of transport modes and options in the future. In addition, certain locations in the city may have multiple functions. In addition, certain locations in the city will have multiple functions. ‘The city of the future is dynamic. A loading and unloading dock in the morning will be a playground in the afternoon and a terrace in the evening.’ →

ShoppingTomorrow

Knowledge network for logistics and e-commerce

PPostNL participates in the ShoppingTomorrow think tank, a group of professionals working on the logistics developments of the future. The Next Level City Logistics expert group is looking at future logistics in Dutch cities. ‘Traffic is increasing, and at the same time we want to reduce the nuisance. How do we help customers, suppliers and service providers achieve their zero-emission goals?’

And how do you create a good business model for city hubs so that they are appealing to multiple parties? The use of city hubs makes the path to more sustainable logistics easier. ‘We can connect shippers and recipients who want to make an impact on the environment through our StadslogistiekNL initiative’, says Suzanne Debrichy. In the world of urban logistics, ‘one size does not fit all’.



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What is possible in the field of modern urban logistics? Read the blue paper.





The whole city climate neutral?

‘With sustainable urban logistics we help implement the agreements of the European Climate Summit in Paris’, Suzanne explains. By 2030, PostNL wants its deliveries in the last mile to be completely emission-free and low-nuisance throughout the Benelux. ‘We are aware of our impact as a logistics company and take responsibility for it. And that also applies to the municipalities: they are looking for solutions for a liveable city centre. By working together with all the parties involved, we can make an entire city more sustainable.’ ■



Suzanne Debrichy
Commercial Manager
Urban Logistics, PostNL



Urban logistics in The Hague

‘Smart use of logistics to reduce CO₂ emissions.’

From toners to toilet paper, we transport all the national government’s facility goods into the city. Andre Weimar, Director of Purchasing and Housing at the national government, is enthusiastic about the cooperation: ‘There were cars constantly driving around on our behalf, serving us. How can we ensure that we use these logistics in a smart way? To reduce CO₂ emissions and prevent the city from becoming gridlocked.’ The new city hub on the outskirts of The Hague is a good example. Here, goods are collected, bundled and brought into the city in one go.



Watch the video about urban logistics in The Hague here.



SCAN OR CLICK

Urban logistics in The Hague



New: the electric cargo bike

Innovation and sustainable delivery

We already know that our customers want their parcels delivered in a more sustainable way. And smart city hubs are an answer to that. We also invest in more sustainable fuels and have been working with electric vehicles for years. The latest innovation in this area: The electric cargo bike! ➔





The electric cargo bike

In July 2020, a pilot was conducted with a new type of electric bicycle for emission-free delivery of parcels in the Nijmegen city centre. Two roller containers fit in the special bicycle. The parcel delivery takes place from the smart city hub. Each bike is expected to make three rounds a day and deliver six roller containers of parcels daily. It delivers as many parcels as a large delivery van and takes up less space on the street and in the city. As a result of this pilot, bicycles are being improved and we are testing narrow electric vans that fit three roller containers.



‘Small electric vehicles are not only emission-free, they also prevent traffic jams.’

Marije Hakkert, Logistics Designer at Post-NL: ‘Small electric vehicles are not only emission-free. They also prevent traffic jams, as they are much narrower than traditional delivery vans. We have experience with parcel delivery by smaller, electric vehicles and cargo bikes, but these were not specifically designed for parcel delivery. With this pilot we want to learn whether parcel delivery with this new type of bicycle indeed causes less traffic congestion and whether the logistics processes are as efficient as when using delivery vans.’ ■

Another innovative, sustainable delivery method: the drone

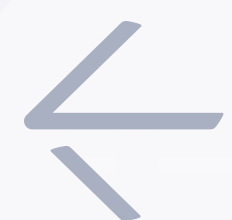


[Read the article about our Medical Drone Service in this magazine »](#)



Sustainable production and delivery

How brandplant thinks sustainably from harvest to delivery



Making sustainable choices in every step of the chain, up to and including green delivery of its products. This is what Erik van Gangelen, plant-based food entrepreneur and co-founder of brandplant, does. For Erik and his partners, sustainable business is not idealistic, but above all practical. 'We believe that if you can help a little to make the world a better place, you should act accordingly. Walk the walk, talk the talk.' ➔





Over brandplant

Innovative start-up brandplant was founded in 2019 by Dirk Schnellen, Erik van Gangelen and Gertjan Kruijk. Their mission is to connect plant-based products with buyers in the Benelux, so that consumers always know where to find a sustainable and plant-based alternative in the supermarket.



