

Panel builder Wepan refuses to compromise on quality

Company:
Wepan

Application:
Panel building

Omron products:
Automation Systems, Motion & Drives, Sensing, Safety, Control & switching components

Gert van Wensen, director of Wepan in De Lier, is an idiosyncratic business man with a very outspoken opinion on the running of a company and how to deal with employees and clients. As a fitter and panel builder, he knows that flexibility and speed are important for many clients, but he refuses to compromise on quality. That's one of the reasons why he has been working with Omron for more than twenty years. "We have never had problems with the PLCs or other components."

Wepan, from De Lier in the south of Holland, is a medium-sized business employing eighteen personnel, involved in electrotechnical installation and panel building. Although Wepan is also active in commercial construction and industrial automation, refrigeration and ventilation equipment represents about sixty percent of their turnover. For example, Wepan is active in the construction and installation of large refrigeration and freezer stores in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany. Apart from panel building, Wepan is also involved in design, engineering, installation and maintenance. Wepan has special equipment and machines for developing and building control and operating panels, power and light installations up to 1600A, and for testing them according to EC machinery directives.



Panel building as a profession

"I regard panel building as a profession", explains Van Wensen. "It's not just about attaching components to a rail or laying cables. We are given a drawing, and we take an empty base plate with the intention of converting it into a high-quality product. That means we only use quality products and spend a lot of time on details such as the lettering of the components in a switch box cabinet. Although we build CO2 boxes in series for one particular client, most of the panels are bespoke, even though the principle of a refrigeration system is the same everywhere. Our strengths are flexibility, technical know-how and staff commitment. We are regularly faced with rush jobs or technical problems that our competitors can't handle. We always deliver, even if we have to work through the night. The nice thing is that we then almost always get follow-up jobs as a result."

Suppliers

Unsurprisingly, Van Wensen sets high standards for his

Technical knowledge

suppliers. He has been working with Omron for years and as the main buyer he now has direct contact with the company. "That's very important to me", he emphasises. "Not only because of the delivery times, but mainly because of the technical knowledge that the distributors don't always have. Sometimes we have major challenges with complex controls. The supplier must also be able to immediately offer us an alternative, if a particular component is not in stock when we are doing a rush job."

Top quality

"With hand on heart, I can guarantee that all the panels and boxes that leave our company are of top quality", says Van Wensen. "That means we look critically at the specifications and make strict demands as regards the components. Obviously, that comes at a price. I think it's a shame that some clients and panel builders choose B products at the lowest price. I don't think you should take that risk. It's obvious what the consequences are of a short circuit or power failure for a refrigeration cell containing perishable products, if, for example, the cables overheat in a switch box. Panel builders and their clients must also realise that a top product can drastically reduce energy costs. That is going to play an important role in the future. We are already building systems fitted with dozens of network analysers to monitor and flexibly regulate energy consumption. Automation and mechanisation will also continue to develop, and more and more technology will be incorporated in systems. Strict standards are needed as regards the reliability of installations. That sort of complex technology requires specialist knowledge, which you will only find among professional panel builders."

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