

 BRICOFLOR



Research Justification BRICOFLOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research justification is focused on the Dutch department of BRICOFLOOR. The company is very international oriented and there is great potential for the Dutch department. Although there are sales and the department are running, the department is not yet the most promising department in the business. Increasing the sales for the Dutch department, focused on the vinyl flooring is thus a must. To be able to identify the problem and elaborate the research, the main research question and sub-questions were defined;

Main research question: How to improve sales for the Dutch department focused on the vinyl flooring?

Sub-question 1: How well equipped is the current Dutch department to improve the strategy?

Sub-question 2: What is the current level of communication and motivation in the company?

Sub-question 3: How can the Dutch department adopt the strategy from other offices, as Germany and France, which are already working at full capacity?

Sub-question 4: To what degree should online marketing improve in order to achieve the goal?

Sub-question 5: How important is a good customer service for the Dutch market to achieve a higher satisfaction rate and receive more sales?

To provide the research with valid and reliable information, literature research and field research were needed. For the literature research, internet sources such as scientific articles were used, in order to make the results valid. These sources can be found in the references. Interviews were also conducted with 6 full-time employees of the company. These interviews were very useful as it showed the right connection with the literature research and clearly showed the problem, the research justification was referring to. All the interviews were audio-recorded. Therefore, the interviews could be transcribed, so every sentence was used exactly how the employee said it.

After analysing the research, it was possible to describe where the Dutch department falls short and how sales could be increased. The focus points that needed attention were spread across different elements of the Dutch department. The most important subjects that are related to sales for BRICOFLOOR are manpower, online marketing, customer service and communication. Moreover, to give an example of how the Dutch department could improve, the strategies of the biggest departments of the company were analysed. As follows, six recommendations were set up for BRICOFLOOR;

Recommendation 1: Expand the manpower for the Dutch department

Recommendation 2: Optimize the web shop with SEO and online marketing

Recommendation 3: Improve the communication and motivation of the company

Recommendation 4: Create more formal and informal meetings for the business

Recommendation 5: Provide new employees with a guide before starting

Recommendation 6: Give the customer service of the Dutch department priority

Further in the research justification is explained at what priority the recommendations are advised to be implemented. For some of the recommendations, a budget is advised, which makes it more difficult to implement it directly.

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1. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

COMPANY DESCRIPTION

BRICOFLOOR is a German online retailer company, founded by Dirck Scharpenack. The company is part of the Furniture and Home Furnishing Merchant Wholesalers Industry. (DNB, 2019) The head office is located in Wuppertal, Nordrhein-Westfalen. The company is an online shop for flooring, ceiling and wallpaper and has managed to become one of Europe's leading retailers in this sector. Apart from the fact that the company is an online retailer, there is a showroom, located in Wuppertal, where customers can see the products in real life, before buying them.

Back in 2006, BRICOFLOOR was one of the first companies that recognized the opportunity of online sales. Moreover, BRICOFLOOR offers the best price guarantee and first-class service, with a customized offer and sample service. (BRICOFLOOR, 2020) With these services and strategy the company managed his competitive advantage in this online industry. In 2008 the company seized the opportunity to expand, because it was easy to see that successful internet sales do not stop at national borders. Therefore, BRICOFLOOR is, apart from Germany, active in 12 countries. These countries are France, England, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Portugal, Finland, and the Netherlands. All these countries have their own office with native speaking employees and interns.

Currently, there are working approximately 35 employees at BRICOFLOOR. This includes full- and part-time employees, from which there are around 10 in apprenticeship and 2 students who do dual studies. Furthermore, there are 15 students (interns) or mini jobs and the company works with 5 freelancers that work from their home country, for example Finland and Sweden, to produce some content for the website. At the head office in Wuppertal, there are offices for all the countries, which have their own manager, customer service, social media, and sales department. BRICOFLOOR is an international oriented company, which means that the company receives several orders every day from all over Europe. This results in having a yearly revenue of 4,98 Million Euros approximately. Nevertheless, the company is a very privately-owned company, based in Germany, which means that the financial information is only legally available in Germany.

Concerning sustainability, BRICOFLOOR contributes where possible, as they have low bargaining power to do more. The products on the website are mostly sustainable, made of environmentally friendly, natural and sometimes even recycled materials. Especially the brands Forbo and Cortex, selling linoleum flooring and cork flooring, pursuing sustainability. Despite that, BRICOFLOOR consumes little waste because the orders that arrive at the warehouse are already fully packaged, coming from the manufacturer. So, no extra plastic or cardboard is needed.

PROBLEM ANALYSES

BRICOFLOR is operating in several European countries, one of these departments is the Netherlands. For companies in Europe, the Netherlands can be a very attractive country to do business in. Considering, a lot of people can speak English and the distances between all the cities in the Netherlands are easy to travel. Also, there are good chances for the internet business, it is very easy to set up a business and most importantly the Dutch GDP per capita is one of the highest in the world. (Fransman, 2020) It would be a missed opportunity if an international company is not doing business in the Netherlands.

Currently, BRICOFLOR already has a marketplace in the Netherlands, but it is far from perfect at this stage. This is visible since there are only a few employees working for the Dutch office, mainly interns. As a result, taking care of the customer service is hard, there is no time for improving the Dutch website and the online marketing, in order to gain more sales. If these elements will not be improved within a short time, the company will lose Dutch clients. Therefore, the company needs to take big steps to optimize sales. Otherwise, BRICOFLOR will recognize significant declines in sales due to an uncomplete website and a lack of good communication between the company and clients.

Good customer service is crucial for a company focused on Dutch clients. Clients always have very specific questions and expect to receive a reply shortly after they send the email. This will be further explained in the results. After analysing, the business recognized a big opportunity for the Netherlands, regarding the sales for vinyl floors and they also recognized the space for improvement. To explain, "vinyl flooring is a product composed of several layers of different materials sandwiched together to form a highly durable, practical and affordable floor covering" (Tarkett, 2020). This flooring is popular as "it is low-maintenance, water-resistant, cost-effective and long-lasting" (Lefton, 2020). This long-lasting characteristic also makes the floor sustainable.

So, before BRICOFLOR can optimize the sales, the Dutch department should be at full capacity and there is no room for failures or gaps. In order to execute this, detailed research had to be accomplished during a 5-months period. This was focused on Search Engine Optimization, optimizing online marketing, including social media, and improve customer service. By conducting interviews, information gaps could be filled in and a conclusion could be realised. Using this approach made the research very reliable and valid, which is crucial for a substantiating research.

INFORMATION GAPS

To identify what resources BRICOFLOR needed to improve the sales for the Dutch department, several information gaps had to be filled. The aim was to find out what the current situation of the Dutch department was and what other resources were needed for the Dutch department, focused on the vinyl flooring, to improve the sales. To provide the research with information that was detailed enough and could cover the entire strategy, five specific information gaps were introduced. These 5 information gaps cover all the different directions the sales of the Dutch department are related to. These information gaps are; *Information gap 1*. How well equipped is the current Dutch department to improve the strategy? *Information gap 2*. To what extent is the Dutch department already using every tool in terms of communication and motivation for what the company believes they can reach the strategy? *Information gap 3*. How can the Dutch department adopt the strategy from other offices, as Germany and France, which are already working at full capacity? *Information gap 4*. To what degree should the online marketing be improved in order to reach the goal? *Information gap 5*. How important is a good customer service for the Dutch market to achieve a higher satisfaction rate and receive more sales?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Information gap 1

- How many people are currently working for the Dutch office?
- Is there potential enough for the department to hire more employees?
- How can the Dutch department become an even more interesting department for the company?

Information gap 2

- How is communication dealt with in the company?
- What is the level of motivation and stimulation in the company?

Information gap 3

- What is the number of employees working for the two biggest offices?
- What are their advantages because of more manpower?
- Are they the right example or do they need improvement as well?

Information gap 4

- What are the difficulties for the online marketing currently?
- What resources are needed to improve the online marketing?
- What is involved in the online marketing strategy?

Information gap 5

- Why is customer service for Dutch people important?
- What are the biggest frustrations of customers of BRICOFLOR currently?
- Is giving priority for the customer service of the Dutch department important?

THE OBJECTIVE

In order to identify the project aim of the research, the SMART method was used. This made the goal, including the information gaps, **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant** and **time-bound**.

The project aim of the research for BRICOFLOOR was to see how the Dutch department, focused on the vinyl flooring, can be improved. The Netherlands is a perfect country for sales for the company and vinyl flooring is a bestseller for the Dutch department. Here will be further elaborated on in the results, chapter 3.1. In a period of 5 months, the company could be observed to be able to fill in the information gaps. By completing the information gaps, it gave a good overview of the current performance of the company and what elements the Dutch department needs to improve so the goals can be reached. To fill in and complete the information successfully, field research and literature research were based on interviews conducted with 6 fixed employees of BRICOFLOOR. The interviewees are all experts of their own department and connected to the Dutch department. Because of this developed research, the conclusion was clear and visible and is a solid base for the company to see the department from another point of view. The goal is also for the company to admit that more attention and concentration can improve the department significantly. This connects to the last aim as well, to provide the company with recommendations. These contains measures that can answer the information gaps and therefore reach the goal of improving the sales for the Dutch department, focused on the vinyl flooring. These recommendations can then be implemented in the company in the coming months, or years, depending on the resources and budget advised.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

GENERAL APPROACH

Before the information gaps can be defined it has to be stated that the research developed for BRICOFLORE was focused on interviews with the employees as they are the experts of their position. At BRICOFLORE, a small business, there are working around 35 employees. Of these employees, there are approximately 10 full-time employees. As a result, the research was only focused on 6 full-time employees, including the founder of BRICOFLORE. More interviews would not have made the research any more valid or complete. Another approach, such as talking to clients was considered, but since the reviews showed in appendix 2 already gave a clear idea of the opinion of the clients, a survey would not have made the research any more substantive. Also, the research was aimed to help the department of BRICOFLORE, which means that the problem is within the company and the company must encourage each other to work on this problem. Not only were experts outside the company not available, but they will also not have been able to contribute properly to the research. Next to that, internet sources and scientific articles were valid enough to give the company outsourced information. These sources can be found in the reference list.

The interviews were all taken at the head office in Wuppertal. For the field research, the qualitative research method has been used for all the semi-structured interviews, this means that “the research is expressed in words” (Streefkerk, 2019). This was the best method to get the most information during the interviews. Also, the interview questions asked can be found in the appendix 3, sorted by information gap. All interviews were audio-recorded, this is an excellent way to gather all the information a person has said and not miss out on any word. In addition, every interview could be transcribed.

Reliability refers to “how often the method measures data with consistency, under the same conditions” and validity refers to “the degree of accurately where the method measures data what it was intended to measure” (Middleton, 2019). Therefore, the approach for the desk research and field research can be considered as valid and reliable.

To have an arranged overview of the research data that was determined during the process, every information gap is explained separately and provided with the necessary information.

INFORMATION GAP 1: HOW WELL EQUIPPED IS THE CURRENT DUTCH DEPARTMENT TO IMPROVE THE STRATEGY?

After completing the desk research, the information gap could be further provided with field research. This was enough for the research to outline the biggest problem for BRICOFLORE currently, and to retrieve how to organize the company in the best way possible. The problem could be identified, related to the information gap, pointing to the manpower and time available, at present. For the field research, the Dutch manager was the key interviewee in this process, but also the founder of BRICOFLORE as well as the other interviewees made their valid contribution to the information gap.

INFORMATION GAP 2: WHAT IS THE CURRENT LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND MOTIVATION IN THE COMPANY?

Furthermore, desk and field research has been conducted to fill in the information gap 2. This approach was sufficient for the information gap to analyse where the lack of the company was coming from and whenever there was a need to improve BRICOFLORE to an ideal working place concerning communication

and motivation. the process of comparing the answers from all interviewees was considerably easy and made the information gap valid. Since this information gap was also focused on the whole team, all interviewees made their contributions to fill in the research gap.

INFORMATION GAP 3: HOW CAN THE DUTCH DEPARTMENT ADOPT THE STRATEGY FROM OTHER OFFICES, AS GERMANY AND FRANCE, WHICH ARE ALREADY WORKING AT FULL CAPACITY?

For this third information gap, only field research was provided. Because the information gap was too specific and focused on the current behaviour of the company, desk research would not have made the information gap any more integrated. After analysing the research, it became clear how the departments are performing, and to what degree the Dutch department can copy the strategy. The process was very interesting since both managers of the French and German offices were interviewed, as well as the founder of BRICOFLORE. This made the result very detailed and made a perfect contribution to the answer needed for the information gap.

INFORMATION GAP 4: TO WHAT DEGREE SHOULD ONLINE MARKETING BE IMPROVED IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL?

The approach for this information gap was to collect literature and field research. By combining these results, the problem was defined concerning the online marketing of the company. A conclusion could be determined what changes were necessary to improve the sales for the Dutch department concerning the online marketing. To be able to answer the information gap properly, the head of performance marketing, the digital manager, and the founder of BRICOFLORE were the most important persons to answer the questions. But the other interviewees contributed to the field research as well.

INFORMATION GAP 5: HOW IMPORTANT IS A GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR THE DUTCH MARKET TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER SATISFACTION RATE AND RECEIVE MORE SALES?

Lastly, for this information gap, only literature research was provided. This approach was still valid and reliable since the other information gaps already made clear that the importance for the company to improve this element was very high. Only desk research could provide the information gap with more details about what the customers of BRICOFLORE would need related to the customer service. The results were clear and easy to implement in the research. Moreover, the problem could already be defined in information gap 1, referring to the manpower. Therefore, this last information gap was more aimed to look at the perfect outcome for the customer service. Internet sources and reviews of the customers of BRICOFLORE, in appendix 2, were used for this desk research.

3. RESULTS

To identify the results of the five information gaps, all information gaps are explained separately. As desk and field research are used, citations have been used verbatim from the relevant source. This can be an internet source or a sentence from one of the interviews. The structure of these sentences has not been changed and they are used exactly as the expert stated.

3.1 HOW WELL EQUIPPED IS THE CURRENT DUTCH DEPARTMENT TO IMPROVE THE STRATEGY?

That the company had some difficulties with taking care of the Dutch department was visible and clear from the beginning. Since BRICOFLOR is an online shop, the most important factor for the company, is the website. "Having a website is an opportunity to make a great first impression and give people comfort that you're a real business". (Kaplan, 2020) But having a website is not the key to success. This is the problem that the Dutch department of BRICOFLOR was facing. The site is there and there are sales, but the optimisation is missing. "Website optimization is the bedrock of building a strong online performance" (Proprofs, 2020) This can bring your business "more conversion rates" (Proprofs, 2020) and thus more sales. To accomplish this, optimization based on Search Engine Optimisation, also SEO, website performance and conversion rate optimization needed to be executed. This will be further explained in information gap 4, online marketing.

To further elaborate the research, the conducted interviews are listed. According to Raquel Patricio (Dutch manager), vinyl flooring is the bestseller on the Dutch website. It is even "one of the most promising countries" in the company (Appendix 4, citation 3). Also, Emanuele Pinci, the Italian manager, agreed that "the Dutch market is really interesting" (Appendix 5, citation 3). As the potential is there, optimising the department is the key to success, because the site is facing a lot of problems. Nevertheless, it was remarkable that despite "all the problems that you can see on the site" (Appendix 5, citation 4), there are already a lot of sales. The potential can be even more supported due to "the money the Dutch people have and their wish to buy online" (Appendix 9, citation 2). This means that if the website is optimized BRICOFLOR can be very attractive for these customers, according to Raimund Scharpenack, founder of BRICOFLOR in 2006. He elaborated further that "the Dutch market is very comparable to the German market, so it is near for us to deliver, and the products are more or less the same" (Appendix 9, citation 1). This makes the process of implementing the strategy notably easier. As a result, the Dutch department will be able to "grow the brand awareness" (Appendix 6, citation 6), which is also an intensively important factor to increase sales for the department, according to Iva Mijatovic, the Digital marketing manager.

To optimize the website, the team of BRICOFLOR needs time and manpower to accomplish this goal. Time management can increase the work productivity, by "understanding the work priorities", and it even "creates happy teams". (Irimia, 2019) With the knowledge of how much time is needed for performing the tasks, it is even more important to have a reasonable amount of manpower in the company, since "manpower is proportional to productivity". As "the more people available to work, the faster the projects can be accomplished." (Contributor, 2020) In comparison, "the lack of productivity reduces profit and affects your reputation." (resource, 2017)

The company is presently using the potential with interns to run the Dutch department, so "the amount of improvement someone can do on the site is limited" (Appendix 5, citation 2). Due to interns leaving every six months and leaving gaps, where in between no Dutch employee can take over the tasks. Correspondingly, nobody "had enough time to work on their tasks properly" (Appendix 6, citation 1)

stated by Iva Mijatovic. As also other offices have to take over the Dutch department now and then. According to Raimund Scharpenack this problem occurred since “it is very difficult to get good manpower here in Wuppertal for the Netherlands” (Appendix 9, citation 3). Despite that, he also commented that “the market is interesting enough for us to hire at least one or two permanent employees” (Appendix 9, citation 4). When this aim can be reached, these Dutch full-time employees “could be solving those issues” (Appendix 4, citation 1). Optimising the site and having more time to do it properly, could eventually lead to increased sales.

3.2 WHAT IS THE CURRENT LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND MOTIVATION IN THE COMPANY?

To run a company, employees need to communicate with each other. Communication is crucial in BRICOFLORE as well, considering it can “boost creativity and innovation, encourage feedback and boost employee morale”. (Solis, 2020) With good communication there comes more motivation for your employees, “it strengthens relationships and ensures everyone is on the same page”. This results in “a positive working environment and improves employee motivation and productivity.” (Sodexoengage, 2020) Another part that could be relevant for BRICOFLORE is the fact that the employees need a certain level of training, to perform well. Focused on knowing the process of ordering, how to pick up the phone and write professional e-mails. “Training will improve productivity and performance” (O'Neill, 2020), clearly two factors that BRICOFLORE is short of currently. Moreover, training can help employees “to show that they are valued and create a supportive environment to work in.” (Mallee, 2018).

Further conducted interviews showed that BRICOFLORE is facing the problem with manpower and thus time. The employees are sensing that they do not have “enough time to spend communicating” (Appendix 4, citation 2), as they “also have to do a lot of other things” (Appendix 6, citation 5). As a result, the team recognized that “with the time bad communication means bad work” (Appendix 8, citation 5) according to Emilie Rol, French manager. Creating a well-functioning communication process for BRICOFLORE is needed to create an engaged team with employees that are willing to fulfil their tasks. Furthermore, it will mean that “organizing it a bit more can result in performing better” (Appendix 6, citation 3). As well, an engaged team must be created since “communication is (...) the most important factor in the team.” (Appendix 8, citation 4). To fulfil this, it has to be understood that communication relates to the motivation of the employees. By organizing “small events (...) once per month (...) like a baking contest” (Appendix 8, citation 7), it can create a working environment where “everyone can be more part of the team and happier (...) to come to work” (Appendix 8, citation 8) explained by Emilie Rol.

