The order is what matters

Globus Baumarkt is a company that is working on the DIY store of the future. In this process, technology that makes workers’ jobs easier and increases customer satisfaction plays a major role. Before getting to the “fancy” things such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and machine learning to lead shoppers to a new joy between the impact drills and the canopy swings, Globus Baumarkt first wants to have done the digital homework necessary to implement them. All at the right time.
Today, the registers, the phones, the Internet, the WiFi, etc. – in every Globus Baumarkt – are all connected to an MPLS backbone via fiber optics. Instead of using their own phone lines, the stores use a central telephone system by Cisco to which all stores were connected via their local area codes with which customers were already familiar. "Just an MPLS data connection, all phone numbers imported, all copper cables completely cut," summarized Fries of what had impressed him: "How T-Systems kept that incredibly tight window and how every store switchover, the entire rollout happened without any disruption?" – So much for how both foundation and framework are needed for a voyage into the world of digitization. And how was T-Systems chosen?

The subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, Fries explained, has been a strategic partner of Globus Baumarkt for several years. Cloud-based service management models, security and cyber defense solutions, or German data protection standards are ongoing topics. "But the real reason," according to Fries, "has an entirely different component. If I'm going to embrace the future, I'm going to turn to someone who knows their stuff."

WHAT DOES THE CUSTOMER GET OUT OF IT?

To Fries and Lehmann, it is essential that this digitization not only be clearly visible, but can be touched. "This speaks to the customer first." Globus Baumarkt is absolutely using special innovations at this time. Or in favor of using them.

"It's important to keep an eye on their development. Losing track of them could be devastating." According to Fries, it would have to be ordered, every supplier had with the video would vanish, a replacement every morning by an employee. Then, the flash drive store that used to have to be turned on every morning or an employee. Then, the flash drive with the video would vanish, a replacement would have to be ordered, every supplier had its own screen, yadda yadda yadda... Today, all of that is done with the push of a button and every error message is immediately logged.

TESTING INNOVATIONS FOR SUITABILITY

Freeing up employees in this manner is important to the IT Chief. This is because Fries already knows how the Globus Baumarkt of 2025 will look compared to the one of today. "There'll be a bit of technology, but primarily it'll be what sets us apart already today: our employees, the quality of their service, friendliness, helpfulness, and expertise."

The benchmark set for this is extremely high and Globus – as one almost "naturally" wants to say when standing in a DIY store – did it itself. According to well-known customer surveys, such as the Kunde­moni­tor Deutschland and the study by Dähne, a publisher special­izing in DIY, Globus Baumarkt is regularly chosen as the most customer friendly DIY company in Germany. To maintain this position, "we try out a lot of things," especially in Saar­louis, "to see what our customers think." Tested, improved upon, or discarded.

For example, VR glasses for virtually combining different bathroom designs have proven too cumbersome for customers: They take too much time to learn how to use them, each pair of glasses needs to be individually calibrated, and there are unsecured insurance issues should a customer stumble and break them – Globus Baumarkt goes down the list, item by item, of arguments against using pre­sumed innovations at this time. Or in favor of using them. For example, Globus Baumarkt is absolutely using special glasses to track the eye movements of selected customers for market research purposes. Questions such as where does it make sense to hang placards and where are they not even noticed, or questions about warehouse stock and its availability can be quickly answered in this way.

Take robots, for example: Equipped with a navigation sys­tem, they can guide customers to specific lines or shelves for market research purposes. Questions such as where does it make sense to hang placards and where are they not even noticed, or questions about warehouse stock and its availability can be quickly answered in this way.

Options between Sense and Nonsense

Alongside the buildings technology, bathroom and heating products, the tools, equipment and workshop machinery, between the paint and masonry products or gardening materials, there are many areas where Globus sees cus­tomer value maturing. Even today, the company offers fish­keepers the opportunity to bring a water sample from their aquaria to Globus Baumarkt to have it analyzed. Something like this could also become a digital service in the future via an IoT platform that registers and analyzes filtra­tion performance, oxygen supply, and water quality, thereby monitoring the health of the fish of every aquarist in the store.

Another step on Globus Baumarkt's digitization voy­age is a customer guidance system that can be used from the cellphones of customers. However, when learning by doing, even Fries and Lehmann are occasionally surprised. In the course of the "Scan&Go" program, the new self-scanners were well accepted – almost to like to cross our bridges before we get to them. And it is easy to believe the head of IT at Globus Baumarkt when he says there is still plenty to come.

"When it now comes to setting up the ‘DIY market of the future,’ for us it’s about: customer first."

MARTIN FRIES, IT Director Globus Baumarkt

At its core, Fries sees his role as IT Director thusly: “To create a shopping experience of the future out of many existing systems and still be expected mosaic stones. And, for example, to use artificial intelligence or machine learning to take administrative tasks off our employees’ backs and to use technology that frees up resources for cus­tomer service.” When walking through the store, going around a corner, Fries already had an example to show: “Here we see one of more than 50 TVs in the store that used to have to be turned on every morning by an employee. Then, the flash drive with the video would vanish, a replacement would have to be ordered, every supplier had its own screen, yadda yadda yadda... Today, all of that is done with the push of a button and every error message is immediately logged.”

INTERSECTION BETWEEN ONLINE SHOPPING AND IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Other developments, on the other hand, could pick up steam faster. Electric transportors, for example, that Globus Baumarkt customers can book online in ad­vance to transport particularly heavy purchases. But what happens when the decision to buy is held up because the customer has questions at the shelf that are unanswered? Customer service representatives can already use a portable data terminal to not only check availability but also to give customers advice. These PDTs can make calls and send e-mails, both edit and send images, and are also connected to the Globus Baumarkt online store, where specialists can submit orders and initiate shipment should a customer want 6ix lanes chairs but there are only five in the store. Overall, the online channel has become tremen­dously important even for the DIY sector. The company logs more than 30,000 visitors to the online store every day, including the Click&Collect area where buyers can pick up their items at a store of their choice within four hours.

"The customers at our store are switch­ing more between shopping in person and shopping online," explained Fries. "But online shopping also has its limits in the DIY sector. The ninth roll of wall­paper – because eight wasn't enough – the customer buys online. But the initial purchase was in the store. See, touch, unroll: The literal look and feel of many products often can’t be replaced by any­thing for DIY store customers. Never­theless, Fries wants to continue advanc­ing the connection between in-store and online shopping. "We still have many ideas and we're always trying out a lot of things," added the IT boss with a smile. "But there are still some things we won't reveal yet. We in the Saarland simply don't want to cross the bridges before we get to them." And it is easy to believe the head of IT at Globus Baumarkt when he says there is still plenty to come.