Fewer food miles, more taste

One of the best-sellers in the brandplant portfolio is their own Upside Sausage. This tasty alternative to the traditional sausage is not only completely plant-based, but is also made with ingredients that come from the immediate vicinity of the factory. And that significantly reduces the product's carbon footprint. Brandplant also keeps short lines with respect to the delivery process, says Erik. 'For larger orders, we send the sausages directly from the factory to the customer. When you talk about shortening the supply chain, it doesn't get much shorter than this. Unless you pick the grain from the field and eat it directly.'

Growing demand helps greening

Erik is clear about whether more direct delivery is still feasible when brandplant is growing as a company. 'It's precisely when the scale becomes larger that it becomes easier. Where we now supply ten individual shops, in the future we will be able to deliver directly to one supermarket distribution centre. That makes it even more efficient.' And this growth is continuing. 'We see repeat orders at every organic shop we visit. We're starting to get fans and seeing that people like to consume our products. They're particularly enthusiastic about having found something plant-based that they like and that has a bite.'

PostNL as a growth partner

'We are still a distributor in the early stages', says Erik. 'We're now focusing on a few products. Ultimately, we would like to be the vegetarian distributor in the Benelux.' That's why Erik chose a logistics partner that can grow with brandplant. And what was the deciding factor in his choice for PostNL? 'Flexibility. With PostNL you can start with small parcels to consumers. You can then scale that up to larger parcels to individual shops. And you can end up with pallets going to very large customers. If you want to grow step by step, that's very convenient. The second factor is the flexibility in what you can send. PostNL even has a cold store. That means you can send dry goods chilled and frozen. PostNL is actually an all-round partner.' ■

Check out
brandplant's
website



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Innovating for healthcare

This is how we keep healthcare accessible for the whole of the Netherlands



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Watch the video about the Medical Drone Service



Watch the video about the Medical Drone Service



Medical transport on a 'higher level'

Faster and more efficient transport with drones

Drones avoid traffic jams and stoplights. They relieve the road system and fly the shortest possible route from A to B. This makes drones very suitable for transporting medical goods; for example, between hospitals or from the lab to a hospital. Together with ANWB, Erasmus MC, Sanquin, Isala and Certe, we investigated how drones can help improve healthcare logistics.



As 'By using medical drones we shorten routes and the organise healthcare faster and more efficiently.'

Jan-Dietert Brugma, Erasmus MC

roads around major cities become increasingly congested, providing good healthcare is sometimes a challenge. Drones offer a fast and efficient alternative and are therefore the perfect solution for medical transport. It's an innovative mode of transport that will allow us to respond more quickly to urgent situations in the future. That's why we're working hard on the development of **medical drones**. With the deployment of innovative mobility solutions, we want to help keep healthcare accessible and available. We've carried out the first test flights successfully. This brings us ever closer to realising routes through drones. ■

Healthpack

Where there's a pill, there's a way

Around 5 million patients in the Netherlands receive medications at home every year. These are often chronic patients who periodically receive their new medications. Home delivery of medication often creates great logistical pressure on pharmacists. There must be a smarter way!

With our specially developed healthpack, we offer packaging in which medications can be safely shipped through our own reliable postal network. The packaging simply fits through the letterbox! This means the consumer doesn't need to be at home to receive it. And just like with normal parcels, the recipient can follow the shipment in full through Track & Trace.

