

COMPLEXITY MADE SIMPLE

For more than 70 years, Maars Living Walls has offered standard and custom solutions for a wide range of industries. With a reputation for aesthetics and high-quality walls, this Dutch company delivers solutions to 45 countries through a worldwide network of selected dealers in Europe, North and South America, the Middle East and South Asia.

Maars Living Walls was founded as a lighting fixtures company in 1946 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. When the company moved to Harderwijk – an hour east of Amsterdam – in 1960, they expanded operations to incorporate ceiling fixtures and eventually also wall systems. Today, Maars solely focuses on walls – especially Living Walls.

“Living Walls summarizes all the possibilities of our walls,” says Harriët Bos, marketing and communications manager at Maars. “Walls come to life by adding colors and integration. They affect your surroundings, life and work because it’s not just partitioning – you can add TV screens, ventilation and even hang furniture on our walls.”

Creating Maars 4D

Maars’ first encounter with Configura was at the NeoCon World’s Trade Fair in Chicago, Illinois, USA. The company was researching software solutions to streamline the sales process. Only a few months after the initial meeting, the project to create Maars’ CET Designer Extension, Maars 4D, took off.

Harriët Bos, Marketing and Communications Manager at Maars Living Walls.

CASE STUDY: **MAARS LIVING WALLS**

Maars is the world market leader in the field of partition walls. They combine years of experience by effortlessly merging special innovations, aesthetics and performance. Maars pushes the boundaries, continually making progress in the fields of design, soundproofing, multimedia and fireproofing. The integration of new high-tech systems and intelligent solutions in walls create a wealth of new opportunities.

Maars brings walls to life with the unique concept of Maars Living Walls. Maars offers both standard and customized solutions in, for example, offices, airports, factories, cinemas, shops and hotels. Also in the public sector, Maars has taken the lead with applications including hospitals, public institutions, universities and schools.



The biggest benefits we've seen with introducing Maars 4D are better lead times and a significant lower risk on mistakes. In only six months, the manual input for our orders have declined from 80 to 20 percent. This is due to the fact that Maars 4D has changed the entire structure of our company. The sales process has been streamlined for everyone that's involved with sales, engineering, calculations and ordering of Maars components. Instead of ordering manually through our ERP system, everything goes through Maars 4D.

Sepp Voois, IT Manager at Maars Living Walls.

Maars 4D consultant Richard Schreuder – under the leadership of IT manager and Maars 4D project manager Sepp Voois – has been part of the project from the beginning and is responsible for implementing Maars 4D.

"Before we started using CET Designer, we worked internally with a plugin that we had developed ourselves for AutoCAD. Everything was in 2D and all calculations, elevations and documentation had to be done manually," Richard says. "When we were looking to upgrade our systems, we knew we needed something that could help us with visualization for our customers. We were also looking for a platform that could help us reach new markets. CET Designer was a great fit for both."

Walls are complex – Maars 4D is not

Maars was also looking for a tech company with previous experience working with walls because specifying walls quickly can become very complicated. Maars' walls, for example, only come with minimum and maximum measurements but, other than these limitations, their walls can be anything and everything in between.

This flexibility offers virtually unlimited options for the specifier – but it also means there are a lot of rules for how the product works and should be built. A small change in length can mean big changes in the parts and pieces that go into the wall.

However, a company like Maars doesn't just stop there. They've taken their products – and also the complexity – one step further by making it possible to combine different systems in order to bring various product lines together.

"It's been tricky – but something that we've succeeded with in Maars 4D is to take all these rules, which make our products so complicated, and present them in an easy and intuitive way to the user," Richard says.

One test of the usability of the Maars Extension was when the company showcased it at Configura's 2016 CET Designer User Conference to more than 300 attendees.



Richard Schreuder, Maars 4D Consultant at Maars Living Walls.