Another difficulty arising from the current communication level at BRICOFLORE is when an intern currently enters the company. They are “just bullied into it” (Appendix 7, citation 4) according to Raquel Patricio, the German manager. An example is that the interns are often trying to promise things to customers which are not correct, only to stop them shouting on the phone. And without a structure given, they will start posting on social media accounts or improving the site, with their own knowledge, and that is wrong. Therefore, “the intern should have a guide” (Appendix 6, citation 4) and “have a least one full-time person, or manager, for every department, to supervise the interns because that is normal at the beginning, since they do not know everything” (Appendix 8, citation 1). Especially in the Dutch office this problem is noticeable, as a lot of different people are responsible for the department, according to Raimund Scharpenack. When the level of communication can be improved, the interns will be “ready to pick up the phone” (Appendix 7, citation 5) and start their internship correctly.

At present, there are also a lot of misunderstandings causing different problems in the company. Examples are, "the process of ordering went wrong" because of no communication (Appendix 7, citation 6). But also "with the product management department, (...) since sometimes they put products online and we are not aware of that" (Appendix 8, citation 6). Lastly, since there is not a great connection between the different departments it is sometimes hard to understand for the employees why someone is taking so long for a task, although they are not aware of what other tasks the employee might have. And therefore communication "should really be the main thing" (Appendix 8, citation 9).

3.3 HOW CAN THE DUTCH DEPARTMENT ADOPT THE STRATEGY FROM OTHER OFFICES, AS GERMANY AND FRANCE, WHICH ARE ALREADY WORKING AT FULL CAPACITY?

Currently the biggest and most important departments of BRICOFLOR are "Germany and France" (Appendix 4, citation 4). Both departments started considerably early back in 2006 and 2008. As for Germany the competitive advantage is obviously there because the company is based in Germany and knows most about the market, according to Raimund Scharpenack. For the French department it is because they were the first online shop in France at that time. Moreover, the company started a local company in France as well, Avenue du Sol. Having this competitive advantage results in a "good relationship with the manufacturers based in Germany" (Appendix 9, citation 4). Just as it is for the French department has therefore a great connection with the manufacturers, according to Emilie Rol, the French manager. Referring to Raimund Scharpenack this is a difficult case for the Netherlands, since "we are as BRICOFLOR GmbH located in Wuppertal, Germany" (Appendix 9, citation 5) and thus not a local supplier. That is why the Dutch department has to work harder to get the same results.

For the German office there are currently working around 15 employees. For the French office this is 10, approximately. Which means that there are a lot of people working in these departments. This makes it easier to; really taking care of the customer and solve all the problems by the end of each day, according to Emilie Rol. Moreover, there can be worked a lot on Google AdWords, social media and the website optimisation.

Despite that it seems like these departments are running smoothly, it is not totally true. According to Raquel Patricio, the German manager, the problem for the German office is that 15 employees seem like enough, but it is not organised. Since "none of the employees is here five days a week" (appendix 7, citation 1). She explained as well that the German team not only has to take care of the German office, but other small offices as well. This makes "the team really demotivated" (Appendix 7, citation 3). Therefore, she stated that this is "not the best environment to work in" (Appendix 7, citation 2).

For the French office, Emilie Rol interpreted that the biggest issue currently is that they would "at least need two more full-time employees, because there are so many tasks to do" (Appendix 8, citation 2). There is still not enough time to get the work done properly and in time. This means that for the French office to "grow and grow efficiently" (appendix 8, citation 3) they also need improvement, but not as much as the Dutch department.

3.4 TO WHAT DEGREE SHOULD ONLINE MARKETING BE IMPROVED IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL?

Every online business needs an online marketing strategy, because “it connects a business with its customers when they are online on Google through SEO & PPC and on social media” (Ballantine, 2018). This is why also BRICOFLORE needs a well performing online marketing strategy. Digital marketing is “vital for your business and brand awareness” (Alexander, 2020) Furthermore, “it helps reach a larger audience than you could through traditional methods and target the prospects who are most likely to buy your product or service. There are a lot of different types of digital marketing SEO, content marketing, social media marketing, Pay Per Click, Email marketing, Online Public Relations, and sponsored content. Of these, SEO could be considered as the most important element, since “there are only 10 spots on a Google search page” (Metric marketing, 2021) and you need to be visible on these spots to get traffic. Optimizing the SEO can help your business in 4 different ways; “How search engines understand your pages”, “each page can rank for different keywords”, “keywords help visitors find what they want” and “unique title tags and meta descriptions can improve click-through rates”. (WebFX, 2019) These elements are easy to fix within the business itself as “SEO is simply not that hard as people say it is, and you absolutely do not need to hire a professional” (Allred, 2016) to get the job done.

Thus, BRICOFLORE needs an optimised SEO website, and it can even be done by personnel in the team. But regarding the conducted interviews, this is not feasible currently since “the structure is all over the place” (Appendix 5, citation 5). This was caused, since first of all “in the past (...) interns were not trained enough” (Appendix 9, citation 5) and second of all “the German site was used and translated in every other language” (Appendix 5, citation 1). As a result, Google recognizes this and automatically puts the site lower on the Google ranking. As the founder of BRICOFLORE, Raimund Scharpenack mentioned, is the SEO optimisation for the Dutch department currently the highest priority. Not only because it is the biggest issue currently, but also because this will improve the organic ranking and thus increase the sales.

Another direction of digital marketing is social media marketing. This “can help engaging with your customers and find out what people are saying about your business”. It can be used for “advertising, promotional giveaways and mobile applications” (business.gov.au, 2022). In addition, social media marketing “generates brand awareness” and is “cost-effective”, (Collier, 2022) which makes it affordable for companies “to reach more people, increase the audience and grow the business” (Collier, 2022).

In order to improve the social media performance of the company, “the task is to create a general social media plan” (Appendix 9, citation 7). This will be focused on “Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok” (Appendix 6, citation 2). The social media plan should also solve the problem related to the gaps when interns leave, so this does not affect the social media accounts. Iva Mijatovic, responsible person of the social media plan, further explained that currently the social media of all the countries in the company is done organically, but it would make more sense to invest in the social media. Unfortunately, the team did not get approved to put money in the plan, thereby the traffic retrieved from the social media accounts is limited. Currently, the social media account for the Netherlands is even fully out of the picture, due to technical problems and since the social media plan has no priority for the company, it will take a while before these accounts will be up in the air again. Therefore, it is extremely hard for the Dutch department to grow if they only can do it organically.

Next to taking care of your social media accounts, there is backlinking. This “improves your credibility because you are citing sources that are relevant to your area of expertise” (Metric marketing, 2021).

Despite that, “Backlinking can absolutely enhance your SEO, but it should be done strategically and carefully, because plagiarism is taken very seriously.” (Metric marketing, 2021) After analysing it was visible that the Dutch department was working very well with backlinking. Although there were only a few blogs published with the backlinks. But in comparison with Germany, the Dutch account had a significantly better percentage of 1,212.00% positive, in relation to -92.98% negative for the German account, as you can see in appendix 1.

Raimund Scharpenack further elaborated on this backlinking strategy that it can attract long tail keywords and measures what customers are searching for online. Moreover, he mentioned that posting 3 to 4 articles per month is very helpful as “an entrance to our web shop at the end” (Appendix 9, citation 6). The maximum budget for one article is 300 euros and this is now the strategy for the whole company. For now, the analysis showed that it has been successful, but it has to be analysed even further after a while. Only then, it can be concluded that putting money into the online marketing is useful.

3.5 HOW IMPORTANT IS A GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR THE DUTCH MARKET TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER SATISFACTION RATE AND ACHIEVE MORE SALES?

Customer service is crucial for BRICOFLOOR, because “it retains customers and extracts more value from them.” (Amaresan, 2021) It can help your business, since “it will help you acquire new customers, free of charge, by convincing prospects to interact with your brand.” (Amaresan, 2021) The customer service for BRICOFLOOR is focused on Dutch clients. Thus, it is important to know what characteristics the Dutch clients have in order to create a smooth process of helping the customer, in the best way possible. First of all, “Dutch customers are big fans of discounts and special offers” (Licheva, 2021) Moreover, “The Dutch are very intelligent and practical buyers, they will ask you about certain products, their benefits compared to the other items, and start calculating which option is more favourable” (Licheva, 2021). This is also the case for BRICOFLOOR. The clients are very detailed with their questions, and they are always interested in the individual offer.

Another important element for the customer service at BRICOFLOOR is that currently there are only interns working for the Dutch department that will pick up the phone. These interns are in the company for only a short period, and there is always a gap between current interns and new interns. As a result, the customer service is switched to the German department in those periods. This means that the Dutch client has to ask the question in English. “Most of the time this is no problem, unfortunately, this isn’t the case in all of the Netherlands.” (Licheva, 2021) Looking at the reviews from Dutch clients for BRICOFLOOR, in appendix 2, the bad reviews were mostly rated with 1-3 stars. The reviews were about the fact that they couldn’t speak to a Dutch employee or that their question could not be answered due to the language barrier. Compared with the good reviews, these were mostly higher than 4 stars. And these reviews were given in periods that a Dutch intern was present.

Currently the review rate for BRICOFLOOR is 9.1. This is achieved with 2 interns working for the department, but this has been different. In the periods that there was no customer service, which is the case 2 times a year, mostly, and this can last for over one month, the review rate was 4.8. The previous intern managed to improve the review rate to a 7.6 and satisfied the clients, but he was alone. This shows that already one person extra can increase the review rate significantly.

4. CONCLUSION

The Dutch department of BRICOFLOOR can be considered as the third best country of the company, but still there is even more potential to win for the department. To improve the sales for the Dutch department focused on the vinyl flooring of BRICOFLOOR, a detailed analysis focused on the manpower of the department, the communication, the online marketing, the customer service and the strategy of bigger departments has been determined. The goal is aimed on defining gaps in the company that keeps the department from growing efficiently. Moreover, the goal is to create a pleasant work environment for the employees of BRICOFLOOR so the business can grow further internationally.

According to the research that has been carried out it shows that the Netherlands is a very interesting country for BRICOFLOOR. Especially since PVC products are very popular in the country and vinyl flooring is therefore the bestseller for BRICOFLOOR on the Dutch website. There is a lot of potential to get from this department. Improving the web shop is the most urgent reason why the Dutch department is still not performing at full potential. To reach this result SEO optimisation and more time available is needed. Unfortunately, the Dutch department is mostly run by interns, who will leave after every 6 months. This means that there is limited time and resources to improve the SEO. In addition, it is tiresome for the other employees who constantly have to take over the department when there is no staff anymore. The conclusion is that the department lacks on manpower and the help of a permanent employee can support the department significantly. Next to that, it can improve the competitive advantage for the company since more time is available to optimize the site with more available manpower.

While analysing the performance of the company in general, it was obvious that there is a considerable large lack of communication in the business. Not only in the Dutch department, but in the company as a whole. That this situation needs to change is also very clear for the employees of BRICOFLOOR, since a good communication can lead to efficient workflows and more time for other important tasks. Moreover, it improves the performance of the company, as misunderstandings can be prevented, and a pleasant work environment can be created. This is very important, since sometimes it is hard for people to understand what the colleagues are doing, and this creates misunderstandings. More contact between the employees during work can thus resolve this problem. On the other hand, miscommunications can also be very confusing and frustrating, which means that improving the communication will also lead to higher satisfaction of employees and make them more motivated. Motivation can also be improved by offering personal goals for the employees and create small events for the company so that everyone is happier to come to work. Eventually this will improve the working environment and therefore the performance of the business.

Research showed that by analysing the behaviour of the two biggest departments of BRICOFLOOR, it can be concluded that the Dutch department can adopt the strategy from these department. Due to having enough manpower to divide the work, there is space to take more care of the customer and solving issues right away. Additionally, working in a team where everyone is friends, and prioritizing teamwork, is the most important factor to have success for the department. Nevertheless, research showed that also these two departments have their difficulties as well and still need improvement. Originating from the fact that the German department struggled with demotivation and both departments still do not have enough capacity and time to complete the tasks correctly. Indicating that more manpower and thus more time is not only an issue in the Dutch department.

As already mentioned, SEO optimisation is the top priority for BRICOFLOOR to improve the web site. But further optimisation for the online marketing is as important. A solution to improve this is by keyword research and optimisation and creating AdWords campaigns. To make the campaigns successful, the conclusion is that keywords should be carefully connected to the correct landing pages.

The business already developed a social media plan, but this is only focused on organic search and advertisement. Currently, the social media accounts of the Dutch department are very inactive. This means that when the social media plan is created, the department should invest money in the social media advertisements as well, to attract traffic and views. As of now, the company is putting a lot of money in backlinking, to create long-tail keywords. But, since the budget is 300 euros for one article, this budget can be divided between the backlinking and social media advertisements. This will create a bigger audience, more traffic, and eventually more sales.

Enough and permanent manpower is the relevant factor for a well-functioning customer service, concluded after research. Currently, the company is run by interns, but this gives several gaps for the customer service. Sometimes for even a month or two, there is no native Dutch employee who can answer the phone or e-mails. When this gap disappears, the company will be more trustworthy for the customers and questions can be answered right away. Looking at the satisfaction rate giving by the customers, it can be concluded that the customers will be happier to buy from BRICOFLOR and more able to repeat the order. The most important change will be that interns and new employees should be trained correctly, before taking care of the customer so advice is professional and correct. Additionally, more manpower and a permanent one, can support BRICOFLOR by having enough time to assist the customer and provide them with relevant information.

In conclusion, the Dutch department of BRICOFLOR has extremely good potential to become a big department of the company, but to reach this, sales must improve. The research showed that by reaching the goal and improving the department, the steps should be to expand the manpower available for the Dutch department and optimize the site with SEO and a solid social media plan. Also improve the communication of the business and therefore the motivation of the employees, implement more formal and informal meetings in the company and welcome new employees with a training. Lastly, make the customer service a priority. As some of these recommendations cannot be accomplished in a short-time frame, the company should implement the strategy step by step and slowly improve the department to a successful element of BRICOFLOR. This step-by-step approach is further explained in the recommendations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned before, BRICOFLOR can implement six considerable important measures, to improve the sales of the Dutch department focused on the vinyl flooring of BRICOFLOR.

5.1 EXPAND THE MANPOWER FOR THE DUTCH DEPARTMENT

The first recommendation and therefore the most important one for BRICOFLOR is expanding the manpower for the Dutch department. By expanding the manpower with at least one or two more permanent employees, speaking native Dutch, the department is always available for the right customer service. Next to that, the tasks can be divided more equally and eventually, there will be more time left to optimize the web site of the Dutch department. Also taking care of the social media channels and come up with new advertisement ideas will be easier. When this recommendation will be reached, the web shop is optimized and therefore the sales for the Dutch department will increase.

5.2 OPTIMIZE THE WEB SHOP WITH SEO AND ONLINE MARKETING

Logically, the second recommendation is to implement SEO optimisation as a priority. Also optimizing the social media channels and Google AdWords campaigns will be part of this, in order to improve the sales for the department. This recommendation can be accomplished by creating the right keyword research for SEO optimisation. Because the organic ranking in Google will be improved and therefore more customers can find the Dutch web shop and buy the products. Additionally, the right keyword research can connect the right keywords to the correct landing pages so the AdWords campaigns will have more success and will cost less. Finishing the social media plan and start being more active on the channels would be another step. Next to that, the current backlinking strategy for blogs is good, but the budget for a collaboration, currently 1200 euros for four articles and a month of content, can be divided between the blogs and an amount for the social media advertisements. As a result, the views and traffic retrieved from the social media channels are not only organic but also paid, so eventually that number could be doubled. If the budget will be divided in half, there will be 600 euros available every month for social media campaigns, this will be a very good start. This recommendation can be powered by having more manpower available to perform the tasks. Another point is having sufficient budget available to perform the campaigns, advertisements and blog collaborations.

5.3 IMPROVE THE COMMUNICATION AND MOTIVATION OF THE COMPANY

As the research has shown the company BRICOFLOR, as a whole, lacks in communication. Therefore, the next recommendation would be to improve the communication and resources needed for that, in order to improve the performance of the company. Also, as communication relates to the contact people have with each other in the company and thus the teamwork, it is very important for BRICOFLOR to take steps into this direction. Because of poor communication, the team got demotivated and frustrated by the misunderstandings. This means that also communication reflects on the motivation of the business. For the company to perform well and increase the sales, motivation is a relevant factor for that. If BRICOFLOR implements this strategy, the work environment will improve and eventually the performance of the company.

5.4 CREATE MORE FORMAL AND INFORMAL MEETINGS FOR THE BUSINESS

The fourth recommendation is that BRICOFLOR should organise more meetings in the office with formal and informal arrangements. This connects to the third recommendation where the measure was to

improve the communication in the company. By creating more meetings with not only the managers of the departments, but also discuss relevant information with the whole team, the communication can be improved as well. Correspondingly, the team will be more connected. Every employee will have a better clue of what is going on and can adopt their tasks upon that. This recommendation can be implemented by organising weekly short meetings with the whole team, every Monday. In these short meetings the most important information about the upcoming week will be discussed and the employees will get a boost of energy for a new week. Furthermore, formal meetings with managers should become more regularly, focused on new information from manufacturers and the performance of the different departments. As a result, everyone knows what is going on.

5.5 PROVIDE NEW EMPLOYEES AND INTERNS WITH A TRAINING AND GUIDE BEFORE STARTING

Another significantly important recommendation for the company is to provide new interns mostly, but also new employees with the correct training. When the new employee will be informed with the correct information and guide of how to handle in different situations, unpleasant situations can be prevented. As a response, the most important factor, the customer, can be assisted with the correct advice and resources. This measure can be accomplished by having at least one permanent employee available, with enough experience to assist and provide the new employee with a guide. The new employee can have a fair start and consult the guide any time later.

5.6 GIVE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE OF THE DUTCH DEPARTMENT PRIORITY

The last recommendation, but not as important, would be to prioritize the customer service for the Dutch department. A factor that will already give exceptional results is to enlarge the Dutch team with at least one or two permanent Dutch speaking employees, as already mentioned before. This can improve the department since gaps can be avoided of no customer service. When there is always somebody available for the customer service, phone calls and e-mails can be answered right away and all problems will be solved at the end of the day. Currently, there are only interns who take care of the customer service, which results in giving customers incorrect information. When this strategy is implemented, the customers should get an answer within 1-2 working days, with detailed information to restore the issue. Also, the employee should have enough knowledge about how to deal with difficult situations and should know all the rules and regulations of BRICOFLO. This will eventually lead to providing customers with reliable information and them being satisfied about the company, so they will leave a positive review on the site. Additionally, they will be more inclined to tell others and thus sales will improve.

Since not every recommendation can be implemented right away, the graphic in figure 1 shows the level of easiness in comparison with the period each recommendation should be implemented. The size of the dot shows the impact of each recommendation, the larger the bigger the impact. Recommendation one and two are both easy to implement, therefore BRICOFLO can implement these recommendations in the first 5-6 months. There are a lot of resources, money and preparation needed to implement these strategies. Both recommendations have a high impact and therefore it is important to act fast. The advice is to implement both recommendations in the first 5-6 months, but recommendation one has priority. Recommendation three is considerably less easy to implement but has a great impact. This recommendation should thus be implemented shortly after successfully completing the first two recommendations. The fourth recommendation will be very easy to implement, since not many new resources or preparations are needed. But since the impact is less, especially if the first three recommendations are already implemented, the need is less important. The advice would be to

implement the strategy in the first 12 months, as the impact will still give the company a positive improvement. Then for the fifth recommendation, as the impact is lower, but the easiness higher, the aim is to implement the strategy in the first 15 months. This recommendation can only be implemented if all other recommendations were completed successfully. Resources and time are needed for this recommendation, so a proper planning is important, before implementing. The sixth and last recommendation, needs resources so is more difficult to implement, but has a high impact. Only if all the other five recommendations are implemented with success, the last recommendation can be organised. To operate carefully the advice is to implement the strategy in the first 18 months. As the situation should already have progressed.

