



How **SIMOVE Fleetmanager** scales up automation at Soudal

'Build the future.' Soudal had quite the ambition for its new Plant 5. It needed a smarter, safer, and scalable way to move heavy mixing vessels – some weighing up to 2.5 tons – across the new 20,000 m² production facility. Supported by Actemium Handling Solutions and Siemens, the company implemented an AGV system based on open standards. **The result: a logistics operation ready for the next decade.**

About Soudal

The Soudal Group is the largest independent European manufacturer of sealants, adhesives, and polyurethane foams for professional and private users. This Belgian family business, based in Turnhout and founded by Vic Swerts in 1966, has grown into an international player and expert in chemical construction specialities.

About Actemium Handling Solutions

Actemium Handling Solutions (formerly AVT Europe NV) is an Essen-based company specialising in heavy load transport, machine building, and customised robot and integration projects.



The challenge: automating production and transport

With a 20,000 m² floor area, Soudal's new Plant 5 is ready to support the company's expanding production of sealants and foams.

They both communicate directly with the manufacturing execution system (MES), eliminating errors. An integrated RFID reader keeps track of each production batch.



"We wanted to automate as much as possible,"

project engineer Jo Maes explains. "Automated production equals less energy usage, less waste and most importantly: a safe and ergonomic work environment."

Soudal's products consist of powders and fluids that are mixed in large industrial mixers. The fluids are stored in large vessels, weighing up to 2.5 tons. And yet, **dosage is critical** as hardening chemicals cause the mixers to jam and the product to go to waste.

"That's why we automated the dosing process. The next step was automating the logistics with autonomous guided vehicles (AGVs). Manually moving loads of that weight presented risks, both for safety and for product integrity."

A multi-stage approach

Additionally, Soudal anticipated a **phased expansion** of its AGV fleet over time, including new vehicle types and transport tasks. Any fleet management solution would have to accommodate that evolution without starting from scratch each time. In a first phase, Actemium Handling Solutions built two AGVs for powder transport; the second phase involved two different AGVs for fluid transport.

"We had already collaborated with Actemium Handling Solutions in Plant 1, for pallet handling," Jo continues. "This project was more complicated: we wanted **two types of AGVs**, one for the powder and one for the fluids."



"We were glad to take on this project,"

Tom Bergmans,
Sales Manager,
Actemium Handling Solutions

"Custom-built AGVs are what we do best. Both Soudal and Actemium Handling Solutions are **Siemens standardised**. As a result, communicating with the dosing automation system was very easy."

3 key features of the Soudal automation project

Open system built for flexibility

The AGVs are coordinated by SIMOVE Fleetmanager: a WinCC OA-based software package that tracks the AGVs and tells them where to go.



*"SIMOVE Fleetmanager uses **VDA 5050**, an open protocol to coordinate movement."*

Jeroen Pieters, Account Manager, Siemens

*"An open protocol was a must-have in this project," Tom confirms. "With different types of AGVs, you quickly end up with different fleet managers for each type. Furthermore, Soudal wanted to **avoid vendor lock-in**. If they ever wish to add AGVs from other vendors later on, that's possible, as long as these vendors are VDA 5050-compliant."*

*"With different AGV types, you quickly end up with multiple fleet managers. **SIMOVE avoids that by using one open protocol.** And if we add vehicles from other vendors later, we're not stuck."*

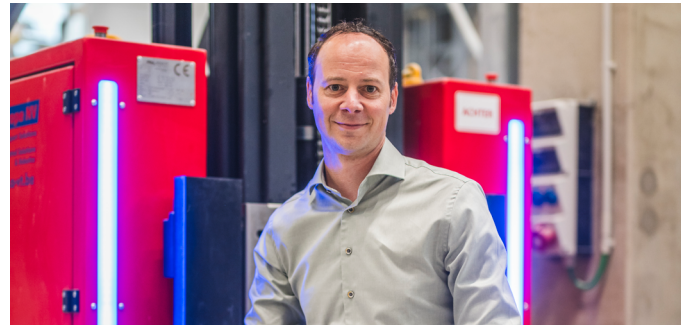
Tom Bergmans, Sales Manager, Actemium Handling Solutions

Scalable and future-proof

*"SIMOVE Fleetmanager is also an open platform," Tom continues. "This enables us to **program features ourselves**, which we did in this project, to integrate non-standard wheels in the AGVs. Closed platforms require reverting to the supplier for each modification: slow and cumbersome. SIMOVE is really the best of both worlds: agile and backed by a large supplier."*

*"And it's **scalable**," Jeroen adds. "At the moment, four AGVs are running simultaneously in SIMOVE Fleetmanager. But there are projects where we control up to 300 AGVs."*

*"This openness allows us to continue the automation as we expand production," says Jo. "We envisioned the routes for the two AGV types from the start of the building project, but we can't predict the automation technology ten years from now. SIMOVE Fleetmanager is completely **customizable and future-proof**."*



*"We don't know what our automation needs will be ten years from now. **But with SIMOVE, we're ready.**"*

Jo Maes, Project Engineer, Soudal

Part of a large portfolio

Another important factor was **SIMOVE's alignment with the existing plant architecture**. Like the rest of the production line, SIMOVE runs on Siemens technology: WinCC OA, industrial PLCs, and wireless communication systems already used in the plant.

*"This made it easier to connect the fleet manager to the manufacturing execution system (MES) and **reduced the need for separate maintenance or support structures**. It also gave our internal engineers more confidence in eventually taking over system ownership. And whenever we or Actemium Handling Solutions needed help or advice, Siemens was there."*

Results

The first four AGVs are already making a real impact at Soudal:



Improved safety and ergonomics, as manual movement of heavy containers is eliminated.



A scalable setup, where new AGVs can be integrated with limited rework.



Fewer process errors, thanks to automatic task handling linked to the MES.



Operational independence, supported by an open protocol and a standardized technology stack.

"Comparing the production of plants 1 and 5 is like comparing apples and oranges, because the sites are completely different," Jo explains.

"But we've certainly achieved a safer and healthier work environment, while improving operational excellence. In the next years, we're ready to continue automating."

Discover SIMOVE Fleetmanager for yourself and start automating with AGVs.



Security information

In order to protect plants, systems, machines and networks against cyber threats, it is necessary to implement – and continuously maintain – a holistic, state-of-the-art industrial security concept. Siemens' products and solutions constitute one element of such a concept. For more information about industrial security, please visit

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