



Mattel



The toy giant celebrates Christmas in Europe

To keep our little ones happy at Christmas, we have to keep up with trends. One year it might be video games, another, tractors with trailers; depending on the latest craze, the consequences are different for toy manufacturers and for their logistics partners.

Sufficient amounts have to be produced, deliveries have to be made on time and adequate storage space has to be provided.

Norbert Dentressangle well and truly plays at being Father Christmas!

At Mattel, Christmas is a priority. For its French (Southern Europe market) and Dutch (Northern Europe market) warehouses, the American toy manufacturer has relied on the Norbert Dentressangle Group for eight years now. As dispatch volumes vary widely from the start of the autumn, Norbert Dentressangle increases its staff accordingly, from 80 people in January to 300 between September and November, working in shifts of 3x8. Likewise, the number of vehicles in use daily rises from 20 in January to 80 in December. This organisation is made even more complex by three parameters inherent to the toy market. Firstly, toys tend to be very bulky and need appropriate storage space. Next, the toy market is largely affected by latest trends, and in line with this, Mattel brings out new games each year. Norbert Dentressangle must be very quick to respond to be able to deliver the right quantity to customers all over Europe. Lastly, Mattel products are manufactured in Asia or Eastern Europe in a "basic" format. It is up to Norbert Dentressangle to customize them. These operations, which differentiate products, such as different pricing labels for each country, are carried out at the last minute. A great deal of dexterity is required to meet the needs of each country. For example, the Spanish toy distribution segment consists mainly of retailers, which means customization to a higher degree. For 2005, the Norbert Dentressangle Group is developing a voice controlled order preparation system, called "pick-to-voice." The aim is for staff to be more available and thus to increase productivity.

A heat-sealing assembly line at Mattel

For Mattel's French, Swiss and Spanish subsidiaries, Norbert Dentressangle's warehouse in Saint-Vulbas has invented an exclusive assembly line: a heat-sealing assembly machine.

All throughout the year, each subsidiary's marketing department prepares promotional kits including at least two toys in one pack, such as a Barbie doll and clothes, a car track and little cars, etc. The machine, which is semi-automatic, carries out the following operations: bagging several toys together; heating the furnace to 140°; stretching the film to espouse the shape of the toys; sticking on a promotional label, and bar code if necessary; and of course the final Quality Control. Between eight and twelve staff can work on this assembly line in one, two or even three eight-hour shifts.