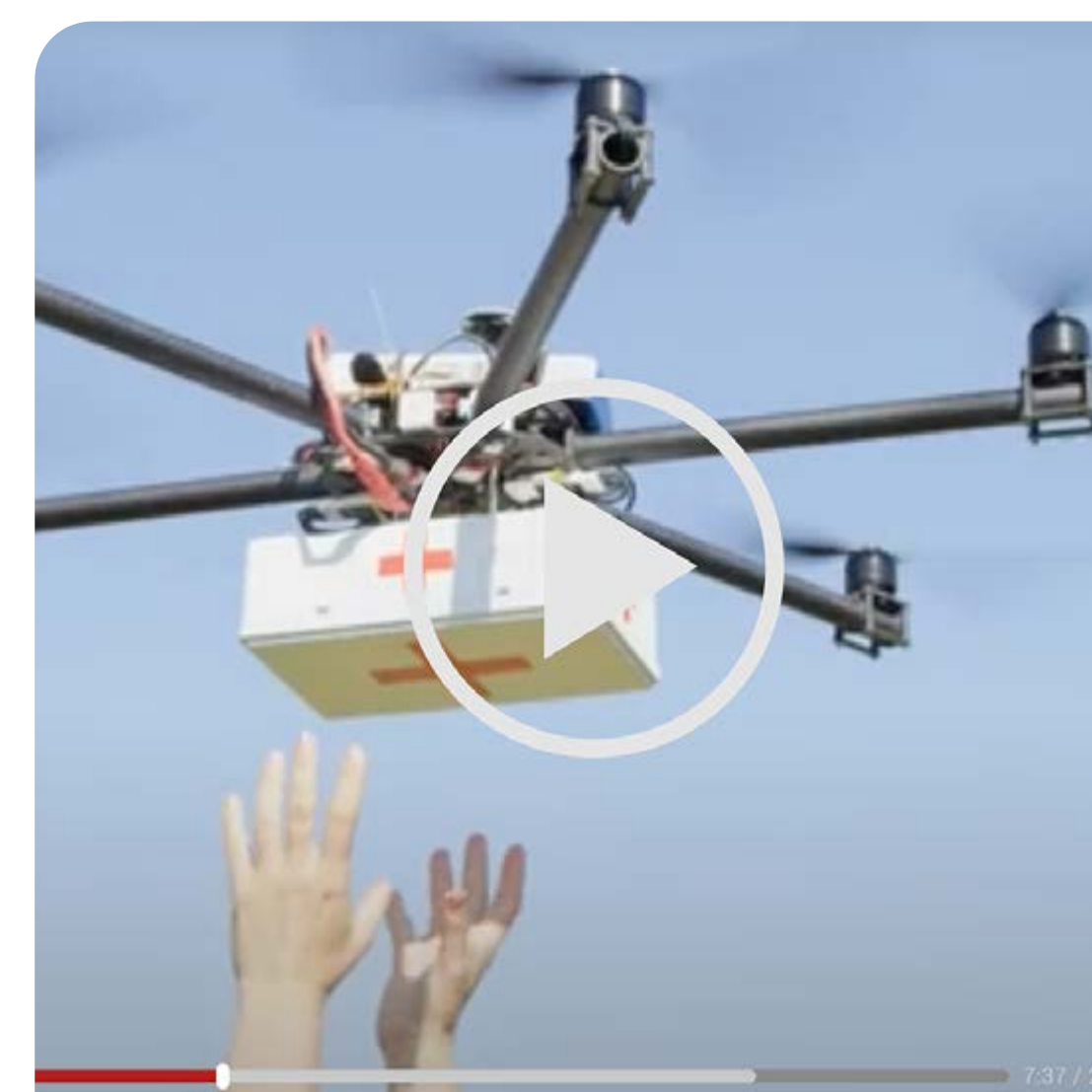
Securely packed

Healthpack has a unique closure that is virtually impossible for children and pets to open. Adults are given clear instructions on how to open the healthpack through symbols and text on the packaging. This makes the healthpack a safe and efficient way to send medication through the letterbox. ■



SCAN OR CLICK

Watch the video on innovation in health



Healthcare is increasingly shifting from specialised healthcare institutions to the home domain. Patients want to remain at home for as long as possible. They don't not necessarily have to go to a healthcare facility for their treatment, to have a medical test or to receive medication. Four experts give their vision of remote healthcare.



