

AutoStore empowered by Swisslog reduces footprint by 70%

Case Study **Bleker, Borken, Germany**



Around 85,000 parts always in stock and quickly on the road. Bleker Autoteile GmbH is one of the most reliable and efficient original parts suppliers in Germany. Their nationwide delivery service makes them one of the leading suppliers of original spare parts. The company supplies 16 renowned brands, including Citroën, Peugeot, Opel, and Renault. Since its inception, Bleker has embarked on a relentless journey of growth, necessitating the flexible expansion of its warehouse. In 2018, the company doubled the size of its logistics centre in Borken to 15,000 square metres to meet rising demand. The next expansion was completed in summer 2022, so that a total of 30,000 square metres is now available for up to 85,000 different car parts and around 60,000 tires. With a portfolio that continues to expand, Bleker's focus remains on delivering outstanding service while embracing the future of warehouse innovation.

SWISSLOG

The customer

The challenge

The solution

The realization



The growing pains of success

As Bleker's business flourished, so did the complexity of its operations. What began as a focused operation serving just four brands had grown into a far-reaching organisation, serving 16 renowned brands. This expansion brought challenges, particularly in the small parts segment, where the existing manual system was no longer sufficient to handle the increasing volumes. Without intervention, the storage area for small parts would have needed to double from 1,200 square metres to 2,400 square metres, utilising expensive warehouse space and threatening operational efficiency.

On top of this, labour shortages in the industry made the task of finding and retaining the 20 employees needed for manual picking an uphill battle. Manual processes were not only labour-intensive but also prone to inefficiencies that hindered Bleker's ability to meet its high standards. The company needed a bold solution to optimise operations, one that could save space, reduce dependency on labour, and improve accuracy – all while positioning Bleker for continued growth in an increasingly competitive market.

» I would gladly work with Swisslog again, as everything went smoothly from the beginning to the end of the project without any delays. This positive experience has made us eager to continue our collaboration in the future.«

Michael Springer, Management Board, Wholesale Automotive Spare Parts at Bleker



Game-changing automation

In 2023, Bleker made a powerful decision: to replace its conventional shelving system with an AutoStore system empowered by Swisslog. This move marked a turning point in the company's journey, ushering in a new era of efficiency and innovation. The compact AutoStore system, with its mere 615 square metre footprint, delivered unparalleled space optimisation, housing 20,800 bins stacked across 16 levels. The system's modularity offered the flexibility to expand with additional bins, without disrupting the ongoing operations.

