

**Customer
Case**



Bekaert works with a team of Cheops IT experts for crucial support

Since the steel wire specialist Bekaert was founded in 1880, it has grown into an innovator with activities in a wide range of sectors and 80 factories worldwide. Many of its services are centralised, but when it came to providing IT support for its six sites in Belgium, Bekaert called in Cheops' Professional Services experts.



"If it weren't for Cheops, we wouldn't have stability in our IT support department for our Belgian branches," says Koen Vereeken, Global IT Lead Technology Infrastructure at Bekaert.

Bekaert has organised its IT infrastructure & digital workplace services on three levels: a global team of solution architects and engineers who work together remotely from international locations, several regional IT managers, and a local team supporting the business.

That team is physically present to perform a wide range of IT tasks for each branch. Apart from resolving actual IT problems for end users and supporting manufacturing, the team also conducts tasks such as installing new software and devices, replacing switches and coordinating or escalating complex issues when necessary.

Digitisation from back end to production

"For years, we didn't need this level of IT support at Bekaert," Koen Vereeken explains, "as our processes weren't very digitised. But over the past seven years, we have been increasingly automating and digitising. For example, we're now working on IoT projects and record a lot more data, which we can analyse in applications such as Microsoft Power BI. That enables us to plan the maintenance of the machines better, for example, and optimise use of the production machines."

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Digitisation is not restricted to the back end. "Our factory floor is fully digitised and connected as well. For instance, we use all kinds of connected devices, including handheld scanners, tablets, label printers and displays," Koen Vereeken continues. "That means we need more IT support, because our production has become dependent on IT. If there is a problem with the network, that has significant consequences for our operations. As such, the support provided by Cheops is critical to our organization."

IT support is indispensable

Bekaert is also committed to automation to increase efficiency. Among other things, this has involved directly configuring PCs on the vendor production line, and automating service requests in its IT Support Ticket tool. Nevertheless, IT support remains indispensable. Ongoing digitisation in Bekaert's departments has led to an increased need for IT support. With our current staffing, that wasn't feasible. We had no IT partner who could scale up its IT support quickly.

An IT support partner close to home

It was clear that an external partner for IT support had to be a nearby company. The firm decided on Cheops. "Like our Belgian factories, Cheops is based in Flanders and Brussels, which makes collaboration much easier," he explains. "It's a perfect match that has given us enormous peace of mind. Problems get dealt with and there are fewer escalations, leaving Global IT free to focus more on projects with added value for the business."

Communication with Global IT

Cheops Professional Services Experts now provide support on the factory floor. Their tasks can vary immensely, and the service experts constantly need to make the right decisions in order to tackle problems efficiently. Koen Vereeken:

“Imagine a production worker reports that a production machine has stopped working. Then the Cheops expert on site has to find the cause. That means being able to switch between different levels of technology. The cause of the problem may lie with the application, the network or only with the device. It’s a question of the IT person being able to analyse a situation quickly, find solutions, prioritise problems and possibly pass them on to Global IT. The IT staff are also Global IT’s ‘hands and eyes’ in a literal sense. For example, Global IT can ask them to quickly check something on site.”

A stable partnership

The partnership with Cheops is now running very smoothly, and it is certainly the intention to turn it into a long-term collaboration. This stability is crucial for Bekaert, because it can easily take six months for IT staff to familiarise themselves with the factory environment. It is also essential for the specialists to be bilingual, using English to work with Global IT and Dutch on the factory floor.

“Besides being bilingual, the Cheops specialists who support us are very versatile,” says Koen Vereeken. “They have wide-ranging IT knowledge and they’re flexible. In addition, they combine their attention to the end user with great interaction with our Global IT organisation. That variation also makes the job interesting for them. There is currently a team for six sites, so they spend half a day at a time on each site. We have found that our employees appreciate their approachability.”

Ongoing training

Cheops’ System Engineers have now become an integral part of the Bekaert team, and the Cheops Academy ensures their knowledge always stays up to date. If necessary, Cheops can also provide substitutes at short notice. We don’t always have the luxury of six months to find a suitable employee,” Koen Vereeken explains. “For Cheops, it only takes a few days or weeks. If we need extra help with specific projects now and then, Cheops is also flexible about providing extended support. And if we were to open a new site, we would be able to use Cheops to bring in the IT specialists we need. So our collaboration may become even more intensive or strategic in the future.”



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The Cheops solution

Benefits of the Cheops solution

- Efficient monitoring of IT issues
- Greater focus on strategic business objectives
- Higher productivity
- Business continuity
- Flexible and fast access to the right expertise
- Continuous training of the team
- Backup if required

About Bekaert

Bekaert aims to be the partner that shapes the way we live and move: always safe, smart and sustainable. As a global market and technology leader in steel wire transformation and coating technologies, Bekaert also applies its expertise to fields other than steel. In this way, the multinational produces new solutions with innovative materials and services. Bekaert was founded in 1880 and is headquartered in West Flanders. It employs approximately 27,000 people in its various branches around the world.

www.bekaert.com



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