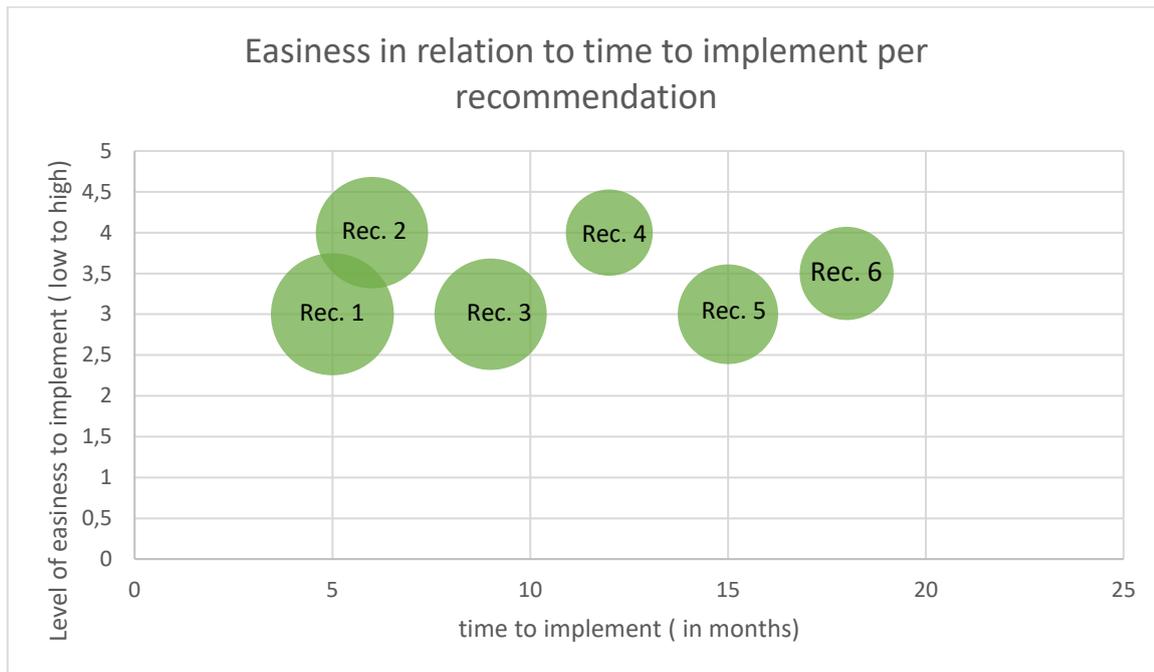


Figure 1, Easiness in relation to time to implement recommendation

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 ANALYSIS OF BACKLINKING BRICOFLOL

Figure 1 analysis of backlinking for BRICOFLOL

Country	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration	Bounce Rate
	44.75% 79,364 vs 143,642	8.38% 73.51% vs 67.83%	40.12% 58,342 vs 97,429	11.59% 2.94 vs 3.33	24.61% 00:01:47 vs 00:02:22	28.04% 66.14% vs 51.66%
1. Netherlands	1,212.00% 66,597 vs 5,076	7.80% 72.86% vs 67.59%	1,314.31% 48,525 vs 3,431	-18.36% 2.89 vs 3.54	-24.04% 00:01:43 vs 00:02:16	38.30% 67.22% vs 48.60%
2. Belgium	197.85% 10,133 vs 3,402	17.65% 77.43% vs 65.81%	250.42% 7,846 vs 2,239	-8.42% 3.34 vs 3.65	-15.32% 00:02:06 vs 00:02:29	25.09% 58.50% vs 46.77%
3. Caribbean Netherlands	-75.00% 16 vs 64	-46.67% 50.00% vs 93.75%	-86.67% 8 vs 60	6.77% 4.19 vs 3.92	-21.94% 00:02:25 vs 00:03:06	-40.00% 56.25% vs 93.75%
4. Suriname	-78.64% 22 vs 103	48.26% 86.36% vs 58.25%	-68.33% 19 vs 60	-10.11% 2.18 vs 2.43	-56.83% 00:00:51 vs 00:01:59	9.24% 63.64% vs 58.25%
5. Curaçao	-84.47% 16 vs 103	60.94% 93.75% vs 58.25%	-75.00% 15 vs 60	-55.09% 1.31 vs 2.92	-75.77% 00:00:37 vs 00:02:32	28.75% 75.00% vs 58.25%
6. Aruba	-89.87% 8 vs 79	15.21% 87.50% vs 75.95%	-88.33% 7 vs 60	-42.12% 2.00 vs 3.46	-23.71% 00:02:00 vs 00:02:37	-17.71% 62.50% vs 75.95%
7. Sint Maarten	-90.00% 6 vs 60	-33.33% 66.67% vs 100.00%	-93.33% 4 vs 60	-73.33% 1.00 vs 3.75	-100.00% 00:00:00 vs 00:03:14	0.00% 100.00% vs 100.00%
8. (not set)	-92.20% 54 vs 692	3.59% 100.00% vs 96.53%	-91.92% 34 vs 668	-26.47% 1.04 vs 1.41	-92.63% 00:00:03 vs 00:00:39	52.28% 98.15% vs 64.43%
9. Germany	-92.98% 606 vs 8,633	-13.86% 60.73% vs 70.50%	-93.95% 368 vs 6,086	34.54% 4.52 vs 3.36	120.27% 00:05:18 vs 00:02:24	-1.14% 51.82% vs 52.42%
10. Luxembourg	-94.09% 14 vs 237	14.77% 85.71% vs 74.68%	-93.22% 12 vs 177	-62.62% 1.50 vs 4.01	-94.24% 00:00:10 vs 00:02:51	69.29% 85.71% vs 50.63%

BAD REVIEWS

Figure 2 Bad reviews

	 Niet tevreden!
	Op 7 september heb ik tapijt besteld en ik heb en tot op heden niets ontvangen. 3 keer e-mail gestuurd, wat de status van mijn bestelling is, geen antwoord! Ik hoop dat ik mijn aankoopbedrag terug zal krijgen!
	Aanbevelen? Nee
	30.9.2020 Lamai , Dordrecht

	 Waar blijft de vloer?
	Er wordt voor de 2de keer gevraagd om wat we van de vloer vinden. Hij moet nog binnen komen, via de mail werd gezegd dat dat begin van de week zou zijn. Het is nu midden in de week. Vandaag maar proberen te bellen, vorige week kreeg ik aan de telefoon een bandje te horen met: we zijn helaas vandaag niet telefonisch bereikbaar. Mijn aanbeveling is nu op het moment nee!
	Aanbevelen? Nee
	12.8.2020 F.J. , Wieringerwerf

	 Slecht
	Nog steeds geen levering gehad en slechte .communicatie
	Aanbevelen? Nee
	25.5.2020 WILLY , Weelde België



Levertijd en communicatie kan beter

Het versturen van een sample heeft ruim 6 weken Q edurden en vervolgen is twee keer cjeleverd. Product ziet er goed uit maar door de levertijd en geen communicatie besloten geen producten af te nemen.

Ann bevelen *

Nee

28.6.2020 Ardjon ,
Rotterdam



contact tijden op website kloppen niet, levering niet volgens leveringstijd.

Na plaatsen bestelling en betaling was er geen reactie meer. Vele keren gebeld op verschillende tijden, maar geen contact, ook geen reactie op emails. Uiteindelijk na twee weken wet telefonisch contact en Yasmine gekr. s en en zij zei dat er maar drie dingen per week telefoon werd benntwoord...

Bovendien bleek dnt "er iets mis was gegaan" en de bestelling niet doorgezet. Maar fret zou nu goed komen beloofde ze.

Drie weken na de bestelling hebben we de order ontvangen. Iets wat volgens ons toch echt veel beter kan!

Aon bevelen"

Nee
e

6.7.2020 Frank
Alkmaar

4

Ik krijg een aanvraag tot beoordeling terwijl ik nog niets heb ontvangen

Ik begrijp dat a.g.v. Covid 19 er niet de gebruikelijke dienstverlening is. Edoch. ter verbetering:

1. Geen beoordelingen vragen als de bestelling nog niet is ontvangen door de klant
2. Levertijd was niet conform aangegeven periods. Pro-actieve Communicatie over levermomenten kan echt beter en concreter

Goed:

1. De juffrouw aan de telefoon doet echt haar best. Belt keurig terug als ze informatie niet heeft. Uitermate vriendelijk en correct {dank je wel!!!}
2. De prijs

Aanbevelen:

Als je niet op de dag "just in time" iets moet hebben kan dat prima. Anders vooralsnog twijfelachtig en afhankelijk of het product op voorraad ligt in het magazijn. Ik zou voor de zekerheid even vooraf bellen {de hulp aan de telefoon is uitstekend}

Hartelijke groet en veel plezier met het verbeteren van het klant beoordelingsproces,

Met Groet, Ernie van Dalen

de privacy verklaring over verwerking van genoemde gegevens onderaan is belemmerend voor het

invullen van klantbeoordelingen en zou ik weghalen.

Aanbevelen?

Ja

12.5JO2O Ernie , Amsterdam

Deze beoordeling is door de beoordelaar gewijzigd. Bekijk hier de originele beoordeling

4

Raagaren niet na bastelling

Ik heb een bestelling geplaatst. Nu probeer ik ze te bereiken en ik krijg geen enkele reactie. Telefonisch krijg ik "we ondervinden technische problemen" en per email reageren ze ook niet. Niet alleen vrees ik nu ctat ik mijn tapijt te laat zal ontvangen maar oak dat ik m'n geld zal kwijt zijn. :(

Aanbevelen?

Nee

B.1JO2O Nirko , Ooigem

3



Slechte communicatie, verlate levering maar goederen zijn goed

Levertijd wordt niet gehaald.

Zeer slecht bereikbaar.

Telefonisch niet bereikbaar, je wordt naar een Duits telefoonnummer verwezen maar die kunnen niet in het Nederlandse bestelsysteem kijken.

Afspraken worden niet nagekomen, transporteur zou bellen voor levering, staat hij onaangekondigd aan de deur als je op het werk bent.

Order gesplitst in twee deelleveringen, track & trace niet werkend.

Heel veel mails en telefoontjes aan besteed.

Teleurstellende ervaring. Na 13 dagen de bestelling pas compleet.

Aanbevelen?

Nee

25.1.2020 Paul , Roermond

GOOD REVIEWS

Figure 3 Good reviews



3 sterren: voldoende, een redelijke ervaring

Pluspunten

Offerte snel gekregen. Email contact goed. Telefonisch contact ook goed.



3 sterren: voldoende, een redelijke ervaring

Pluspunten

Goede website voor vinden product. Snel antwoord na vraagstelling per mail.



Prima zaak, bestelling netjes afgehandeld.

Vloer keurig afgeleverd. Vriendelijk te woord gestaan door het personeel.

Aanbevelen?

Ja

27.12.2021 Rene , Paprndrecht

8

Alles goed geregeld.

Nadat ik mijn bestelling geplaatst had (behangj een bericht gestuurd naar bricoflor met de vraag wanneer ik het kon verwachten.

Binnen een paar uur was er een nette reactie terug met de mededeling dat de order al aangemeld was bij de vervoerder.

De volgende dag had ik mijn behang al in huis. Top!

Aanbevelen?

Ja

Z1.7CO21 Esther , Krabbendijke

9

Komen afspraken na

In februari vloer besteld. Ik werd gelijk opgebeld met de mededeling dat de vloer pas in juli kan worden geleverd en of ik de bestelling dus wil doorzetten of niet. Ik zou bij andere leveranciers oak lang moeten wachten, dus vloer gewoon besteld. Gisteren gebeld met een vraag over een update...en die kreeg ik want vandaag is de vloer geleverd! Klantenservice was goed bereikbaar

{telefonisch} en zeer correct/behulpzaam. Enige aanbeveling aan het bedrijf zou zijn om updates te geven over het proces in plaats van dat ik er zelf achteraan moet bellen. Dat geeft de koper wat meer vertrouwen.

Aanbevelen?

Ja

14.7JO21 Geerte , Gouda

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION GAP 1

Question 1: Is there a potential for the Dutch department to become a big department?

Question 2 : Why, why not

Question 3: What do you think that needs to be improved for the Dutch department in order to improve the sales, so related to manpower, improvement in online marketing, website optimization?

Question 4: Would it make sense to increase the number of employees for the Dutch department in order to increase the sales?

Question 5: Would it be better to higher a full-time employee instead of only using the potential with interns?

Question 6: Is there enough time to fulfil all the tasks?

Question 7: What is the result of not enough time?

Question 8: Can this as well be improved with more manpower?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION GAP 2

Question 1: is communication in the company important, and why?

Question 2 How is the communication in the company, in the departments itself and with the whole company?

Question 3: Can it be improved?

Question 4: What is currently the biggest issue in relation to the level of communication?

Question 5: Is the level of communication also in relation to the motivation of the employees?

Question 6: Why and how does this look like in practice?

Question 7: What would the result be of a high level of communication and motivation?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION GAP 3

Question 1: Why are German and France the biggest departments currently?

Question 2: How many employees are working for the departments?

Question 3: What is the advantage for the department because of more manpower?

Question 4: What is currently the strength in the departments?

Question 5: What could be an option for the Dutch department to copy from these bigger departments in order to perform better?

Question 6: Would more manpower help? Or division of tasks, always someone on the phone for the customer service, for example?

Question 7: Could these departments also either be improved, regarding more manpower, more full time employees, better division of tasks?

Question 8: Why is there still need for improvement?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION GAP 4

Question 1: What is the current problem of the online marketing?

Question 2: the advertisement campaigns are not running well lately, why is that?

Question 3: what is the current blog/backlinking strategy?

Question 4: How can this strategy improve the online marketing and thus the sales for the Dutch

department?

Question 5: Is there a plan to improve the social media?

Question 6: Why is there no priority yet for the social media plan?

Question 7: What has the biggest priority in order to improve the online marketing?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION GAP 5

Question 1 : is the customer service important for the Dutch department in relation to sales?

Question 2,3 are answered with literature research and were no other interview questions needed

APPENDIX 4 ; INTERVIEW RAQUEL PATRICIO, DUTCH MANAGER

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Raquel Patricio

Function: Dutch manager at BRICOFLOR

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: So, hello, thank you for making time for this interview. And during this interview, we will talk about the order processing for the Dutch office and how would this relate to improve the sales focused on the vinyl flooring for the Dutch office? So let's start. Um, first I would like to ask if you can introduce yourself and talk about the job you're doing for BRICOFLOR now.

Raquel: So I'm Raquel. I'm the head of the sales department of BRICOFLOR, but now I took the job of also the Dutch manager at the moment. Uh, mostly in the part that comes from the sales uh and yes. What else?

Sanne: No, I think that is it, and I know that you started as an intern here. What did you have to do by the time?

Raquel: Uh, so I started here as a Portuguese intern in the Portuguese store. Uh, I had to do the orders, customer service. I had to do the marketing, like the Instagram, Pinterest, um, also optimizing our website, like, um, the texts, the blogs, Um, product titles and all, everything that had to do with the Portuguese store.

Sanne: That's a lot. And what do you like the most about this job currently, like related to the sales.

Raquel: Like the sales part? I, to be honest, I really do enjoy the part of managing the Dutch department is I think it's my favourite part. I know it because it kind of, you get some rewards from it. When it comes from the sales department that like the part of the whole company, you keep on fixing mistakes and fixing things there, there, there, which is a bit tiresome, but when it comes to the Dutch department, uh, website, I think because I'm close to it, it's a smaller project. You can kind of see the results of things that you're doing. And, um, I think the Dutch country is very dynamic. Like we do get orders everyday. Something's always happening. And it's interesting. You can ask because it's also smaller. You can kind of like understand how things move when you increase prices, decreased prices with the marketing, you can see things changing. In the German office Uh, it's too big. It's very hard to see results as accurately as the Dutch ones.

Sanne: Yeah, that's true. Okay. Um, and in terms of the Dutch office, what's your opinion about the current process of dealing with the Dutch orders? The customer service?

Raquel: We, to be honest, I think we lack on manpower. Like we have two interns at the moment and me doing the orders for now. But, um, every six months they change every five to six months. We changed the interns and meaning that for at least two months, I'm just there telling interns how things are done over and over and over and over again. And it gets boring for me, even though you guys are like the second, the second interns I have had, but I can only imagine how tired some it might be. And, um, And it takes a lot of time, which yes, the time that I could be putting in price research time that I could be putting in marketing to have a, there could be putting in understanding our clients better, um, putting in, um, teaching interns over and over again. Yeah. So that's the biggest problem.

Sanne: Well, true. And, uh, did you try to talk with someone about it to see how you couldn't really improve it or it's just something you have in mind?

Raquel: Um, to be honest, I also think we haven't had any Dutch intern, because the company has opportunity for growth. Like I started as an intern, they weren't looking for a Portuguese person to stay here full time and just happened that they wanted to hire me. But I don't think that has happened before with Dutch interns also because they come here as a mandatory internship and then they have to go back to the university. For me, it was a voluntary one. Um, so we haven't even had anyone that said, oh, I'm going to stay. So that was also, that's also one of the reasons why we don't have a Dutch manager from the Netherlands, things like that. I think that would help a lot to have someone staying here, but I haven't, we haven't even, I don't think there has been any attempt on that so far.

Sanne: Yeah. And do you think it will make a difference to have a full-time employee? That is also Dutch working for the Dutch office?

Raquel: Yeah, definitely. Because for example, my job is not to do at the moment I'm doing orders. My job is not to do orders and the two hours in the morning that I spend doing orders and then the other hour that I spend, uh, solving some issues and stuff like that. It's three hours where I could be doing anything else to improve the company or to improve the Dutch store. If we had a full-time employee for the Netherlands, then he could be solving those issues¹. He could be, So, uh, answering those questions, he could be doing the orders, you know. And, um, yeah, it's, it would be perfect if we had someone full-time.

Sanne: Okay. And, um, we noticed we currently are only with the three of us. Um, but what do you think about the communication? Um, Uh, we have to deal with it and could that be improved.

Raquel: Yeah, well, I think there's always place for improvement, but to be honest, one of the thing, one of the problems is that the company itself not, I'm not just talking about the Dutch office, but the whole company does lack a lot is in communicating. And, um, it's very hard not to put or for that, not to go down from the manager to the intern, because I mean, if that's how things are dealt with in the upper levels, it's very hard to change it down. But, um, I did try like, for example I created a bunch of Excel sheets, because for me, it's easier to communicate that way we have a group, um, to have, so I make sure that everyone's on the same page. Um, but there's always space for, for changing things and things also don't I don't have as much time to spend communicating², which is not nice. I wish there was more time.

Sanne: So time could be a thing to improve the communication

Raquel: yes.

Sanne: Well. Yes. Okay. And, um, so we know that, uh, broadly they will start to other employees working on the orders. If I understand it correctly.

Raquel: Oh yes.

Sanne: So, um, So, can you explain a bit about what they will do and how this will change or change your roll in the Dutch office?