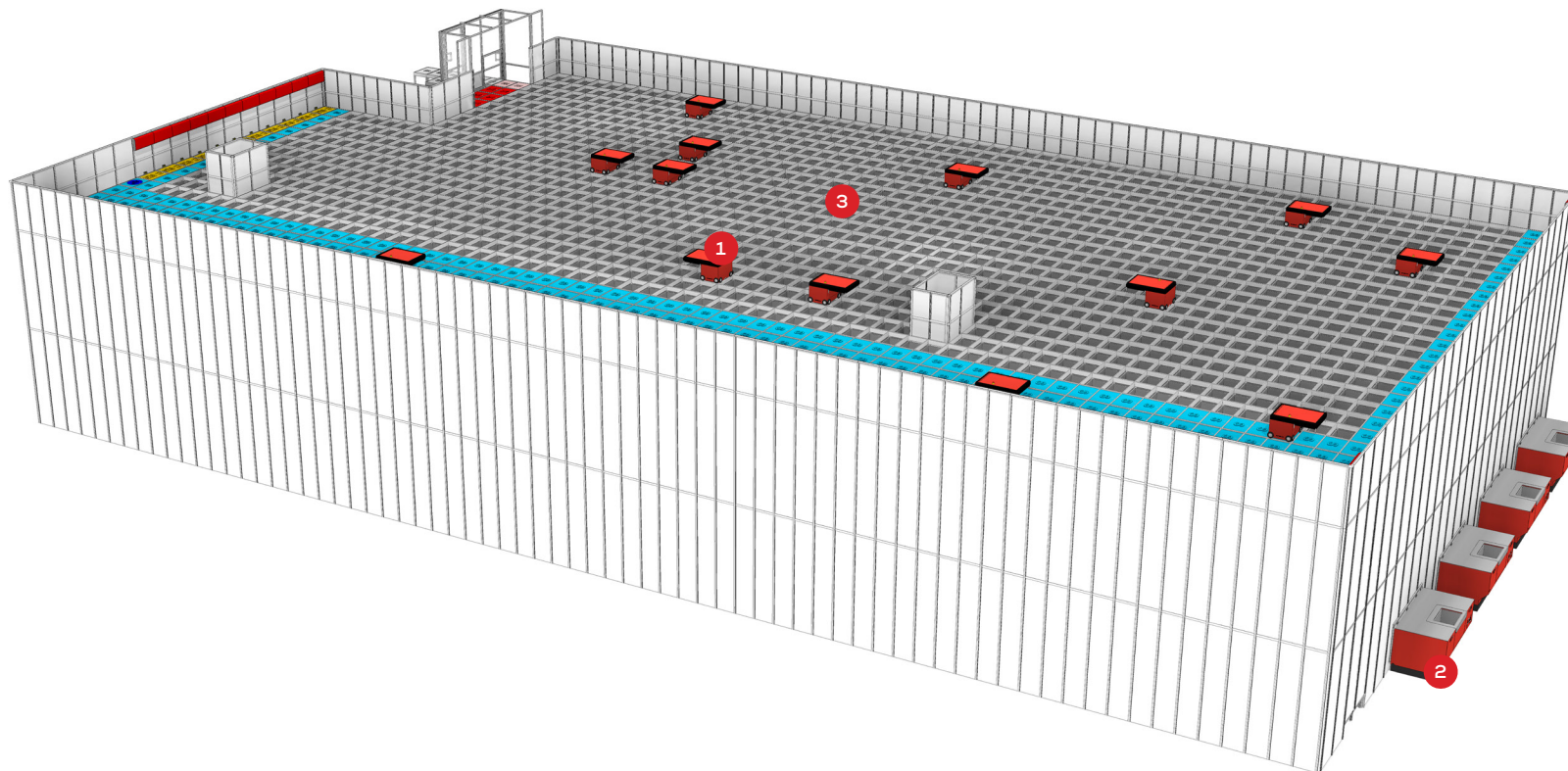
At the heart of this innovation were 13 R5 robots, tirelessly navigating the grid to ensure swift and precise good-to-person picking. Four carousel ports provided full access to inventory, while a sensor-cleaning station ensured the system ran smoothly and reliably. The AutoStore system was seamlessly integrated into the existing SAP WM world via an interface created by Bleker without disrupting the company's operational processes.



Footprint reduced by 70%

The impact of the Swisslog solution on Bleker's operations was nothing short of transformative. Space once consumed by manual storage systems was reduced by 70%, with the required footprint shrinking from 2,400 square metres to 615 square metres. This newfound efficiency unlocked opportunities to better utilise the warehouse for other priorities, reflecting a vision of working smarter, not harder.

Labour dependency was significantly reduced, with the system requiring only five employees instead of the 20 previously needed. This not only alleviated pressure from labour shortages, but also translated into significant cost savings. At the same time, productivity soared. The system achieved 236 bin presentations per hour for picking and 102 per hour for goods-in, drastically improving speed and accuracy while eliminating manual inefficiencies.



Blekers new compact AutoStore solution in focus

The AutoStore has floor area of 615 square metres with 236 bin presentations per hour possible for order picking and 102 bin presentations per hour for incoming goods.

- 1 13 R5-Robots
- 2 4 Carousel Ports
- 3 20,800 bins (330 mm bins on 16 levels)

A scalable solution for flexible growth

Bleker is now eager to further collaborate with Swisslog due to the positive experience of this project. They plan to expand their AutoStore by adding 5,500 bins, utilizing the existing empty stacks. Additionally, a fifth port is planned.

Maik Weinheimer at Swisslog said: "Delivering this solution wasn't just about solving today's challenges; it was about creating a strong and flexible foundation for Bleker's future success. By implementing a scalable and modular AutoStore system, we ensured that Bleker could continue to grow and adapt seamlessly to market demands."

The true beauty of the solution laid in its scalability. As Bleker's business continues to grow, the AutoStore system can effortlessly expand—be it by adding more bins, robots, or ports. This future-proof design ensures that Bleker's operations remain agile and competitive in the face of evolving market demands. What started as a necessity has now become a strategic advantage, enabling Bleker to set a new benchmark for operational excellence in the industry.



BLEKER AUTOTEILE

swisslog.com/bleker

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