Pharma@home

Medications from the hospital delivered quickly and safely to your home

How do you ensure that people receive specialist medication at home, without having to make a trip to the hospital or pharmacy? Conditioned, transparent and safe transport offers a solution. But how do you configure this to be as efficient as possible? We're working on a logistics solution especially for this called Pharma@home. The first experiences with a unique health box for Erasmus MC are very positive.

We deliver the medication from the outpatient pharmacy to patients' homes. This can be done on the same day – or immediately the next day. We make sure that every medication gets to the right place, under the right conditions. The health box contains a sensor with which we track each shipment and monitor the temperature. If something goes wrong or deviates, we are notified immediately. The box is insulated and kept at a constant temperature by specially designed cooling elements. This is how we bring personal healthcare into the home. ■



European guidelines from the RIVM (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment)

The health box fully complies with GDP guidelines as set out by the European Union. This means, among other things, that the temperature remains the same and that the staff is qualified. The IGJ (*Inspectorate for Health Care and Youth*) monitors compliance with the GDP.



Send clothes wrinkle-free and with less air



with the sustainable Fashionpack



Fashionpack is one big, green story

We developed Fashionpack especially for the fashion industry. With this unique packaging, clothing is shipped with little air inside. This way several garments fit in one parcel. While the parcel simply fits through the letterbox. And that has a lot of benefits.

A sustainable solution

Fashionpack is reusable. For example, customers can use the same packaging to return clothes – which can then simply be put in the orange mailbox. Moreover, Fashionpack is fully recyclable. Until recently, there was an aluminium layer in the packaging to give it extra strength. Thanks to our continuous development and refinement, we've now found another, better solution to this. The aluminium inner layer has been removed, and Fashionpack is allowed to feature the KIDV logo.

Less air, less transport

Fulfilment companies are also happy with this innovation: after all, more parcels fit on a roller container, so fewer roller containers are ultimately needed. That makes a huge difference in costs. In addition, our delivery vans can hold more parcels, which means that we drive back and forth less frequently. In fact, because of its size, the postal carrier can simply take it along on the bicycle. And the parcel fits through the letterbox, meaning the consumer doesn't need to be at home to receive it. All in all, we are reducing CO² emissions with Fashionpack. Making Fashionpack one big, green story. ■



Fashionpack fits through the letterbox.



Read more about
Fashionpack here





Under development

The at-home parcel safe

Want to safely receive parcels when you're not at home? That's the ideal situation for many people. One possible solution is the at-home parcel safe: a locked safe at your home where you can safely receive a parcel without having to be at home. The parcel safe can now be ordered in our web shop.





Receiving parcels when you're not at home

Customer-friendly

The advantages of a parcel safe are numerous: consumers can always receive a parcel at home without having to be there. The parcel safe becomes part of the Delivery Preferences and can be selected by the consumer. This way the consumer remains in control. If the safe is full or the parcel doesn't fit, it will be delivered according to the other delivery preferences. It's therefore customer-friendly and advantageous for web shops, for example. We are investigating the possibilities of offering the at-home parcel safe nationwide in the future.



SCAN OR CLICK

PostNL parcel test: not at home, still delivered

Lean start-up

For this we work according to the *Lean start-up method*. First with the *problem-solution fit*: is there a specific customer need? Then we looked at whether the parcel safe is the right solution for that need. We used banners on our PostNL homepage to recruit testers. This test gave us a lot of insight into the customer experience in terms of safety and convenience and also taught us what our delivery staff thought. We are taking these experiences into account in our further exploration of the parcel safe. All in all, the future looks promising! ■





‘The only thing that matters is how the customer behaves.’

Kitty Koelemeijer is Professor of Marketing & Retailing at Nyenrode Business University and is a member of several supervisory boards. Her **expertise** is in innovation, marketing, e-commerce and retail management. In addition to an increase in scale and increasingly intensive cooperation between e-commerce parties, she foresees that voice commerce will really take off. →

‘Talking devices are going to directly influence consumer behaviour.’