Raquel: Yes. So basically the thing is I am the head of order processing. I'm not supposed to be doing orders. That's the thing. So I decided to, but the Netherlands, we have big orders. And I had, I had already been working, uh, with those orders before and I had practise in them. So I, I knew how things were done. So I decided to keep those, but then, like I said, time, I don't have time to be doing those. So we had a, we have an order processing team, here and they do the Germans and German orders, Finland, Poland, and all of that. So now they're going to take over as well. I mean, we hired two more people for that team. Yeah. And within that team the Dutch orders are going to be processed. And yeah, obviously the new guys will have to communicate with them instead of me. And instead of spending time, um, just ordering the, um, the products, I'll be spending time and seeing our prices, if they right. If they're not right, if, um, how we can optimize the processing of the orders, how we can make it faster, how we can make the interns understand it better or how we could make the introduction of interns into the company, easier and faster. If, well, I need to have time to organize that. So that's why the order processing is being moved now to the team and not to me.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. That's clear. Thank you. Um, then I would like to ask, um, if you can explain a bit more about, um, the process of placing the orders, how is that going?

Raquel: How its going or? How, how it is done? How it, uh, so basically we, we get most of the orders we get through the website. The client goes to our website and they buy it. Um, I check what it is, I order it from the manufacturer and we don't, uh, hold stock of almost any products. Except for like two or three in our warehouse. So we order them from the manufacturer and then the manufacturer either sends it to us, to our warehouse and we ship it to the Netherlands or we order from the manufacturer straight to the clients. Um, and then we also have some offers because above 50 square meters, we do give discounts. We have a team for those offers because we need to calculate our costs and profit and everything very well. Um, so we have a team that deals with that. So basically. Um, the client does it through email. We have the interns, they check the email, they send it to the team and once the offer is done, then the intern sends it to the client and then he decides if he wants to take it or not. So basically that's it.

Sanne: And I think that this system is working for all the countries right now with the offers?

Raquel: Almost all of them. Uh, for Spain and I think the UK, they do their offers, uh, on their own. They don't do the team. They manage everything on their own.

Sanne: Yes. Yeah. But like ordering from the manufacturer goes the same way with every country?

Raquel: Yes

Sanne: And then, um, so when you think about this system, is it working or do you think we can use it in another way better?

Raquel: I think honestly, it's, it's quite boring.

Sanne: Maybe related to time, like if it takes a lot of time and if there would be a faster way.

Raquel: We could optimize so many things. For example, to this day, the interns have to search for the products to send tracking. I find that very unnecessary. That, We have one of the interns that does that at the moment. And I don't know how long he takes, but probably like 20 minutes every

day, 25 minutes that he spends just looking for the orders to see if they have been sent or not. And then sending the tracking to the clients, um, offers and stuff like that. I also think that maybe the client could just literally send, I mean, we do have places in the website where you can fill in and say how much you want and all that, that could go directly to the offers team. And. Send it directly to the client. Shouldn't go through the intern and all that. However, I do know that there's usually some type of negotiation that the client wants to do, and then that's where the intern comes in. Um, and then, um, What else? There's so many things we could optimize. It would be, we have one of the manufacturers that, for example, uh, this is going more into detail. When we ordered the things. I literally have to write an email every single time to order something. I write the email, I send it to the manufacturer and then another email, I send it to the warehouse. It's very like it's tiresome. Like it takes two hours, three hours in the morning, just the one country. And, um, we have one of the manufacturers that basically we get the order, we click on a button when, when we get the order, remote orders and it's done, it's processed. It goes automatically to manufacturer. Everything else, You have to literally copy the order and send it to the client. And if it's a different products and you have to send it to different clients and it's just very tiresome, it's very basic.

Sanne: Yeah. You also have to check if you send the correct email with all the correct information.

Raquel: Yeah. Yes, that's, that's it leaves a lot of human error, like a lot of space for human error, because let's say instead of 17 I put 7, instead of a 7, I put 70, then we make a huge loss or it's very hard to cancel orders also because other manufacturers, I mean, other companies, they also want to make money and. And for example, if the client, once again, the client doesn't get to tracking, right. Or, um, doesn't get it automatically. And then, um, for some reason we don't send it that day and the client gets the order that day. Then the client is like, well, I wasn't at home. Then the things come back, then we have to send it again. And then it's another 50 euros that we have to pay. So it's, it's very, it's a lot of manual work. Yeah.

Sanne: Um, okay. So then I would like to ask you more about, um, if you have like a sort structure planning during the week, if you have things that you have to do daily, and how you divide that.

Raquel: Yeah. So besides the order processing, I do Amazon Germany. I do, I take care of the, of that marketplace. And I also am in the marketplace team. So every morning, like every morning I have to do Amazon DE because we have a strict deadline until 10 o'clock, all those orders have to be processed. And the tracking has to be like in, um, in Amazon for those clients. Um, so every morning I have to do that, then the second thing I do is usually the Dutch orders. Uh, so yes, that takes me a little bit. I do. Well, I actually have it down usually. I'm sorry. One second.

Sanne: No, that's fine. Yeah.

Raquel: So yeah. Then after that, oh yes. And I also have to deal with the messages from, from Amazon. Then I go to the Dutch orders, once I have processed the Dutch orders and everything. I do the Polish and the Czech. At the moment I'm not doing them anymore. I moved them. I moved them. I mean, I moved them this week to someone else. So And then I do, uh, the Portuguese emails. I still have to answer some clients when it's very, uh, detailed information. And we have the Spanish team that answers them because I planned the whole, um, templates for Portuguese clients. But, um, Some messages. We really don't want to translate them with Deepl.com. So I answered some of the Portuguese emails. Then I go to the German emails that I also have to deal with the German team and all that. And then I go to. What do I do afterwards? I go to, oh, NL communication go through all the problems that we might have had with the Dutch clients. And I help the interns with whatever questions they might have. And, uh, usually on Mondays, I do work on marketplaces, but then the other, the other days and afternoon, I have to optimize our Amazon account. And I have to add products, change prices, do stock updates and all those things.

Sanne: Yeah, thanks. So if I understand correctly, you can make the planning yourself. It's not like you have to follow a certain format.

Raquel: In the company were actually quite free to do what we would like to do. Yeah. I mean, also they give us a lot of tasks. And they don't know most of the times we that's where the communication sometimes lacks, but for example, we have different people coming to ask you for different things. And then, and that's something we could optimize actually in the Dutch office. It's because at the moment we divided the intern work between order processing and marketing. Right. And at first I was just responsible for order processing. That's it. I tell them how to do things and then, uh, how to do the order part or how to help me with the order part. And then they would do that. And then the marketing, everything has to do with blogs is divided in, is someone else taking care of it, but if there's no communication amongst what I gave them to do and what the other person gave them to do, then I can give them work for eight hours. And the other person also for eight hours. What are they supposed to do and know, and also when you're an intern, you don't really want to come and be like, oh, but that other person gave me work, you know, it's not, I understand. So that's another thing that I need to take into account is, and we are kind of with now with one of the interns is like, we get the whole thing that they're supposed to do, the whole task that he's supposed to do. They send it to me. And then I speak to the people to see what kind of priorities it is. And then I sit and give it to him. To say to him, these are your priorities. Then he can organize himself the way he wants. Uh, but I tell him, this is a, this is a priority and you have a deadline or something like that. And then, but it's up to him, how to, how, how his, I'm not telling you, you have to work one hour here and one hour there. And the same thing comes with me. Like I also get tasks from different departments and, uh, I organise it, or if the Boss tells me I have to do something, I'll do that one first and then it goes down with priority levels and do what I want to.

Sanne: Yeah. Great. Um, so for now, the Dutch orders is probably taking you the most time during the day. And if that is going to take away from you, then you have time to do the other task. You already talked about a bit. Doing the price research, what are some other really important tasks you can do then?

Raquel: Okay, so because, um, as the, as the order processing, uh, like as managing that part, there's a lot of like.. Order processing should be just like, ABC, you do this, this and that. But yeah, it's it, it's not true. There's always things that change. There are always clients getting things back or something like that, or, or a client ordered this and we see that, oh my gosh, we have this price. It's really old in our website. Or I see that the, the person that's processing the orders, processing them wrong. It's the fact that I have to overlook those. I have to overlook that part. I have to understand why some of the people in the team are taking so long and then it happened. And then they also have other tasks. I have to organize that, I have to organize that team. So that will be my next big task.

Sanne: Okay, well, that's clear. And, um, let me see.

Raquel: No, basically I think basically that was also one of my points is to make, like, make sure that the sales department doesn't cost us money. That brings us money. Yeah. I think that's my greatest task.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Um, and are there also tasks that take you a lot of time now, but, uh, in your opinion, could be removed for like, could be done in another way.

Raquel: Um, um, I know I moved, I mean, the Dutch, the Dutch orders are something that should I be moved to the order processing team before. And yeah, it was moved. Um, I don't know, I think the moment I move the orders to the team. I think the other ones, I would have to keep them myself. And also, like, I think the moment I optimize things, I started optimizing things better. Then

you have less work. It's a bit more work now, but then it's less work. Like, for example, I just started now we have like an intern introduction book in the company, two of the departments have it, um, basically it, when. When the intern comes, they just fill in the information. Then they are told, what are they supposed to do? When it comes to like registration here in the city, it tells them where to go and all that. It tells them the rules of the company and all those things, like those silly things. And literally it's a book, it's a book like it's five to six pages or whatever it is. And yeah. It's honestly, I know this might sound small, but it's in one hour conversations that we end up having the interns and it's like explaining this, and then I forget this and then I have to come again. And then I have to explain this and all that. Now imagine if the client, if the intern comes and he receives that book, like these other rules, I'm like, just go through them, go through them, keep it with yourself. Even like, then I know that when you're interviewing, come in and then you go talk to Eva. That's the marketplace. The marketing, um, head, and then she tells, she asked you for a bunch of questions and all that, and other, the HR comes to you and also ask you about your internship and all that, that book literally tells you to fill in everything. And then you just handed it to the right people. That's written there. That's just, I it's something silly, but it saves a lot of time. And also, so I'm fixing that one now. So it's, uh, for the Dutch interns. There's only one for the British and French, and I'm fixing that one out and also want to include there, Um, the communication sheets we already have, like the NL communication, all that, they are included there with like, not subtitles, but like notes, so they know what it is. So I don't have to spend another 30 minutes to one hour, just explaining those things. I mean, of course I'll still explain, but they'll have a basis. I won't just be talking. They were like, what the fuck?

Sanne: They can always go back to where it was written?

Raquel: Yeah. Yes, exactly.

Sanne: Okay. Um, and then, um, in your opinion, what would be the best, um, dividing of tasks, uh, with the people working for the Dutch office right now? So, uh, related to the one doing the customer service or social media or whatever.

Raquel: Maybe to be a hundred percent honest. It really depends. Which part of me you're asking if you're asking me as the manager, I'll tell you one thing I will tell you, like I would rather have the best person for orders doing orders, or like the best person for marketing doing marketing for me, that would be simple. Yeah. If you asked me the person that started as an intern here, then I'll tell you, you come here. I mean, it's our job to teach you as well. So it's a bit selfish of me being like, oh, you're good at this. So I'm going to put you doing that. Imagine, just imagine like, you're good at order processing, but you like marketing, but you're not as good as let's say. And, but then as a manager, I'll be like, I don't care how you do order processing because you're good at it. That's what benefits me and stuff like that. Um, we have to give both people a chance to learn everything. Uh, is it the best for the company? Not really. Is it the best for me? Not really for managing time. It's really, it's really not the best because you're here as interns, but when we have so much, we kind of want to have people here as like workers, you know, like you apply for orders, then you work in orders, you know, stuff like that. But as managing like interns, you know like we come here to learn, so you have to do a bit of everything. Maybe we could divide it better, like, okay, you start your internship doing orders. And then, and then. Uh, the second part you do marketing, let's say, but that's also very tiresome because then I have to explain it twice. I have to explain it to you how to do processing orders and to another how to do the marketing. And then when you swap, I have to explain to you or the other one, it's very tiresome. So at the moment we divided it like this. This time, it was a bit tricky because we did divide, Uh, you were divided, you do most of the ordering also because you're more detail oriented. And I know like I can trust you. Sending emails and stuff

like that can trust you more because I know you pay attention to all those small things. Um, with the other intern, he's been helping us with Excel skills and all that because he already has them and with researches and stuff like that. I know you are also good at writing, so I'll give you the blogs, but it's not right, because I mean, if he's not good at writing, he at least should leave here a little bit better. You know, he shouldn't just leave here with the skills that he already had. I mean, because that's a little bit selfish as well as just ask, taking the skills that you have and what did we teach him? I mean, we gave you experience, yeah great, but you here to learn and if we don't divide, if we divided just with what the skills you have, then you just practice, you don't learn.

Sanne: So it's important to give everyone a chance to learn the whole process.

Raquel: It's important for the interns. Yeah. For us it's like, okay. We have to.

Sanne: Yeah, but if you look into the future and see the best solution, what would you do then? So really hire people, um, for that specific thing. So, um, ordering, and customer service. And would that all be different persons or is that divided with only a few employees.

Raquel; Well, now, if, if we hire someone full-time?

Sanne: Yes

Raquel: Okay. So then that person would be left with, um, I assume, well, don't have like this plan literally set up properly, but if we keep, we, we aim to keep the orders with the order team.

That's the Germans that we already have, with that team. That part of the team. Hiring a full-time Dutch, Dutch person here would be for customer service would be for, um, all those small issues like, oh, well basically this customer service, um, we would need that person. And with the communication that we have now, basically he would like whatever is written in the Excel sheet or whatever they have. That's how they have, they keep communication with the order processing. Uh, that person would be great if they could also write blogs or something like that, or optimizing maybe not the blogs itself, because you of have to have a skill for that because not anyone can just write blogs. I mean, it's like not everyone is as, or is even happy writing blogs. Yeah. So, but we do need a lot of help to optimize our website, like keywords. There's so many things that are written in German. There's, there's a lot of mistakes there, so we need someone to do that. And then we need someone that, for example, I know that for, Forbo, one of the manufactures, we need a price research, but I shouldn't be having to spend 30 minutes doing price research. So it would be great to have that person to be like, look can you do price research for me about these products? And then I get that information and then I go, and be like, we have to take this and this and this and this and that. So that would be nice to have a person that would help me in that situation. Yep. And then if you add an intern on that, then that person will be teaching the intern, you know. That's when, for example, we could hire an intern for blogs or for order processing. And then we don't lack, you know, that would be great. Then we could just hire an intern for blogs. You do not really have to teach them. But if it's a person that comes already with a mindset that, oh, I want to write blogs about that. And it's an internship dedicated to something. Then we don't have to worry about like, oh, I have to teach you this. No, It's an intern that got here to do something we need, and he's doing what he came to do, then that would be perfect.

Sanne: Yeah. Great. Well, that's clear, uh, then a bit something else, um, maybe you don't know, maybe you should have looked it up, but do you know what are the most busy days related to the orders?

Raquel: Mondays, Monday's is terrible. Yes. The weekend, Monday is terrible. Tuesday. It's okay. Then Wednesday and Thursday, should be fine and Friday. Yeah. It's usually Mondays and Tuesdays. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, those are the worst days.

Sanne: Okay, because I also try to see with the customer service, how it's, uh, done like with how many emails weekend and the calls, if there are some busy days. And of course it's also the Monday, that's the, the most busy day, uh, but for the rest, it's kind of the same.

Raquel: For all the departments, Monday's are horrible. That's why I also don't do marketplaces on Mondays. Because I know I have to concentrate on orders.

Sanne: So then that was the thing that's, it's best to divide the work. That you know, that on the most busy days, you really have to concentrate on that.

Raquel: Otherwise it just kind of spills into the other day. So if I don't finish the things that I have to finish on Mondays, then Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, I'm still busy with what I should have done on Monday.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and then almost the last questions, um, show you did work for the Jtec and the Polish office on the orders. Um, but probably the, the Dutch office was like a bigger and, um, is it true that most of the orders is always related to the PVC floors or?

Raquel: Um, yeah. Most of the orders. Yeah. Most of them is vinyl flooring. Yeah. Yeah. There's we have some other orders, like carpets and things like that, but **it's mostly vinyl flooring. It's our best seller**. Wallpaper also, but don't really. We sell wallpaper, not that much, not in comparison to flooring.

Sanne: And, um, do you think there still like, um, space for improvement. Uh, because we're probably still not that familiar in the Netherlands as the company BRICOFLOOR. So that it is possible to have even more sales, if we could optimize the category texts on the website and stuff like that.

Raquel: Yes. We need to optimize a lot of things in our website, a lot of things. And there is a lot of space for improvement because I, from what I know so far that Dutch clients are not, have no problem with ordering online. That's a problem we have with other company with other countries, but the Dutch ones, they don't mind ordering 3000, 4000 euros online for them something so normal. So it is a space where we could sell a lot because I mean, flooring is not cheap. You don't really order five euros of flooring more like a thousand euros of flooring. And knowing that, knowing that that's a, that the Dutch are fine with it. Um, then it is, uh, it is, um, a type of group that would be really, really good for us. But yes, we need to, for example, we don't have an Instagram account. Um, Facebook. I think it's very weak at the moment. Um, we need to work a lot when it comes to marketing, we need to work a lot when it comes to our website, we have, I mean, I wouldn't buy if I go to a Portuguese website and I see things in German, no, no, I wouldn't trust them. We've had clients calling before asking if it's real, like if we are a real company. So I feel like we lose a lot of clients. We have no idea how many clients would lose with that. The only thing is that I do think we are very competitive. When it comes to the other, um, Dutch companies. Um, and another thing that I've understood is that the Dutch are also very cheap. They're like always looking for the cheap thing. Doesn't matter how long it takes. They are always looking for the best deal. So even if we tell them, we can give you this floor, but only six months, then we'll wait those six months to buy it. So it's a very good group. I think it's like, **it's one of our most promising countries³**. I mean, but the problem is that we don't take, we don't have enough time to make it work, like to optimize the country. That's the thing, because, um, it's one of the countries here in this company that always has always been

on a positive, has always made money. It never, it was never on the negative side. It never like cost us something. It was always making money, even with just one intern taking care of it. Even with the Spanish before it was a Spanish, uh, manager taking care of the Dutch office, besides the Portuguese, and that Spanish one. So even when people weren't paying attention to it, it was making money. So I guess if we do pay attention to it, if we make, if we work on it, there's a lot of potential, like a lot. Yeah. Okay.

Sanne: And then my last question, um, because you said that, uh, the Dutch office could be a potential, but which office is now working at like the full capacity. So working as the best in this company, like the biggest one?

Raquel: it's always been the German one. Yeah **Germany and France**⁴. They always made the most money, uh, German, uh, well, well we did, we did lower a little bit. Like we went down a little bit, but it was in general, all the stores because we changed to a new website and it didn't really work. Uh, but the German one has always made money. Uh, the French one also a lot, but now we are not making sales as much. Uh, but those countries and the Netherlands, those other countries have always been in the positive. Like always making a profit, always, always, always. Um, then the other countries are somehow floating. We kind of need Germany, Netherlands and France.

Sanne: So the Netherlands is in the top tree of this ranking?

Raquel: Um, it's on the top three in terms of it doesn't make it doesn't make a lot of money, but it pays itself. Yeah. That's the thing. And unfortunately it's not a priority yet in the company.

Sanne: Yeah. So that's the thing.