“The users were very enthusiastic about how user friendly it was for such complex products,” Richard says. “The event helped us to reach potential dealerships to work with, but what we found even more valuable was the networking. We were able to talk to other manufacturers to learn what they’re doing and how they’ve solved their problems.”

Configura’s developers, who have helped to launch a number of cool CET Designer Extensions, agree that the Maars 4D Extension has hidden the complexity especially well.

“It’s an impressive Extension,” says Sofie Rönnerberg, a senior application consultant at Configura and the Maars project manager. “The products are very complex, but the Extension is created in a way that you don’t actually have to know anything about walls to be able to draw and use it.”

Releasing the Extension

When it was time for release, Maars decided to launch the Extension in two phases. First, they gave their internal sales department access to use it. This phase helped Maars to collect feedback and polish the Extension before releasing it to all their dealers.

The transition to get CET Designer into all Maars dealers was quick. In just a few months, Maars had reached 200 users, and 80 percent of all sales were being done in CET Designer with the Maars 4D Extension.

“Changing to CET Designer was not a hard transition because the whole company was standing behind it,” Richard says. “Everyone from management to engineering knew it needed to be done – it was only a question of when.”





Streamlining the sales process

One of the goals with creating Maars 4D was to streamline the sales process. Previously, Maars' dealers had to send all information to Maars' headquarters for specification. At headquarters, Maars had multiple departments that would spend days quoting and calculating designs for customers. Once an order was ready, other teams had to manually create elevation drawings and installation documents.

With CET Designer, this process has been simplified, enabling the same team of engineers to create all information by themselves in a much shorter time span.

This process has been further improved since the Maars 4D Extension was released to the external dealers. Many dealerships have become more independent since they no longer need to send all information to Maars' headquarters. The dealers can finalize calculations, quotations and order documentation by themselves. Many functions – such as creating elevations – are as easy as the click of a button.

Dealers have been reporting multiple benefits with the new solution, but the instant pricing is one of the main benefits that Maars considers a game-changer. It's a win-win for both Maars and the dealers – headquarters benefits because they don't need to do quotes for everyone, and dealerships can deliver better and faster services to their customers.

Additional benefits to customer service include the many visualization capabilities that CET Designer offers. The solution has made it easier for dealers to present their ideas to their customers.

"We work with many interior designers who want to combine our walls with their furniture interiors," Richard says. "For example, we work with some Steelcase dealers in the United States who are already used to working with CET Designer, so it's easy for them to bring in our Extension. It has also been a great advantage for our dealers in Europe since we're one of the first companies to implement it here – we're beating the competition."

Taking over development

The Maars 4D Extension is developed on the CET platform, which means that Maars can reap the benefits of being a part of a multi-industry solution – something that fits their interests. They also get access to new features that are released in the core program, as well as the option to use their own developers.

Juliana Osmalia, Production Worker at Maars Living Walls.



Maars 4D helps us provide a more advanced and efficient way to present our products, and also contributes to better support for our dealers throughout the world. One of the main reasons we introduced Maars 4D was to compete in the USA, because without it, we're not taken seriously. In Europe, on the other hand, we are the first partitioning systems manufacturer with a 3D design and order system. This will keep us ahead of our competitors.

Menno de Vries, CEO at Maars Living Walls.

Maars recently decided to hire a developer to continue development of their Extension in-house. Six months into the project, Sebastiaan Haverkate is fully up to speed and developing Maars 4D together with the team at Configura.

"I found the platform and CM programming language pretty easy to learn and work with," Sebastiaan says. "I knew very little about walls before I started here, but it's exciting to see all the possibilities."

With future developments ahead, Sepp Voois and his team are looking forward to continued partnership with Configura.

"It's a lot of fun to work with Sofie and her team at Configura," Richard says. "Sometimes it's been difficult to explain what each side needs since we know our products but not necessarily programming, and the team at Configura knows programming but not so much about our products – but I think we really succeeded in creating a great solution together."



Sebastiaan Haverkate, Maars 4D Developer at Maars Living Walls.