SCAN OR CLICK

Watch the
video about
innovation
with Kitty



What are the current big innovation trends?

‘On the one hand, the enormous growth in the amount of real-time data and their analysis form the basis for the increasing ability to respond to customer demand through advanced artificial intelligence. And on the other hand, for the development of robotics, which plays a role in the supply chain in particular. Although a robot is actually also an algorithm, but in a jacket. This robotisation – together with the algorithms and data behind it – are an important, driving force for increasingly far-reaching innovation.’

Where will we encounter these robots?

‘Everywhere. In the coming years, their functions will be refined. Now robots can often do one thing very well. But picking up a book first and then a head of lettuce, that doesn’t work. That’s why so many fresh products are still picked manually. At many fulfilment companies, a lot of sorting and packing is still done manually. But robot technology is developing rapidly – and that’s going to have a huge impact on the entire supply chain. In the end, something like fulfilment will become much more efficient.’

And where else?

‘The self-driving car is, in fact, also a robot. This car is on the road by the grace of the Internet of Things. By seeing all objects as data, the car can drive safely.’

Of course, this will also change the delivery in the neighbourhood. Today, there are still vans driving back and forth, but in the future autonomous cars will carry orders from different suppliers. This will change our whole infrastructure.’

‘Everything is becoming more predictable’

Will we see self-driving cars delivering parcels in the near future?

‘First, an optimisation process will take place. On an average day, as many as five different delivery services pass through my street. This must – and will – be much better coordinated.’

‘And it can be done. In fact, the delivery drivers are already subcontractors. Soon they will be able to use smart keys to register all orders in a certain neighbourhood, for example.’

What can we expect from artificial intelligence?

‘Everything is becoming more and more predictable. There’s a reason why Amazon says that they know better than you what you’re going to buy. This is perhaps the most important thing of all: How well can you predict the wishes of the consumer? Social media, for example, will play a major role in this. Anyone who had been keeping an eye on Instagram knew that “boyfriend jeans” were going to be a huge trend. So it’s all about collecting and interpreting customer insights. A.I. can help predict trends.’ →





Are social media an additional sales channel?

‘They’re going to play a much bigger role in any case. Offline and online channel integration is still in full swing. Almost all physical shops have a web shop by now, but digitalisation continues. Now you already have Instagram check-out and Pinterest sales. Soon we will no longer be talking about integrating channels, but thinking in a channel-independent way. Then we will focus on what the consumer wants – because the only thing that matters is how the consumer behaves.’

‘Blockchain makes the market even more transparent’

Looking a little further ahead, what does e-commerce need to consider?

‘Blockchain technology is making the market even more transparent. E-commerce has already made a lot transparent for customers. For example, they can very easily compare offers, which puts enormous pressure on prices. Blockchain is going to bring much more transparency. That’s because you can record and view the source and route of a particular product without error. Where is it coming from?’

Who was involved in the transport? That insight leads to reliability. Think of food safety, which is certainly already a hot topic in Asia. As a consumer you may not need to know everything, but thanks to blockchain you can.’

‘Voice commerce is going to play a very big role’

In short, the consumer is gaining more and more direct influence.

‘Yes, as well. But consumers also allow themselves to be guided by voice commerce, for example. Think of Lexa, Siri or Google Home.

These machines are increasingly starting to talk in a way that appeals to consumers. This way they can even influence consumer behaviour. The commercial opportunities are enormous, precisely because you’re at the very beginning of the customer journey. You’re in the place where the decision is made: in the car, in the living room, on the phone. It all seems a long way off, but these kinds of developments can suddenly go very fast. People are already learning to talk with home automation, and in a few years’ time it will be quite normal to converse with robots – and listen to them. “Hi Siri, which jeans do you recommend?” Whoever masters voice commerce can then guide the consumer.’ ■





Want to know more about innovations in e-commerce and data-driven logistics?

Go to postnl.nl/succesopbestelling.