Raquel: Yes. It's not a priority. Uh, the UK at the priority list, usually the priority here is Germany, France, UK. I don't know why the UK is up there. Um, and then it comes to Netherlands amongst the lower ones. For the lower ones, Netherlands is at the top. Then you have Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Finland Czech is all together, but those ones won't make much money, but the Netherlands usually pays itself. Like, other countries sometimes take the profits from Germany and France to, to like there, those are the cash cows, and then we take the money from them and put them into other companies to invest in all that by the Netherlands has always been a good one, yeah.

Sanne: So the most important thing is just to prioritize and then maybe, uh, implement the strategy from the German office, like, uh, dividing the work how they do that?

Raquel: I think that's why we've also done this. Uh, if we look at it now, um, the companies that, yeah, the countries and the companies that are under the order processing team now it's Germany, um, Czech, Poland, uh, the small ones and the Netherlands. So we put the Netherlands there, so the Germans will take care of it, but then there will be space and there'll be time to take care of the Netherlands as well to optimize it, you know? Well, we're giving it to before we would just put the. Uh, person to do everything now, it's like the best people in order processing are doing the order processing for the Netherlands, the best people for managing or for uh, for marketing, are doing the marketing for the Netherlands. You know, we don't just have one person just, just because they are, they're doing it. So I guess we are trying to prioritize it, but it would be great to have a Dutch person to do it is, you know, it's very hard. At the same way. We it's very hard for us to hire, for example, um, I could say about Portugal when I was hired, they wanted a Portuguese person.

They didn't want a Brazilian person, even though these people speak Portuguese. It's very nice when you know your own country, when you have that base, it's very, that's the information we also get

from the interns. Like what, you know, like what is best? And for me it's like, okay, I'm Portuguese. I love the Netherlands. I'm there all the time, but I don't know. Like, I don't know. I don't have any family. I don't have any. Anything that links me or that makes me understand the only thing I understand what the intern told me. Oh, we like this. I'm like, oh great. It's like, what do you even use that for? So yeah, basically that, and all the information I can get is from clients basically. Yeah. But we get orders. We don't really get much more into it. Just get the orders. So it's basically numbers that we can analyse, but it would be nice to have some. Uh, actual information.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, I think we've come to an end of the interview, so thank you very much for your effort and your time and, uh, yeah, that's it.

Raquel: Thank you. I wish you all the best.

APPENDIX 5 INTERVIEW EMANUELE PINCI

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Emanuele Pinci

Function: Italian manager/ head of performance marketing

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: So thank you for your time and doing this interview, during this interview we will talk about the online performance of the Dutch office, and how this can relate to improve the sales, um, focused on the vinyl flooring for the Dutch office. Um, maybe we can begin by, uh, Introducing yourself and talk about the job you are doing for BRICOFLOR.

Emanuele: Okay. Uh, so yeah, my name is Emanuele Pinci. I'm the current, uh, responsible person responsible for the performance marketing in the company. And yeah, I'm handling all the Google accounts, uh, for all the shops that were online at the moment, which I think are 12 or 13 shops. Um, so yeah, I took over the job in September last year. So we went through some difficult times in the company because of the failed relaunch. And now with the whole issues of with the price increase of the gasoline or the deliveries of the products and so on and yeah, that's it.

Sanne: Okay. And, um, what is in your opinion the most interesting part about your job,

Emanuele: About my job? The data analysis and analysis of the, of the, yeah, the job is the thing that maybe, uh, I liked the most. And I think that I don't get to do as much as I can as I would like to. Um, but yeah, basically the most, the most interesting part is, uh, find, uh, ways to compete within a structure and within limitations that are giving to you because of budget, because of things that you can do. And yeah, this is something that I really enjoyed because it's something that pushes you to be creative, pushes you to find solutions for problem and makes you realise that there are problems. The first, uh, the first step is that you have, you realize that there are problems that maybe you didn't know that were there. Maybe your boss didn't know were there. Um, so that's why I'm so sorry that I always giving you stuff to fix these, fixed this. I'm noticing issues all over the place. Um, but yeah, I mean, this is the, I think this is the fun part of the, of the job. It's not fun to create Google campaigns because it's like the most boring thing that you can do. But the fun part is like to try to improve them. Um, and like I said, it's something that I don't have a lot of time to do because there are too many accounts and too many new things to do all the time in this company. But yeah, this is the thing that I enjoy the most.

Sanne: Thank you. Um, yeah. So if we look at the Dutch office, um, it's clear to see that in some areas it's falls short. Um, and, uh, do you know in what areas these problems are?

Emanuele: I mean, I think, I think you can say it better than me, uh, the main issue with the Dutch offices are. No, not to go into like organizational stuff here in the company. But if we, uh, if we stick to the, uh, online part of this, uh, the main issue, which is not an issue that is like a senior, or like only for the Dutch office is that, uh, the site is not good enough. Um, Uh, **unfortunately for the longest time, uh, we just took the German site and translated it every other language¹**. And this is something that doesn't work. It works, but not as well as it could work, if we do something else, which is like, uh, tailoring the site to what, what are the needs of each country and, uh, and so on and so on. I mean, yeah, it's, it's a, it's a huge task and. It could take us a lot of time, but, uh, as you could see, um, the, the things that they give it to you most of the time is just sloppy things. Is people just using Google translator instead of writing the text or putting wrong hyperlinks and messing up all the metadata, the meta titles, the shopping titles, and so on and so on. So yeah, if I had to point

out to one, uh, the, the biggest issue in the Dutch office, I would say that that is the, that is the biggest, the big issue.

Sanne: So the site?

Emanuele: Yes the site, and even if the site is so bad that the results are not bad at all, which is something that infuriates me because means that if we took care of a little bit better on the site, the results could be even better, you know?

Sanne: And, um, what about if, uh, the Dutch office would have more, uh, like full time employees, at least employees that would stay here for a longer time than only the interns that are here right now.

Emanuele: Okay. So there is a big problem, uh, in sense that you have always, you have to take into consideration that the margin in, uh, what is our like, um, sector, um, is not that high. So, if you think about a 20, 30% margin on every sale, you have to then consider that we are spending money on marketing. So that is going to cut the, the margin. Uh, we are already spending money on employees, me, you as an intern, Ewan an intern and so on and so on. Um, and if we add people here full time, that would lower the margin even further. The problem is that if we don't have a person that is here, 24 hours not as an intern, but permanently here, of course, **the amount of, uh, improvement not someone can do on the site, it's limited**². Okay. Uh, so I think, yes, that would help a lot, but that doesn't mean that it's, it's important to find like a good balance between, uh, how much money we spend to make the office work and how much money we get in return. Um, we get to return. So it's something that is not up to me to the side. So I think that the boss, I think has its own calculations. Yeah. Uh, but yeah, I mean, one person, or at least a more permanent person, will definitely help.

Sanne: Um, Then another thing, um, uh, related to another interview I had, um, there are some people that say that the Dutch office could have potential that there is a lot. What do you agree with this?

Emanuele: Yeah, of course. So, um, it's the Dutch, uh, **Dutch market is really interesting for us**³, but, uh, we have to um, yeah, I think for sure. I am sorry I lost the material. Um, yeah, yeah, yeah, for sure. There is potential there. You got, you have to imagine in the last year, the Dutch office was one of the one that improved the most in terms of gross sales. So I know, I don't know what at the margins, I don't know if we gain money on it. I don't know anything. I just know that in terms of pure sales, that that shop was one of the best in the company. I mean, the one that improved the most, um, and that **with all the problems that you can see on our site**⁴, um, so there's definitely potential there, but there's also a lot of competition. There's also, um, different, uh, needs from the customers, products that maybe we don't have, that the customer would want us to have. So it's a matter of finding a person that can help us find, uh, manufacturers in the Netherlands or wholesalers in the Netherlands that can sell us products that the, uh, Dutch customer would want to buy online. Um, but yeah, there's, there's, there's definitely a lot of potential there.

Sanne: Yeah. And so, the Dutch office was always performed like, like this really related to the sales or was it better?

Emanuele: I give you an example where we with the Italian, uh, the Italian side is the one that I handled the, uh, the most, uh, because of my accent, of course. Um, but yeah, for the longest time, the Dutch office was not one of the best performing, it was just one of the ones that were there, like

the Italian or the Spanish or whatever. Um, I think there was a huge increase in sales last year that make us all go okay. What's happening here? Um, so I will, I won't say that it's a market that always, um, performed this good, but yes, since last year it did really, really well. Now this year, not as well as last year. You have to, you have to think of it that last year there was a full lock down for the first part of the year. So, the sales were higher everywhere.

Sanne: Yeah true. Yeah. And it is true that the sales are mostly related to the PVC. Because you are also focusing on the PVC floors for the campaigns.

Emanuele: I am not sure because I haven't seen the data, but, uh, yeah. I mean, uh, it could be, I don't know if reality is wallpaper or linoleum, you know, uh, for what I can say. Yes. I think there are a bunch of sales with, uh, PVC things.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. Um, so you're mostly working for the Dutch office. Um, when it's about the Google AdWords and the campaigns and stuff like that. Can you tell me more about the process of creating the campaigns and keep track on them and how you deal with that?

Emanuele: Yeah. Uh, so, uh, I think the most important part of the whole campaign creation is to have a dependable keyword research, um, and also a keyword research that fits what is your purpose? Okay. So you have to first see what type of product you want to sell a, you have to set what type of conversions you want to have on that product. Or if it's something that you are interested in for sales, or you're more interested in quotation request, or you are more interested in whatever. I mean, that's something that you have to set up before you start doing the keyword research after you, you know what your goals are, you can do keyword research that is tailored to your needs, and that it than can help you with. Uh, the right ad for the right customer, because what is the point to advertise a product that every other 10 companies have, and they have it cheaper than us. Um, that doesn't make any sense because then we are just spending money because unless the customer knows us and loves us and wants to buy from us, which is not the case in the Netherlands, because we are not a brand, as like in Germany, that people, I wouldn't say they know us, but they. Uh, yeah, it's more known than that in the Netherlands. So to give you a practical example, does it make sense for us to have like a, a general campaign on, let's say PVC laminaat, which is a generic term for flooring, or is it better for us to have a campaign for a residential use PVC flooring, for example, which is like cheap, for example, uh, uh, Gerflor product that nobody else has in the Netherlands, and we can sell it as a highly, uh, maybe, uh, yeah. High-quality French made, uh, flooring, you know? Um, so yeah, I think that, that, that those would be the most important part of the, of the job. And then, uh, how you track it, you just track it and just see if they're going well or not. You can see that with how big is your CPA? Uh, how big is your return and of course, if you, you and you have to set your goals. Okay. Sorry. I'm all over the place, but I slept a lot these two nights. Um, you have to set your goals first. You need, you need to know, okay, what do I want to advertise? How much money do I have? Uh, what are, what is my keyword search? Okay. After I have this.

Okay. I would say so on these products, I made 30% margin, 40%, 50%, 10%, how much it is. After you have this data and you have in mind what your goals are, because you can say, okay, I don't care if I lose money on this product. I just want to, people to go to this page. And maybe when, while they are on this page, they can go somewhere else and buy other PVC stuff or whatever. Um, you have to set your goals, you have to set your KPIs and which are numbers that you would want to achieve. For example, I want my CPA to be maximum, whatever 20 years or my return should be a factor of five or six or four or three or two. And after you have set your goals and you set up the campaign and you let it run for a couple of weeks, let's say three weeks better. Um, then you can see this if it's going well or not. And if it's not feeling well, you have to go deeper into the campaign and into the site and to see. Yeah, try to find what the problem is. Sometimes there's no problem. Sometimes it

just doesn't work and you just have to kill it. Or other times you can find a problem and you can, um, yeah. Save the campaign and yeah, reach your goals.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and currently, um, We recognize that the campaigns for the Dutch office have had some issues. Like there was some problems. Uh, I think we already mentioned it a bit, but, um, it's probably mostly because of the, that the website isn't optimized that well. And do you already know if there are some other issues that could be involved with this?

Emanuele: Uh, I think the biggest issue is the site. Like I said, I think another issue is that for the longest time we just, uh, said, okay, we have to create a campaign, on what? PVC laminate, uh, without having a context of the market, we don't have any, uh, an analysis of the competition. We just did that. And this is not helpful for us because we, uh, this is not Germany that we know the market. We know what our competitors, what our competitors are doing. We know what the price is. Our competitors have on the same class of products that we sell. Um, so yeah, I would say site and context is the, is the thing that is lacking right now.

Sanne: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Because then, um, it's because of that Google ranks us lower.

Emanuele: You mean on the, on the, um, ads results or in general in the, uh, search engine results page for sales.

Sanne: Yes, all of it.

Emanuele: For sales. So I think our sales in the Netherlands is not good, but you saw what the problems are there. The problem is that the site is not optimized. There's a term for that, but now I'm missing it. There's no. Um, yeah, I cannot tell you it at the moment, **but the structure is all over the place**⁵. Let's put it that way. Uh, the, the internal links are wrong, the metadata is wrong. Um, so even if we have the best page in the, in the world, of course we will not help us because you have to imagine that it's a robot. A computer program that is doing the..

Other colleague: Yes and don't forget, they are making money of you.

Emanuele: Yeah. I mean, they also wanted to make money off of us, but there's, there's ways for us to pay less money and we will just try to be better at what we are doing. And so the sale is really important because that means that these people, that we're not paying for that tracking, because, yeah, it's not good.

Sanne: Okay. Um, next question. Um, This is more related to you personally. Um, work-related um, Since, uh, time is very important to have a quick process. Do you think that you have enough time related to working for the Dutch office and the online performance?

Emanuele: No, yeah, but this is a problem for everyone, everybody in this company doesn't have time, but everything you search for it, all of a sudden, you know, nobody has time, but everything is urgent.

Sanne: And is there like a really important task that sometimes you have to leave out because you simply do not have time for it.

Emanuele: I mean, yes, most of the time, the monitoring part of the, of the whole work is become secondary, unfortunately, because things come up, you have to do something else you're working. I mean, you work for a couple of days on the Dutch account, then. If something comes up for the French account and you have to focus on that and you spend a week on the French account, then you lose track of what you were doing on the, on the Dutch account. And you have to go back

at it, spend half a day figuring out, okay, here is it what I was doing, I was doing that. So, yeah. Um, uh, in general I think, uh, this is a personal limit. I can not organize myself pretty, too well, trying to improve on that, but also in a general sense. Yes. Uh, I think it's a problem that every small to medium company has, uh, not enough manpower for the things that we are supposed to do. Uh, but you have to try to, yeah, you have to try to make the best of it. Nothing much you can do.

Sanne: Okay. And then the last question already, um, if we compare all the countries with each other here at BRICOFLOOR, the officers, uh, which of them are working the best in terms of the sales, communication?

Emanuele: Yeah. Uh, in terms of sales, I would say Germany, of course, and French, France, Germany, because the company is German. So. A lot of people working for the, for the German office, not just in terms of customer care or order processing or whatever, also in terms of marketing stuff. So writing texts, making sure the metadata is fine.

Sanne: Yes. That is the best optimized site?

Emanuele: Yes, because of course it's the most important site for the, for the company. Um, so the French account, the French, uh, Um, site is working really well. Um, and those two are the other best sites rank. The French account, not only because of the French people here are amazing, but also because they have great connections with, uh, French manufacturers. I mean, the most important of them being Gerflor and that helps them a lot. Uh, having like a good connection with, with the manufacturer is very important. And also you have to take into consideration that some markets are more matured than others. So for example, uh, French people are more willing to buy stuff online, also flooring, and also make like 4,000 euros order, or something like that. Then how an Italian person is, or a Spanish person is, and this is not like a. Uh, stereotype, uh, is, is unfortunately it is the truth. So you can have in Italy the best possible relationship with a manufacturer. I think we have a great ratio for Gerflor for instance, but, uh, the market is not strong enough for them to make the extra step like they did in France and gave us the same condition that they did to bigger players, for example, like Bricoman. So on and so on.

Sanne: So, yeah. Okay. Uh, yeah, that was it, thank you for the interview and thank you for your effort in answering the questions.

Emanuele: Thank you for your help here, Sanne, with the Dutch office.

APPENDIX 6 INTERVIEW IVA MIJATOVIC

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Iva Mijatovic

Function: Digital marketing manager

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: Okay, so, um, hello, thank you for making time for this interview. Um, during this interview, um, we talk about the social media performance, um, for the Dutch department and related to the other offices for BRICOFLOOR and how this can improve the sales for the vinyl flooring of the Dutch department. So I would like to start by, uh, if you can introduce yourself and talk about the job you are doing for BRICOFLOOR at the moment.

Iva: My name is Iva and I'm the digital marketing manager at BRICOFLOOR. I'm taking care of. I started taking care of social media, um, maybe two months ago. Um, and also other digital presence. With backlinking and blogs and so on. Yeah.

Sanne: Okay. Um, and so how are you involved with the Dutch department related to the social media and online marketing?

Iva: Well, since we started planning and doing researches maybe two months ago, but we didn't work on it like full time because of the, um, yeah. Um, Yeah, we were missing like time and so on because I'm also working on some other, um, things not related to digital marketing. Um it's oh, um, so now we're in the process of actually planning everything because we were doing research on like, um, our customer personas. So we are still finishing that, but we also started a little bit, uh, with information that we have, we started a little bit with, uh, planning, um, social media channels. Um, the thing is that we have 13 countries, so it's a bit hard to organize all of them at once. So in the beginning it will probably be, um, few countries first. Like France and Germany and Netherlands probably UK too. Um, and then we will start implementing our plan to other countries too. Um, okay. So right now we are, um, yeah, so that's how I'm involved in the Dutch department. Yeah. But on the other hand, I also don't speak Dutch. Yeah. So we can just play. Um, plan the content and then we need someone from Netherlands who's going to take care of that.

Sanne: And what would the plan for social media be, what's involved with that, like, um, creating the content already that you have like, uh, some formats you can use or?

Iva: Yeah, because we want to go more into video because right now, even Instagram, for example, is turning more onto video. Not only like a catalogue photo and so on. Um, well, till now we were mostly posting photos that we got from, um, what's called the brands itself. So we didn't produce our content mostly only for Germany, but Germany has another, um, it was working different before. Um, so we want to produce our content. That's going to be a bit closer to people, not only like, uh, catalogue pictures and we, uh, wanted to post a bit more often. We wanted to go into another direction with the stories too. Um, because by now we didn't post much, much on stories. So we want to change that too, to, um, improve communication with, um, with our followers.

Sanne: Okay. So, um, it's you who is involved with, for example, the social media for the Dutch office, but are there any other people that are involved with that process?

Iva: Um, kind of, uh, I'm leading it. And, um, the other person who are also working on it with me is our designer Irina, and, uh, she's going to help with creating content and there's also Julia and Dory, she used to manage the German account. She's still going to work on it. We were working as a team and Julia is also designer. Who's going to help Irina to create content. So we are actually a

team of four people. Um, who's going to try to implement it to other countries with, uh, working with interns and so on because, um, by now every country was doing their own. And it wasn't working properly because sometimes we wouldn't have, um, someone to take care of it in advance, you know, to schedule posts and so on. And now we want to change that and have, uh, content months in advance.

Sanne: Um, and then, uh, because till now the Dutch social media account was like not active anymore. And it was also not working that well. I think. Um, what was the planning for that, like were there post published once a week or there was like, not really a, um, a system

Iva: There was kind of a system, but the thing was that, um, we did not have Dutch interns for a while. So we didn't have a Dutch speaking person at that time. Yeah. And, um, before that, even when we had, um, it was kind of hard to organize them, um, because some people are not interested in social media and they also had a lot of calls and sales and so on, **so they didn't have enough time to work on it properly¹**. That's why we wanted to change it. So while we have someone from the Netherlands that they would help us, um, with writing texts for social media and, um, schedule the content and everything, um, to write copy. So in case if we don't have someone, uh, this wouldn't happen because now we had a whole, I think like a few months, you know, that nobody did anything. And before that, I think they were posting maybe once or twice a week, even not that much, sometimes like there were weeks, without posting anything at all. So it was kind of messy and it wasn't taking care of properly, which is sad because, um, Netherlands is the third country by sales. So it's Germany, France. And then the Netherlands is the third one. Yeah. So it, it, it was kind of a big mistake.

Sanne: That there was not taken care of that much?

Iva: Yes.

Sanne: And, um, do you know how many followers we had? Like, it was not that many?

Iva: I think it was around 200 or maybe close to 200.

Sanne: Okay. And was that like really low compared to the other countries? The accounts?

Iva: Oh, well, in comparison with, um, France and Germany, uh, it was kind of low, but since it wasn't really taking care, that was kind of high.

Sanne: So that means that, um, it would make sense to upgrade the social media, for the Dutch department so it would be a good opportunity?

Iva: Definitely.

Sanne: Um, and so also the social media plan, um, would like solve this problem so that in the future, um, it's better with like a consistent plan, so that there will always be some content and there won't be like gaps.

Iva: We wanted to plan the topics, um, regarding the seasons. So for example, um, if people buy more flooring in the spring, we would post more that type of content in the spring and so on, and we wanted to connect, um, all the other presence. So it fits with, for example, if we, If we choose to post about vinyl flooring for awhile, or like one period, or if we have a new product, we know flooring and we are introducing it, we wanted to do the same thing at the same time. So for example, to post, um, **something regarding that on Facebook, on Instagram, on Tik TOK²** to write a

blog post and also do a backlinking, um, regarding vinyl flooring. Yep. So everything would be kind of connected. And it would be easier to organize and track everything. Um, so yeah, we, we wanted to plan topics in the beginning, like first and then upload the content for it and then schedule everything in advance. Because that would help, um, to not to have gaps. Yeah. I

Sanne: And that could be really important. Um, so is there a social media account currently that is performing the best compared to the other countries?

Iva: Um, I think at the moment it would be French account. Yeah. And I think that last year they have grown with a lot of followers for a while. For example, German account is not doing that well, I think the German account is more, most active, but it's not performing very well, but I think it's the problem is current content because right now, um, uh, they're posting as they posted before. So we are not touching their current plan while we are planning the future. Okay. Yeah. Uh, because, um, yeah, it, it wouldn't make sense at the moment. Um, and the French account, for example, um, they are performing well, but there are some, uh, problems kind of. That are always not used properly and so on. So there's also a lot of place, a lot of space to improve stuff, and I think they will, um, perform even better, uh, when we organize it a bit³. And when we also make rules about posting, because sometimes it's kind of hard to, when interns are taking care of social media, they come and if you don't give them a guide, how to do that. They will do their style, they will do their stuff and it's wrong. They should have a guide⁴ and then they should do the postings. Yeah. So without a guide, it's just a mess because everybody's doing it as they know. Yeah. So it's, um, I think there's a lot of space to improve every channel and every country.

Sanne: And what do you think, um, is the biggest reason that's since like German and France are both the biggest offices, why France is still better in the social media.

Iva: I think it's just, um, taking care of better.

Sanne: So they prioritize the social media more than the German office.

Iva: Well, and what they post in my personal opinion, what they post is more fitting to French people. Okay. Then what's what we're posting on German account that I think is, yeah, it's content is not, uh, appropriate to our, um, persona. Okay. So I think they're just a bit closer to posting proper stuff. Good stuff, then the German account.

Sanne: And this is also something, um, you're planning to involve in the social media plan that like for every country you'd still would have like content related to the, to the country itself.

Iva: Um, we will try to do that. The thing is that, um, since we created our marketing department, not that long time ago. And we don't have enough people really, and even me, I was supposed to manage all of it. I don't have much time because I'm also doing a lot of other things⁵ that, for example, currently they have, um, priority. And the problem is that of 13 countries, there's like at least 11 different styles. And it's hard to post, uh, same content in Germany or Scandinavia, and then Spain, and to create content separately for every country, it would take a lot of people and a lot of time. Um, and at the moment it's just not possible. That's why we wanted to start with a few countries first. Yeah. And, um, try to, uh, Make proper content for example, for France and Germany, because it's kind of similar. Um, but at the moment they're posting different things and then, um, Netherlands is also a bit different. Um, but it could go with those because the content that we're planning to do is more, uh, it's not generic, but I would say there's no, um, I don't know how to explain it, but I think it's, we are trying to create content that is going to fit to as much countries as possible, just because we don't have enough, um, uh, manpower and time to do differently. But in

the, um, the optimal thing to do would actually be, uh, to create content, one type of content for Scandinavia or for Sweden and Finland, and then different content, a bit different content for Spain and Portugal because they have their own style. And there are a bit more colourful in comparison with, um, Scandinavia. So we would somehow we'll split it a bit, but at the moment it's not possible. So we're going to do more, um, general style that we're going to try to implement with maybe some details, changing some details, but yeah, it's, it's very complicated and I wish we have only one country because that would be like a very easy thing to do.

Sanne: Yeah. So like the, the solution would be like more time and more people.

Iva: Yes.

Sanne: But that's, most of the time that's a solution.

Iva: I wish that Digital marketing is actually my only task, which it isn't at the moment, especially with the relaunch and everything, but hopefully in the future, I will have more time for it. And then it would be at least a bit easier. And then I think, yeah, I think that, uh, if we had enough time, um, and if it was my priority. We would already be somewhere with, uh, planning, but at the moment it is just not a priority. It's kind of like standing and floating around.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. And then I would like to ask you something about the backlinks, uh, because I think, um, you, or at least some people did some research about it, like compared with other countries. And then, uh, it showed that, uh, backlinks for the Dutch, uh, department would, could work really good. Um, yeah. Could you explain something like that?

Iva: Um, when we were doing some data analysis, we noticed that, um, they work much better and they'd bring sales, um, much more in Netherlands than in other countries. And we are also trying to figure out why, uh, because, um, Dutch, um, market for backlinking is not as big as for example Germany and France. Yeah. But they're still working better. So one reason could be that, um, Dutch people trust bloggers a bit more than people in other countries. Yeah. But there's also, um, a possibility that perhaps backlinking weren't properly done in Germany and France. Okay.

Examples, we also changed strategy in Germany before it was, we were doing back-linking, uh, once a week or once a month. I'm sorry. And, um, it turned out that it might be better to do it more often, like once a week. Yeah. Even though the score was lower, before we were trying to, uh, get, um, websites who had better score than us and do it once a month or once a month. But now we're trying to do it once a week. And if it's acceptable, if there's score is the same or a bit lower than ours. Um, because some research showed that, um, it's better to be, um, more consistent than just to post, on better scored websites. Okay. Um, we tried it with Germany first and it turned out well it's improved. But, um, yeah, for example, one thing that also confused me a little bit, that was that backlinking for Netherlands were also not done, um, regularly. So it's extra reason to be surprised why Dutch backlinking was doing better than other countries. Yeah. Um, and in comparison, All the other countries like Italy, UK, and everyone else. Um, I think that some of them weren't performing very well, uh, because they didn't do it sometimes for months. I think that Scandinavia did it only like few times in the past few years. Um, so it's also a bit, yeah, it's hard to compare because there were big gaps, uh, in some countries without doing backlinking and same with the Netherlands, but Netherlands performed very well. Yeah. So yeah, I'm kind of new with the backlinking.

Sanne: uh, so since we're planning to do the backlinks now more often for like, maybe three or four times a month. Um, do you think that's like the, the amount of money we agreed on to spend would

it be relevant or do you think that's, um, because sometimes it's possible to do it for like less money than the maximum. Um, so that, that amount of money we could also use for some other important stuff or maybe the social media?

Iva: Um, the thing is that in my, my opinion, yes, but currently our, um, financial status doesn't allow us really to put money in social media. Um, I think that, um, what we are allowed to spend is only a hundred euros per month for Germany. And all the other countries are doing it organically. Yeah. And I think it's going to stay the same for Netherlands also, at least for a while, until we, I don't know, get approved to spend some money on it. Um, because yeah, what I was told is to, um, invest money in backlinking not social media. Yeah. I don't really agree with it, but it's not my call.

Sanne: So if there wouldn't be anyone to like, say that, do you think that it would make sense for the Dutch department that's uh, if we had the money for it, um, you would make content not organic, but like with paid advertisements.

Iva: Definitely. Sure. I think it would, uh, bring us a lot. For example, now we have a new Instagram account and to grow it, it doesn't necessarily have to be as soon as possible, but like to grow it in some normal, acceptable timeframe, it would be needed to, um, invest some money into ads. Yeah. And, um, especially since Netherlands is our third country, if we considered sales. It's a shame that, uh, we are not inventing, investing in it a bit more. Yeah. So yeah, definitely it would be better, but okay. It's just that currently the situation is like that. Yeah.

Sanne: Okay. I think that makes sense. Um, okay. And then the last question, uh, what do you think at this moment, uh, is the most important thing for the Dutch office to improve? Um, so would that be the social media or like more backlinks, we're already going to do that, but maybe we have to prioritize it more, uh, or like maybe the campaigns with the Google ads?

Iva: Um, well, I'm not in charge of Google. I think Emanuele is doing that. But I know that, um, uh, the campaigns for Netherlands weren't set up properly before. And, um, one of the reasons why, uh, why that happened is that people who were supposed to work on it either didn't have time or they couldn't catch up. Some other interns didn't have interest in it or knowledge to, um, to write copy and so on. Yeah, so it was kind of a mess because we, uh, put a lot of money in Google ads and it's kind of hard, uh, to do it with interns. Um, in my opinion, we should have a professional, who's going to do that to take care of that amount of money. Um, so yeah, and the. Yeah, I think it's also, uh, same as with everything. Um, not enough of manpower and time to improve it. And with, um, what was the question?

Sanne: Um, what is the most important thing to improve for Dutch office?

Iva: Um, for backlinking we should follow the plan as it was like three to four times per month. The thing that I think we also discussed, or I discussed it with Silvi, was that in some smaller markets, if we do it very often, like three to four times a month after a while, um, you will not have new blogs anymore to do new collaborations. Um, and I talked about that with, uh, our, um, digital marketing advisor. And he said that even if we go back again to some blogs and some websites, it shouldn't affect our score. So it wouldn't be bad to, um, do backlinking on the same websites. Like a few months later, I don't know. So you can go back to them and it shouldn't hurt us. So we should try to do it three to four times per month. And then after maybe few months, um, or like a quarter of the year or something to go back and see the data and see how like, if it bring us something or not. And then according to that too, we change our plan a bit and each, go maybe into another

direction or maybe do it even more often. Depends on what the data will show us. And regarding social media, hopefully, um, our planning will be done soon. Yeah, I'm not sure.

Sanne: So is there like a final deadline that you have in mind right now?

Iva: it was end of March. And then we were supposed to start planning content and creating content. But the timeframe became longer because I'm working on the relaunch. Yeah. And that relaunch is currently like a high priority. Yeah. So it's going to take time, but, um, yeah, I can't really say a timeframe because, um, I don't decide on that and I get tasks from the boss. It's not really my decision. I wish I could do it more. Yeah. But yeah, I think that, um, connecting our social media channels, like Facebook, Instagram, blogs, and, um, backlinking at the same time, it should definitely, um, bring us more, um, followers. And with that, hopefully traffic. Yeah. Even though, um, like social media, shouldn't ever count on sales because you can send someone on the website or something, but it's not your responsibility, how it's going to go further. So for example, if there's a, I don't know, you send them to social media and then, um, they don't find a product they wanted uh there's no enough, um, stock. Yeah. Or maybe customer support messed it up or something. A lot of things can, can happen. So you never count on sales. There's also, um, the other reason would be that. Um, so for example, you send someone from social media to, um, website, but they don't buy immediately. They go back a few times and then they buy later. So, you can't track that. That's why you never measure sales regarding social media. Yeah, because it doesn't happen very often that people see something on Instagram or Facebook, and then they go to the website, and they buy flooring. That's worth of like 10,000 euros or 2000 or even 500 euros. It's not a decision that is made that fast. So, you can't track it.

Sanne: Um, but it makes sense that like, if we have more followers, you know, we will be known more and then eventually it could improve the sales.

Iva: The goal would be to grow followers because, um, the thing in the Netherlands is that, um, you have a lot of websites where you can buy flooring or where you can buy wallpapers and so on, but it's always separate. I think that BRICOFLOOR might be the only one, the only web shop in the Netherlands that sells all of those things on the same website. You have a lot of websites that are specialized for some specific things like flooring or carpets or wallpaper or decoration like pillowcases and, um, curtains, drapes. So it's, um, I think we have a lot of like opportunity for us is, uh, very big, but **we need to grow our, um, brand awareness⁶**. And, uh, it's a shame that it's not that big in the Netherlands as it should be. But yeah, the goal would be actually, brand awareness. Yeah, I think, uh, when I talk with some previous interns, they told me that, for example, there were surprised how much we sell in Netherlands because whenever they talk with someone and they said that they're going to work, um, their internship for BRICOFLOOR people never know who that is. So that's kind of surprising. And I think we could improve that with our social media presence. And, um, especially like even older, people are using social media now, especially Facebook. A lot of people don't pay enough attention to Facebook anymore, and everybody went to Instagram and TIKTOK and so on. But, um, in 2022, Facebook is still most used, uh, social media channel. Even bigger than TIKTOK and even bigger than Instagram and people don't know that. So, they're like, yeah. I think it's also a generation thing. Yeah. I think, um, because younger people, for example, have Instagram, but don't have Facebook anymore. They just use Instagram and TIKTOK. But the thing is that we sell the most to old people in the Netherlands. It's not nice to say old people, but there's like 50 plus 60 plus. Yeah. They're our biggest sales group. Yeah. A while, for example, in Germany, it's very young people like 18 to 24 and 24 to 34, I think it's that. And so that's why, for example, I think that Facebook would work in Netherlands. Because older people usually have Facebook. They don't have Instagram as much. Yeah. And Tik TOK, especially. Um, so I think it would

be also good if we pay attention to Facebook a bit more because we sell to that group of people in the Netherlands. So I think that, um, Paying attention to Facebook is very important. That is my conclusion.

Sanne: Okay. Um, yeah. And that's mostly it for me, so thank you for, um, uh, answering the questions, I will make something of it.

Iva: No, thank you.

APPENDIX 7 INTERVIEW RAQUEL PATRICIO, GERMAN MANAGER

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Raquel Patricio

Function: German manager

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: So, hello and thank you for making time for this interview. Uh, during this interview, we will talk about the performance of the German office and how this could be an example for the Dutch office, related to the sales of the vinyl flooring. So let's start by introducing yourself and, um, maybe you can tell more about the role you do for the German office.

Raquel: Hi, my name is Raquel, uh, I'm the head of the order processing of the German team. Uh, basically what I do is, well, I was hired to organize the team and how they process the orders, and to minimize the mistakes that they make and organize the teams so that we optimize our sales department, basically.

Sanne: Um, so, uh, do you know how many people currently are working for the German office

Raquel: For the German office, at the moment we have 15 people.

Sanne: Okay. And, uh, are they all full-time employees or part-time

Raquel: Not really. We have 13 students, one part-time and one full-time, which is me, uh, with the students basically, um, they work. Uh, it depends on which year at the university they are in, but, um, mostly they work, um, almost every day, except a day or two. And then we have two of our employees that work only three days a week. And, uh, yes, it's between some of them work, **none of them work like five days a week¹**. It's either they work three or four.

Sanne: But it's not the same as an internship. So are they working here like for a period of time?

Raquel: Yes. So they have to fulfil the, the university it's, it's a student, basically they work and study at the same time, but it's connected with the university and usually it's, uh, three years that they stay here.

Sanne: Okay. Um, so does it mean that the process of ordering and including with the customer service and all. Is that running smoothly or can some improved?

Raquel: No, there's a lot. Yes. I mean, I was hired because of the problems that they have in their, in their team, basically. It comes from the people because, um, there's not enough people. It makes, it might seem that it does have like, okay, we have 15 employees, but it's not just for sales. Like the daily sales we do offers and we do customer service. We have complaints and returns. So they are all working in those, the, in that part. Um, but the problem is if there's never someone that's here every day and they're always, they do overlap each other. There's always people here, but not if there's not someone that's here every day, if one person is missing, then we have no one basically. Because even though they are all the German team. They, for example, we have four of them. They're in the office. They're not supposed to be doing orders. We get a lot of offers, basically if a client orders above 50 square meters, we do make offers and we have to pay a lot of attention to those because if they do it wrong, we lose a lot of money. Yeah. Um, with the orders, um, at the moment we have, um, three girls doing it. Uh, including me that I'm helping now. That's why I still have the Dutch orders. Uh, we have three of them doing it. Um, but for example, one of them doesn't work on Mondays. Another one is starting now. So she's very new. She doesn't exactly like all the, how to order, how to process it. It's a lot of bureaucracy and, uh, one of them is leaving, in two months.

Sanne: Okay.

Raquel: So, um, it's very complicated and it's also, if one of them is not here, then we have, they receive hundreds and hundreds of orders in a day. So if one of them is not here, everything goes wrong. And also too, we have to point out that the Germans don't always process, uh, don't only process German orders. They process the German, Swedish, Finish, Polish, Dutch soon, and the Czech. The that's soon. So, um, yes, it might seem like 15 people is enough, but it's not organized

Sanne: And it's not enough because there are so many, uh, orders or?

Raquel: Yes, it, I mean, it's a lot of orders. They're not very well organized amongst themselves. Uh, for example, we don't have any, we don't have any log of like the orders that have been processed example, we have, we have that in the Netherlands. Whenever I order something, I write it down when I order this. And then I fill in some parts of the Google sheet and whoever comes in knows what what's happening, with that order. I don't have to communicate with them with the interns as much because they can just go and check there. But then in Germany they don't have that. Uh, I also set it up for Finland and Poland now. Um, but Germany doesn't have one in Germany gets hundreds of orders a day. I mean, they say that it takes a while to put the information there and that's why they don't do it, but it's, um, it's not, it's not the best to be honest.

Sanne: So basically no one knows, uh, how to keep track on those orders.

Raquel: I honestly, it's something that really surprised me because what they do is basically if they're looking for an order or something, uh, they, the same way I explained to the interns. Okay. If you're looking for something where the order is gone, like you can just check your emails or, uh, yes. Basically, check your emails, check for order confirmations and things like. But it's not optimal because I, for personally, for me it does not make sense, but it's also a team that has been here, students that have been here for almost three years now it's a team that's not very flexible. And those types of things are still a little bit hard to put within the team. Within the Netherlands is fine because I am doing it. And then whenever I give it to someone else I'm like, you have to do it the same way I did it. But when you come into a team where they've been set up doing stuff for the same way for 3 years, it's very difficult to, to bring in new ideas or bring in something that might seem like it's extra work. Yeah.

Sanne: Okay. Um, and then if we were already talking about the order, keep, keep track on the orders. Uh, so you already said that for Finland's, Czech, Poland. I think they also have it the, to keep track of them, with the Google sheets.

Raquel: Yes. Finland and Czech have it, sorry. Poland and Czech have it for sure. Finland also has it. Yes. Um, and, uh, and the Netherlands has it.

Sanne: Okay. And for the other departments, uh, like for France and Spain,

Raquel: uh, um, the other departments? Spain has it. Portugal has it. Uh, France. I'm not sure if they have it, but I know that almost everyone has it. The UK has it. The only two I'm not sure about. Well, the only one I'm not sure about is France, because Germany I know they don't have it.

Sanne: Okay. And, but then, um, yeah, because France and German the biggest ones, how do they keep track on it.

Raquel: I'm not sure about the French, because I do think that they, they have a better tracking of how things are like of, of their orders and stuff like that. I know they have a really proper one when

it comes to their offers. Like they have it well organized, so they know if the offer has gone through or not. I know they have that. I know that the Germans I'm including that a little bit, bit by bit with the offers. Um, but there's an office team for that. Um, but for the orders, the truth is the team that we have is not, um, it's quite demotivated because they only get work and work and work and work. And to be honest, to be doing, um, order processing for three years, it's a bit demotivating. Yes. We keep doing the same orders and when something goes wrong, it's a lot of responsibility because you still, if it's, if you order 20 boxes instead of two, then it's thousands of euros on top of you. Like it's, it's, it's a lot of pressure, so they're not very motivated. So it's a little bit difficult to bring in any type of change. But, um, what was the question? Sorry.

Sanne: Um, I think the question was related to keep circling the orders.

Raquel: Yeah. It's they just, for them it's time consuming. Yeah. And, um, besides that they also, I, to be honest, it's a team that, um, is not very caring about their job to be very, to be very honest,

Sanne: Maybe it also depends on their culture because, um, I think they're mostly native Germans.

Raquel: Yes. That's, that's, that's very true. That's very true. You can, you can really differentiate between the Spanish teams. Um, actually any foreigner working here, you can really differentiate it because it's, it's very clear that with the Germans it's they kind of take it for granted, like even the orders and things like that. For example, in the Netherlands or in the UK and Portugal and Spain, the departments I've worked in except the UK, but the departments I've worked in, I always see people trying to keep the client, you know, or going the extra mile or making if the client complaints or if the client is like, oh, but could I have that somehow it is. We always try to find a way with, uh, the Germans no. The moment there's something, I also understand that there are a lot of orders. So the more orders you have, the more problems you have, you can really see the difference between working for Portugal, Portugal. I, I ask for the clients to stay for the, uh, for the Dutch. It depends on if I see that it's going to be a big problem. I, my eh, is better. We give up, but I do notice that with the Germans, um, there's no, they don't try to keep the client. They don't care. There's a lot of that. It's, it's sad to say, but they don't care. Most of the, most of them also, also a thing that could influence that is the fact that as workers, you are afraid of getting fired as students, I mean, you can lose your whole degree because if they don't finish here, they have to start all over with someone else. But it's very difficult that that's going to happen because the company itself knows, that if we take, if we cancel your contract, you lose your whole degree. So it's a bit, the responsibility is higher for them because of the degree, but it's much harder for them to be fired. I mean, not, it hasn't happened. It's either it happened to one person in the first week or the moment you're here for a month or two, you know, it's not going to change. So I think they take the job for granted. So it's very difficult to meld a team that behaves that way. I think there's two or three people in that team that actually care the rest, it's very much a I don't care. Yes.

Sanne: Okay. Interesting. then, um, to come back, uh, to the customer service, uh, because, um, if you also know that for the Dutch departments, uh, there have been some gaps between when new interns are coming and when the current interns are leaving. Uh, but you already mentioned something about it, but then, uh, for the German office, that would never happen.

Raquel: No, there's always somebody if they're not present, but yes, but there's always a solution. There's always someone to pick up the phone. And also another thing that, uh, to demotivate the team is for example, when we didn't have the Dutch, um, interns, uh, for a while, uh, the Germans, because what happens in this company is whenever there's a, when it lacks someone to do something, the German team takes it. So that's why they're doing the Finish orders. That's why they doing the Czech orders because there's no Czech intern at the moment. So they always say pick up the slack. And when we didn't have a Dutch intern, they will pick up the Dutch calls and we didn't

have, they didn't have, um, access to the way we, we record the orders. So therefore, they were lost. They didn't know how to answer. They would pick up the call first. They would pick up in German or in English, which is not optimal, but still, and, um, and when the client would ask, oh, where's my order, they wouldn't know. Which is quite ridiculous. Then why are you picking up the phone first place, if you can help me, but, but it's, it's, it's, um, it's frustrating, but at the same time, it's also not their fault. And it can be very demotivating when you keep working like that. And people keep giving you silly, not silly tasks, but tasks that you're not prepared for. And then things like that happen. **I mean, it's not the best environment to work in.**²

Sanne: So, do you agree that the customer service experience for clients could have any influence on like sales and, uh, reputation of the Company.

Raquel: yeah, definitely. Uh, in the German office?

Sanne: Yeah.

Raquel: Yeah, definitely. Also, uh, if a person is, um, not very motivated to process the orders, trust me that person's not going to be motivated to answer the calls as well. And if they don't care when they're processing it, they're also not going to go the extra mile to, uh, to keep that client to keep the client basically to buy from us. So, um, we could definitely work on that. I feel like there's, we need this, we need to motivate people in the company. Um, but I feel like they don't believe in it anymore. Even when you say, okay, let's solve some issues. **They're very demotivated**³. They're like, yeah, nothing's going to change. Or. It's very difficult or, yes, it's just difficult to, to try. And even if you go with the right motivation, they're always like, they don't really believe in it.

Sanne: Yeah. Yeah. And what about customer service for the Dutch department?

Raquel: It would be great if we always had an intern to pick up the calls. Um, but even, so the problem when you don't have, um, I mean like, uh, someone here full time. So the problem when you don't have someone here full time is that you still have to explain to the intern what to tell. And in the beginning, it isn't the most clear, like for example, we just had, now we have another intern and, um, and it, honestly, it's not, to be honest, we had this discussion with, um, all the managers.

It's not fair because you came in, Ewan came in at the same time. You picked up the phone from the beginning, there were no issues, but it's not fair because we shouldn't expect that from some, from everyone with Ewan was a bit difficult, but I don't have time to be teaching him how to properly do customer service. And to be honest, **we came to the conclusion that everyone kind of gets bullied into it here.**⁴ It's like it's right away and it's in. And if you're not good at it, What do you do? You know, if you're not good at it, then we're like, okay, you're not good at it, but who, no one really explained to you how to do it. So it's not really fair. Um, and uh, sometimes we, we are lucky or we get people like you, and most, mostly with all the interns we've had from the Netherlands ever since I've been here. Um, everyone was quite good at it. Everyone was quite good. And, um, the only thing was that sometimes the intern took it a bit too personal, or, um, it's, it's hard to understand that the client's not shouting at you. It's shouting at BRICOFLO. And also sometimes the interns tend to try and, um, convinced, not convinced the clients, but. Uh, promise things to the clients that it's not going to happen, just so they stop shouting at them. Yeah. But then that causes extra problems. But then at the same time, you see, you don't have the proper preparation. It's not your fault that you do that. I understand. But, um, even if we have interns here all the time, if they're not prepared and if people don't have time to prepare them for proper customer service, it still doesn't work. So it still needs someone here full-time. At least to explain. **And then when the person is actually ready to pick up the phone,**⁵ then they could start, but not just being bullied into it.

Sanne: Yeah. So that's also really important thing for the customer service, because otherwise it wouldn't make sense.

Raquel: You can really tell it's very demotivating when someone calls and, uh, And they ask about, I mean, a simple question, because most of our questions are on the phone are very simple. Like how many squared meters comes in a box and it's written on the website, all the information is written on the website, but, um, it's very demotivated when the client calls and we can't help. That's why we always say, okay, you always have to sound a little bit more fancy, but like, oh, I need to talk to the department or something. But still, it would be great if the interns knew a bit more so that the clients would feel more trust. It's hard. It's still hard to buy online. So it would be great if you would call someone and that person would put in trust, like would trust you afterwards. Because if I call on, I got to an online store to buy something, that's going to be over a thousand euros. And I'm confused. I mean, it's flooring. When I started working here, I didn't know anything about flooring and then you call, and you ask the person, the person knows exactly how as much as you do. I wouldn't buy it. It's like that that's the same. I wouldn't trust it at least.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and I think you already mentioned it, but so there are three people more involved with the order processing. Yes. That's including you or

Raquel: no. No.

Sanne: Okay so four. And then, um, the other people that work here, like the students and stuff, they all have like one job. They really have to do like the customer service or the social media or anything, do they have to like, do everything?

Raquel: Yeah. So, um, the three girls that worked directly with me . Uh, one of them is being trained at the moment to do more the accounting side of the company. So basically she will be part- time order processing and customer service, the, all of them do customer service, all of them do, um, order processing. Um, but they're more focused on that. Then we have the offers team. What they do is basically offers. Uh, they also pick up the phone, all of them pick up the phone, all of the German team. Um, then we have some people that deal a lot with complaints and returns. So we get them a lot. Um, yes, those are. It's more specific to that area, but somehow one of, I know it's two of them, but I know one of them always helps with orders. He always helps with customer service helps with a lot of things, to be honest. Um, then we have, um, a woman that comes in, she only picks of the phone. Uh, she comes, I think twice a week. Just to pick up the phone. Uh, we have one for samples that, oh, she also comes two times a week to order the samples for the clients. Uh, yes, I think that's about it.

Sanne: Okay, good. And since they're not using like the, um, the Google sheets for the order to keep checking the orders, um, what's the communication channel they use to have a sort of system.

Raquel: They do have a nice Google, not really a sheet, but like an organization tool that they use, where they put, for example, oh today I process I process because the way they process orders is completely different from the way the Dutch process the orders. As we go through which orders we got and, um, we process them, right. We go through Magento. We say, we see which orders we got and we process, they go through bank accounts and, uh, through PayPal, through basically channels of receiving the money. So basically what they define is okay. Uh, Ozk y, one of them, uh, we'll do commerce bank and PayPal today. So they go and see which money there is. And then they look for the order and then the process, the order. Um, and then they do that for all the marketplaces and everything like that. Um, there, and then they write in the sheet today. Ozk y did it today. This person did it today. That person did it. Uh, but then in terms of communication, or for

example, if you're looking for an order, I think all they do is. Um, check the emails. Also, they, when they send the confirmation, they always send it with, um, a signature. So then that's how you can find out if who did that order, because when they send the confirmation on Magento, they right there like their name, of course one can change them, but yes, you can change that, but basically that's how they, they have the communication. Uh, with returns and things like that, basically, that's it. They don't have any clear place to put orders or any type of thing like that. Their communication is basically two, 3CX and mails. They also organize their, um, their, um, mail, like on outlook. I know they have, um, a folder for each one of them, the "mitarbeiter". So each one has a folder and.

Basically, they put tags and things like that, and they send it to, to each other. And once they are done, they put a tick, like a tick in green one, and then they move it to done. So basically that's it. So that's how they communicate with each other.

Sanne: Okay. And, um, then something else, uh, because as far as I know, The French and German office are the biggest one and they both have like a second company

Raquel: Uh, the French have a second company. They have an avenue du Sol. Yes. With BRICOFLOR we are owned by Scharpenack. Oh yeah. Yes, we are owned by Scharpenack, but, um, we don't really. I mean, we order some stuff through Sharpenack, but it's not like we, it's not, yeah. It's not a different company. What they do have is the showroom. So we also have, that's another problem because we have to showroom. So once you're at the showroom, you have clients that come to see your products and stuff like that. So whoever's at the showroom still has to order, to process orders and still has to pick up the phone and then has clients there. So if someone is listening here and the phone keeps ringing, then we don't pick up because the person is answering to someone at the show. Me. So it's, it's a lot of things in one day. And even though 15 people is not enough, it's not, if it does not work. There's not really. Um, yes, it does not work. Yeah.

Sanne: So although there are 15 people working, it's still too big the tasks?

Raquel: Yes because, because no one is here every day, like, it would be great if we had here someone at least five of them here every single day. Yeah. And then, but even so, yeah. Okay.

Maybe five of them to do customer service and. Um, and then we could, because, okay. Maybe they managed to do as much as they're supposed to do, but there's so many mistakes happening. Yeah. There's so many, we lose money in silly things. It's like, yeah, they do it. But do they do it well, it's like they do it, but do they do it? Well, that's the problem. Yeah. So that's basically it's, even though it might be enough to keep the company running the mistakes that we get. I mean, I could give you examples of, uh, they took over the Dutch, um, office for two weeks or whatever it was. I don't remember how long. And I came back and they were like, Orders that were wrong, because of no communication, the orders, the client asked to cancel the orders and the order wasn't cancelled.

And we just get noticed by the client receiving, I think it was a 3000 euros order. And the client is one, that one is you sending us, you are sending me this, but I already, you already refunded me the money. I don't want this anymore. I don't want to pay for it. And it was like, but how is that possible. The order is cancelled, but no one communicated. And I remember at the time we had the intern, and I don't know how they communicated, uh, between themselves. Um, but, um, with the intern, he was also confused because I know he knew how to process orders, but he was probably confused. Like he probably didn't know what to do, but without any communication, a lot of things like that happen, a lot of them. And, um, And for example, there's also, uh, recently, um, one of them processed the order wrong, and then we got a refund of, uh, we got a refund. No, sorry. Uh, **we ordered, we processed the order wrong**⁶. And then the client complaint, after a while that something was missing. And instead of, we have connections with companies and stuff like that, you can ask most of the times, can you send this for free, because something went wrong? Okay. And

usually they do that, but when it's two different people doing it, um, and it was a department of orders that messed up and basically the, yes, the one who received the order, she messed up. Then the complaint department received the complaint of we missed we're missing something. And just the, that we had to pay an extra 50 euros. To deliver, um the skirting boards. Yeah. I mean, it's quite important. The box is not even 50 euros and we had to pay 50 euros and the client didn't pay to us because it was a complain and, you know, and there was no communication and that's it. I mean, it's small things, but it might, 50 euros might not mean a lot for a company like this, but it does mean it adds up and it does add up, I mean, I know.

Sanne: Okay. Uh, yeah, I think that will be it. Uh, is there anything you would like to ask yourself that's uh, you think it's relevant or no. Okay. Then, um, I want to thank you for your time and answering all the questions.

Raquel: No problem. All the best.

APPENDIX 8 INTERVIEW EMILIE ROL

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Emilie Rol

Function: French manager

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: Thank you for making time for this interview. Uh, during this interview, we will talk about, uh, the performance of the French office and how this could be an example, uh, for the Dutch office and how this can relate to improve maybe the sales focused on the vinyl flooring for the Dutch office. Um, so maybe we can start by, Uh, introducing yourself and, uh, um, talk about the job you're doing for BRICOFLOR at the moment. Okay.

Emilie: Uh, so I'm Emilie. Well, I started as an intern at BRICOFLOR in 2016. Um, then, uh, they offered me a full-time contract. So I stayed as a customer service agent and now, since September, I'm the manager of the French office.

Sanne: Okay. Perfect. Um, and do you know how many people are working for the French office at the moment?

Emilie: I don't have the right number, the exact number, but I would say around 10. Okay.

Sanne: And, um, is there also information about how many people are there like full time or is it more like interns?

Emilie: Um, so we have at the moment, four persons as full-time, uh, contract, we have, uh, two interns and, uh, two students.

Sanne: How is the structure of the office, so is there just one person doing the customer service and one is responsible for marketing.

Emilie: Uh, actually we have like Marine, she's taking care of the marketing part. She's also taking, Yeah, she's more taking care of the marketing, because we are taking care of BRICOFLOR France, Belgium, and also, a third, uh, shop Avenue du sol. So she is kind of the marketing manager for Avenue du Sol, but she's also taking care of, um, the marketing for BRICOFLOR. So everything that, uh, regarding, uh, AdWords and stuff like this, uh, about the customer service, we are all working actually, uh, we are on, um, related to the customer service. Um, the interns are mainly taking the phones and answering emails, but every time there is like a, uh, problem with an order or something, I'm here to help them. And Yasmina also, um, let's say we are like sharing the manager job, um, because that's a lot of work.

Sanne: Okay. Um, and because, uh, for the Netherlands, um, I think you also know that, uh, at the moment, it's mostly just the interns that are taking care of. For example also the customer service. Um, so would you advise this sort of structure also for the Dutch departments to have like, um, at least some full-time employees, uh, that are native Dutch who can take care of the customer service and the marketing because now are, uh, like, uh, many times there are some gaps between the customer service and like new interns that are coming.

Emilie: Yes, actually I think for every office we should have at least one full-time person, one manager, um, to supervise the interns because that's normal at the beginning, you don't know everything and you are just an intern¹. So basically you here to learn and you have to have somebody to teach you how to do the right thing.

Sanne: Great. Perfect. Um, and um, currently the German office and the French office are probably

the, the biggest ones regarding sales. And, uh, also maybe how many employees there are working. Um, and, um, they have an idea, maybe why the French office is performing like this, that like that.

Emilie: Well, I would say that we are really taking care of the customers like we, for as they're just not like a number, you know, we are just really thinking, uh, doing things personally, we are trained to, uh, answer fast to their email or to their calls and to give them as much information as possible. And every time they have a problem, our goal of the day is that at the end of the day, everything is fine again. Of course, that doesn't work every time, but we are really taking care of all of our customers, we are not just like, like pretending to take care of like some customer service could do. Um, and about the sales I guess, um, that we are working a lot on Google ads, Google AdWords. So I guess that helps a lot and we are taking care of out of our, um, social media a lot too. So, I guess that's why it is working so well.

Sanne: Yes, okay. And, um, do you also think that how many people there are working, uh, right now, um, is that enough or do you think that there could be even more people working there.

Emilie: **To me, we would need at least two more full-time employees, because we have so many tasks to do².** Um, yeah, to me, that's not enough as well, in the future we would have more people in the team because that's important **if we want to make it grow and grow efficiently³,** you know? Um, yeah, we definitely need more people.

Sanne: And, uh, how is it about communication between the team of you? Um, is there maybe some, a file that you keep track on, um, the orders or anything that's happening?

Emilie: Actually, we believe that **communication is the main, uh, the most important factor, uh, in the team⁴,** we are really like more like, like a friendly team. We are all friends in the team and we really want to communicate everything because **we learn with the time that bad communication means bad work⁵.** So that's really important to us. So every time somebody needs information, they can ask anybody from the team, even the interns, we consider them more like employees, you know, we don't just like consider them as interns. They are fully part of the team and everybody is a lot to give ideas and to help everybody. So, yeah, I think communication is really, really important.

Sanne: Okay. That's great. Um, and could it even be improved more the communication or is it just really working really well?

Emilie: No, I think there is always place for improvement. We are, we tried, for example, some month ago to use Meistertask that is like, um, a website where you can, uh, you can like list all the tasks you are doing and all the other ones of the team has access to your tasks so they can see what you are currently doing, what you are planning to do on the next week and etcetera. Um, but, um, we are actually, we were just like two days ago talking about the fact that we would love to have like, you know, like kind of a whiteboard in the office so everybody can leave his task and that we'd be more visible for everybody because that's really important. Then you can see who has time to take care of these or no, you know, like that there is always room for improvement.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and would you advise this, uh, sort of strategy for the communication to the other offices as well?

Emilie: Yeah, I truly, I think without communication, that's not working, so everybody should have his own organization, you know, but they should like really communicate because, um, that's what teamwork is, you know, like if you don't communicate you basically, you basically work by yourself, but that cannot work when you have so many, so many stuff.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. And, um, what do we think about the motivation? You already told us a bit about it, that everything, everyone is like, uh, friendly to each other. Um, Uh, but sometimes a thing that

people can, uh, become demotivated is also because they just don't have enough time to complete the task or anything. But do you think that the, the employees for the French office are all still very motivated to perform all the tasks.

Emilie: Yeah. Actually I think we are all motivated and the fact that we are all friends, that's making, um, everything more easy and for example, one month ago, one of the team member was like feeling a bit down. And so I went directly to the boss to explain that she needs some more help. And we managed to, um, to share the task a bit better. You know, I think communication inside the team, but also with the boss is really important to improve everything. So, yeah, that happens.

Sometimes we. Yeah. That's why you work in a team. That's what the team is made for that's to cheer you up, you know? Yeah. We'll find solutions together. Okay.

Sanne: Yes that's great. And, uh, do you think it could also be an option to, um, have contact with the employees of the other departments as well? Um, like what they're doing or, um, if there's any news, like I know that there's like a newsletter, but, um, do you think that we need it even more to just motivate everyone and keep the communication high?

Emilie: Yeah, actually. Um, I think especially with, uh, product management department, that's really important because sometimes they put products online and we are not aware about that.⁶ Once again, last month I went to see Mr. Scharpenack and I asked him, uh, I asked the product manager team to, management team, to do an email per week saying what they are planning to do for the next week. So everybody can know a bit what going on, you know. And about the motivation of the entire, um, company, I think it's also important to, um, create some small events, for example, you know, um, I don't know if she were already here, but before, um, we went out for example once per month doing like a baking contest⁷ or, uh, we were, I don't know, you know, doing a lot of little events and that was making people more, making people more. That was taking everyone more part of the team, more part of the company and more happy, you know, to come to work⁸. So I think it's really important to improve that.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Well, that's good to know. Um, and, uh, I was informed, so I don't know if it's true, but is it correct that there were, uh, uh, in the past, uh, three managers working for the French office and now it's only you.

Emilie: Yeah, no, we had only one manager. Um, but when he left so in September, I took, uh, the, I took his place basically and I was, um, like taking care of the French office with, um, with Juliette. Who's now replaced by Yasmine. Juliette left anyway, but basically, I'm not the only one managing the office, you know, I'm like, we are like more like, um, a duo, you know, because that's, we have a lot of people, we have a lot of work and then it is really hard to handle everything. So, um, yeah, I'm more taking, taking care of the, um, the part where you talk to the manufacturers and Yasmina is taking part or taking care of all the price, the invoice, do quotations for customers, some stuff like this. Yup.

Sanne: Okay, and, um, was there a time or is it at the moment that the Sales for the French office are the best or was there in the past, like a better time, maybe it was last year, because of the lockdown of course.

Emilie: Yeah. During the lockdowns it was really hard. Uh, we did a lot of sales for sure, but, uh, we had to work a lot, so it wouldn't be, that was the best time for us. Um, but now it's a bit tricky with all the price increases. Um at the moment it is really hard to, um, uh, that's really hard because you have to change prices every, every week. Uh, basically some prices that you changed, uh, has to be changed again, you know, so that's really, really tricky. So we also have to communicate more with our customers to tell them, okay, if you want to, uh, enjoy the price you have at the moment, you

have to order fast, because we cannot promise you that next month you will be able to have the same price, you know? So I wouldn't say that now is the best time.

Sanne: Okay. Yeah. And, but that's just because of the price system.

Emilie: Yeah. That's because of the whole situation I would say.

Sanne: And was there a time that there were working even more people than right now?

Emilie: I don't think so. When I arrived, we were only with three people. So we just had more and more people with the time, you know.

Sanne: And you think that's even better to have even more people.

Emilie: We need to, because the company is growing and we need people to, to take care of everything, except if it would be only three people, we couldn't do as much as now.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Oh, that's good. And then already last question. Um, I think I already asked you a bit about the Dutch office, but, um, currently they're only working interns for the Dutch office and of course we have Raquel as the manager. But, um, do you think that if we would follow the strategy for the French office, so more manpower, um, the better communication, um, division of tasks with the customer service, with like, with the phone and stuff, uh, do you think that the Dutch office could be improved also regarding to the sales.

Emilie: I guess so, yeah, I would say the first thing you should take care of is really like please the customer and, um, answering emails as fast as possible. Um, really invest yourself in like finding solutions, um, quickly and maybe. I don't know about AdWords, but maybe about the social media, maybe make it like, uh, have a plan, you know, uh, like everyday you are posting stories or, um, post on Instagram or whatever. You know to increase the views. Yeah. **Communication. That should really be the main, the main thing.**⁹

Sanne: Okay. No. Yeah. I think that's fully clear. That were all my questions I needed to know. So, um, okay.

Emilie: I hope I answered everything, right. Like that would help you.

Sanne: Yeah. Yeah. It was really helpful. Yeah, for sure. So, yeah, I would like to thank you.

Emilie: No problem. And I wish you a good day.

APPENDIX 9 INTERVIEW RAIMUND SCHARPENACK

Interviewer: Sanne van der Hoeven

Interviewee: Raimund Scharpenack

Function: Founder of BRICOFLOR

Location: Wuppertal, Germany

Sanne: So, hello, thank you for making time for this interview. Uh, today we will talk about, um, the performance of the Dutch office and, um, how we can improve the sales related to the vinyl flooring, uh. So, maybe we can begin by introducing yourself and, um, the function you have in the company. Yeah.

Scharpenack: Okay. So, um, good morning. First of all, my name is Raimund Scharpenack Um, and I am the founder of BRICOFLOR. So in 2006, I created the company in Germany and after two years we opened our store in France and Belgium. And the following years, we also opened different stores like the Dutch store as a way of, yeah.

Sanne: So since the interview is focused on, uh, especially the Dutch department. Um, do you think that the Dutch department has a lot of potential to become a bigger department than it is right now and, uh, also related to the sales? Um, and why do you think that is?

Scharpenack: Yeah, definitely the Dutch market is very, very interesting for us because Dutch, um, the Dutch customers, uh, are very rich customers, they are used to buy online. So the density or the percentage of sales that is done online compared to the traditional, um, market is very high compared to other countries in Europe and combined with the, um, power to buy products, um, uh, in general, The Dutch market is very, very, very interesting for us also regarding the flooring sector in general, the Dutch market is, uh, in the flooring sector, um, very interesting for us because all the products we are selling, like vinyl flooring, um, carpet tiles. Um, are very important for the Dutch market. For example, in the Southern countries, people are more used to buy ceramic tiles. It is a little more difficult for us, but **the Dutch market is very, um, uh, comparable to the German market. So it's, it's near for us to deliver, the products are more or less the same¹, but, um, yeah, we combined with the, um, with the money the Dutch people have and, um, Um, the wish to buy it online².** It's a very interesting country for us.

Sanne: And, um, right now it's still not that big. Um, so it's, there may be a thing that you can think of that, uh, could be improved so that it would be better. So maybe think about manpower.

Scharpenack: Yes, definitely. Definitely. Definitely. Yeah, but **it's very difficult to get good manpower, um, uh, here in Wuppertal for the Netherlands³.** So we always tried to find some people. We also had fixed employees for the Dutch market, but unfortunately, um, we noticed, uh, after a while that, um, you know, the employees were not very useful for us. So this is why at the moment we are, um, uh, we start to grow in the Netherlands a little bit slower than we could. By using, um, uh, the potential with interns like you. Um, and we try to do, for example, everywhere where the Dutch language is not necessary for, so that means for instance processing the order or, um, um, um, regarding, um, regarding new products or something like that, we try to do everything what is possible with English in English or German. We try to do it with other people. Use the Dutch people just for language skills.

Sanne: Okay. But so it would be helpful if we had at least one person that would be here like

all the time, instead of only an intern.

Scharpenack: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Definitely. **So the market is interesting enough for us to hire at least one or two fix employees⁴** that would be possible, I believe.

Sanne: Okay. Um, and then about the communication in the company, um, do you think that communication is very important, maybe also for the Dutch department but for the overall communication as well?

Scharpenack: Definitely, communication is very important to create, um, efficient workflows in general. And at the moment I noticed that our process, our processes are not, um, very, um, perfect, organized. So this is also something we are working on at the moment, but especially our Dutch department is a little bit difficult to handle because there are different people who are responsible for it. So sometimes it's Ms. Blesa who should have sometimes it's, it's, it's Ms. Patient sometimes or it is Ms. Mijatovic , or regarding the sales with Ms. Patricio. Um, this is a little bit difficult to be honest. Um, but learning by doing, we try always to, um, set up new processes and we hope to be able to improve the organization.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and, uh, do you also think that the communication could be in relation to the motivation for the employees. That there is like a relationship.

Scharpenack: Definitely, definitely. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Um, for example, regarding interns like you, we try to now, um, a new way to give them a goal or task. So for example, we defined when you came here, before we set together, and we said, okay, we have an intern and we want to give her a task. And that is measurable. That is. Um, logic and interesting. So we said, we define just one product group in that case, the vinyl flooring. And we want to try to teach the intern to do everything related to that product portfolio, um, for online marketing. So that means, um, first of all, you had to learn something about the products that you understand what technical data are relevant, for example. And then we wanted to teach you how to write texts, how to see if a text is SEO, optimized or not. Um, we wanted to teach you how to use, um, uh, backlinking or social media, um, activities to finally improve the organic ranking of our vinyl flooring categories. And I believe to define such a project that is clear and manageable for a timeframe like you are here. I believe this is a very, I hope that this way is motivated enough to fulfil.

Sanne: Yeah. It's really interesting. Uh, and then, um, the German office and French office, if I'm correct, they're the biggest departments at the moment. Um, Both related to also sales, but also that they're working the most people in those offices. And why do you think that is, is there like a logical reason for that?

Scharpenack: Uh, yeah. Germany, because we are based in Germany, we know the most about the job market. **We have a very good relationship to our manufactures based in Germany, from historical part.⁴** Um, we are, we have a good relationship to the, um, uh, German, um, Manufacturers. So finally, I believe this is why we are very strong in the German market. In France also because we started very early. So as I said, in 2008, when we were the first online shop in, um, in, in France for flooring products and for wallpaper, there were no other one before. So, um, this is also a little bit historical that we are very strong in France. So from the beginning on, we could create very good relationships also with the manufacturers there, we

created our own company there. So we are really a local customer. Whereas for example, in the Netherlands, we are as BRICOFLOR GmbH located in Wuppertal, Germany. So we are always off the scene from the Dutch manufacturers or we are seen more as a foreign, um, company and not like a local company⁵.

Sanne: Yeah. Yeah. And, um, what could be an option for the Dutch department to sort of copy from, uh, those bigger departments, um, to perform better or to improve.

Scharpenack: Yeah, yeah, I believe, um, first of all, if there are people working who are motivated and want to improve something, if they want to, to work on the mission, I believe this is some first thing that is very important. Sometimes I noticed that we have interns here that they are very interested to improve their skills. And then we can see that they are very successful. So they get the task, they get a project and finally, they, they, there are relevant results after a while. But sometimes we also have interns here where they only want to, to get a paper that they were here for the necessary time for their exams. And then finally, we can see that the results are not as good as it could be. So I believe the person character counts a lot for us. And then finally, um, I think the communication from the intern is also very important. So for example, if you are an intern that is interested in the task and you ask for example, several times, Ms. Patient, oh, what can I do to improve it? Do you have some more ideas? So if you are somebody who also goes to the different people and you ask Ms. Blesa for help, you ask Ms. Patient for help, you will also get more trainings and then you can improve your skills. So for example, I remember two years ago, we hired a very, very great intern from Finland and with her, she was both, Finnish and Swedish. And with her we started from zero in Sweden and Finland. And she was so motivated and she was, she was really hardworking and she learned a lot. So it was, um, a very good relation between her and us, as a company because, um, yeah, she, she got a lot of power from us. Um, but also she got many trainings. So regarding things like, uh, texts, uh, rules, like privacy rules. So she learned from zero everything that is necessary to create a company more or less. So that was very interesting for her and very helpful for us finally. And still today, we have a good relationship to her. So we have, from time to time, we have, um, we are writing some emails and, um, um, it's it, she made the project a little bit being her baby. Um, I believe this is very important.

Sanne: Oh, okay. And then about the online marketing, um, because, um, we have running some campaigns, I think Mr. Pinci is doing that, but sometimes it's not working that well. Is there a reason for that?

Scharpenack: Yeah, I believe a problem is that in the past, sometimes the interns, were not trained in the beginning enough⁵ to understand what are the correct keywords mentioning to the products. If it needs, for example, I don't have a good example, but, um, um, normally it is necessary to create a very focused, um, set of keywords to the corresponding landing pages. I believe in the past, there was sometimes a problem that keywords were not fitting correctly to a landing page. For example, if you have a keyword like PVC laminaat, is it connected to the general PVC flooring category? So PVC vloeren. Or is it connected to the Click Vinyl flooring so PVC click. So what is the correct landing page to use the keyword for PVC laminaat. In the past this interpretation was done, not very clear and someone interpreted it like that. Another one did it in the other way. So for Google, it's not clear if we want to rank for the PVC laminaat with PVC vloeren or another category. And this is why it's a little bit, um, difficult or why we had some problems, especially in the past with it. This is also why we said when you came. We want to start, restart, from zero regarding the vinyl flooring category.

So we can repair all the mistakes that were done in the past. We want to clear now, um, um, our keyword lists, we want to make sure that we only use the good ones for the, um, correct, uh, landing pages. Yep. Yep. And then if the same is done for AdWords, for example. So if the AdWords descriptions and the set of keywords is fitting to the landing page, then it should be fine.

Sanne: So that's also, um, the optimizing, the, the texts on the website also relates to that. Scharpenack: Yes. That's the thing.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. And then also the, the blogs, the back linking is related to the online marketing. Um, we already, basically we said that we will try to do it now three or four times a month instead of once in a while.

Scharpenack: yeah. Yeah. This is normally a rule in all departments in all the parts of our countries that we try to publish one article per week. Um, because, um, the blog articles or the backlinking articles try to, um, attract some long tail keywords, like for example, How to choose a good vinyl flooring. So we can measure that customers are searching for such phrases and we have no category page that could rank for such a keyword in this way. **We use the blog or backlinking articles, um, as an entrance to our web shop at the end⁶**. So we try to, to get the customer on our website who is searching for such a phrase. And then finally we recommend some products and we navigate the customer from the blog, from the backlinking article to our website, to the, to a landing page.

Sanne: Yeah. Um, and I believe that there's also, uh, currently a social media plan. Um, but at the moment there's not really a priority. The other things are more important right now. Um, But what is the sort of plan for the social media?

Scharpenack: So, um, regarding, um, social media, like for instance, its the same procedure also for the other online marketing activities in the, for the Dutch market. For example, we are very lazy compared to Germany or France. So with the manpower we have in Germany or France everything structured better and the organization is much better. Yeah, of course. Yeah. So for example, regarding social media activities, um, we try to, or we, we publish, we publish more or less daily, um, some, um, pins on Pinterest. So some images with a good content, and we can see that we get a lot of traffic by our Pinterest to our German or French website, for example. Regarding Instagram or Facebook. For example, we, we have collaborations in Germany and France with different influencers. We are delivering them for free products and they are installing and they make pictures before and after the installation. So in Germany, we have this in France, we have disciplinary action and we are, we are working on it, but we want to professionalize that in a way. So this is why even Ms. **Iva Mijatovic, who for example, has now the task to create a general plan for social media activities⁷**. And we want to, to, to have a spill over effect from what we are doing in Germany and France to do it also in these smaller countries.

Sanne: Yeah. Okay. Um, and then, um, what would be the most important thing for the online marketing to improve right now?

Scharpenack: I believe the most priority has SEO because we need to improve our organic ranking. So especially in the Netherlands, because the search volume is very high, but unfortunately also the CPC. So price per click on Google AdWords is very, very high compared for example, to Italy or Spain, just to give an example, maybe in Spain with pay-per-click nines

cents or 10 cents or eleven cents, but for the Netherlands it is sometimes more than one euro. Yeah. So that makes us very, um, this is very expensive for us to buy traffic and this is why it makes sense for the long-term to have a good organic ranking for relevant categories to get traffic for free finally. Yeah. So this is why we want to improve now category texts, while we want to do more back linking and publish more blog articles related to long tail keywords so that we try to get a better organic ranking for some relevant categories.

Sanne: Yep. Okay. That's clear. And then already the last question, um, about the customer service, uh, because now, um, I think it's a bit, um, difficult because there are always interns, there are sometimes gaps. So that means that, um, for that period of time, there is no customer service or the German office will take care of it. But do you think that the customer service is really important?

Scharpenack: Yes, definitely. Definitely. But, um, I believe here, um, we close the circle you started with one of your first questions regarding the HR management for the Dutch office, because finally the problem is that we do not have a fixed person who is speaking Dutch. So in the past we try to do different things. Sometimes we had, for example, somebody, as I told you there was a fixed employee, it was a Dutch man living in Wuppertal, but unfortunately he had absolutely no feeling for E-commerce, let's say. And so he was not fitting very well into our company. Um, the, in the past, we also used the interns to do not only, um, marketing, but also the customer service. And the problem was that when we gave them a task. Like I explained to you to work on the vinyl flooring to measure organic trend today and after the internship to see if, um, to see if there is an improvement, um, we could see that unfortunately many interns were frustrated because they lost a lot of time doing customer service and they did not want to do that finally. So, yeah, we could not improve the organic rank and we could not improve anything regarding online marketing or the website. So at the end we didn't improve anything. And this why we said, now we want to, this is also a test. It's the first time that you do it like that. And when you came here, we said, no, we try to do as much of the customer service by the German team. So that the Dutch intern has as most time as possible to work on the marketing things.

Sanne: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's clear. Um, and then the really the last question. Um, so like all of the online marketing, customer service. Um, maybe more manpower, uh, all of the things we talked about. Is that a reason why the sales could be improved for the Dutch office or what do you think is the reason that we could improve the sales for the Dutch department?

Scharpenack: Yeah, I believe, um, if we would have more manpower and a better structure for the Dutch department, I believe that we would, we would be able to, um, uh, to improve our sales a lot. Because we can see that, uh, there are many online shops in the Netherlands, just selling flooring products, just selling wallpaper products and they are just there in the Netherlands. So that means that we as BRICOFLOOR, we can share many costs and we can divide it by the different countries. For example, as you know, we, we are doing our relaunch. We have a new website, a new technology, and this is a very high investment and our Dutch competitors, for example, they have to earn money to be able to invest something like that only by selling in the Netherlands, but we sell in more in many more countries. So that means if we have an investment of a hundred thousand euros for us, we use that investment. We can divide it by the different departments. So this is where we can be much more competitive in a country like the Netherlands, like than how our competitors could, could be. Yes. So we have, uh, we

really have potential. But at the moment. Yeah, it's a little bit difficult. And especially now in general, with the development on the market with the inflation, et cetera. No, it's a very difficult period. Yeah,

Sanne: Yeah, I understand. That is it. Thank you for your time and for answering all the questions. Scharpenack: I wish you all the best.

Sanne: Thank you.