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# VAN KERKHOF METAALBEWERKING

LARGE FORMAT TUBE LASER CUTTING

Van Kerkhof Metaalbewerking cut over 370 tons of large format pipe material in just 4 weeks for a floating dock for a Frisian yacht builder. The construction company was able to put together the kit for the 28 m high and 24 m wide construction in record time, also thanks to an adequate weld preparation. That is a considerable time saving compared to the conventional process, which was made possible with the use of the BLM GROUP LT14 laser tube cutting machine. A cutting capacity of up to  $\varnothing 355$  mm, makes this one of the largest Lasertube cutting machines in the range. Owner Leon van Kerkhof saw the investment in a large-diameter Lasertube as an opportunity to attract new business and took the plunge. *“We offer the market a tool that can be used to build large constructions much more efficiently. We work mainly with companies from the agricultural, offshore and steel construction markets, but we are also ready to work for companies from other sectors.”*





Compared to the traditional production method, we can do that with the Lasertube in

**20%** of the time



Van Kerkhof Metaalbewerking is an all-round supplier with 15 employees who are involved in sheet metal processing, metal structure manufacturing and machine building. The company's history is mainly characterized by machine building, with engineering still shaping the company's DNA. Over the past 15 years, sheet metal working has become a core business.

#### **Market expansion**

Leon van Kerkhof has been looking for ways of expanding the activities in the cutting area for some time now: *"We already had a lot of experience with flatbed laser cutting, but you can't stand out with that anymore. That's why we'd been thinking about buying a Lasertube for some time now. Although we didn't have any customers for that before, we did have the feeling that we could generate new business with it."*

#### **Standing out with large format Lasertube**

Pieter Fleuren, co-owner: *"It had to be a Lasertube, but even then there is a wide range in smaller diameters (max  $\varnothing$  120 mm). That's why we chose the LT14 from BLM GROUP, which can cut large tubes and pipes for the construction market with a maximum capacity of  $\varnothing$  355 mm. In 2017, we became the first in Benelux to have this large format Lasertube. We spent the first six months getting to know the machine. Then, we gave our own clientele a detailed explanation of the possibilities and efficiency benefits for their products. That's where the first orders came from. Over the past year there has been a sharp rise in the number of orders and new customers. We see even more potential, especially for larger companies, but we'll have to double our marketing efforts to gain an entry."*





CUT OVER **370** tons

of large format pipe material in just 4 weeks

#### Gradual change of construction method

*“We still think too much in terms of kilos and calculations rather than focusing on smart manufacturability. On the other hand, more and more companies have discovered the advantages of constructing and connecting with cut pipes and tubes. It isn’t until after the first deliveries that customers discover the efficiency benefits in the rest of the process. Whereas we used to make compositions with sawn pipes and tubes, and later with curved plate, the Lasertube has set the trend for the next major change,”* explains Leon van Kerkhof.

#### High mix, small batches

Pieter Fleuren: *“We only cut semi-manufactured products that the customer compiles himself, which usually involves specials. They are often single pieces in different lengths and thicknesses,”* explains Leon van Kerkhof.

*“Most customers supply their drawings in STEP format, and we start by taking a close look at the files for manufacturability, including aspects such as the position of the cutting head (perpendicular or inclined). We import the STEP files with BLM GROUP’s Artube to make a job program for the machine. After that, it’s important to use the available pipe and tube material as efficiently as possible, and for this we use Protube Enterprise. Since there is a great deal of variation in every order the work preparation*



*calls for a lot of attention, but the lead time for delivery in STEP format can be greatly reduced.*

*The operator can start work as soon as the material arrives at the machine. In principle, the operator completes the order per job. But as soon as a rush order comes in, we rapidly readjust the schedule again.”*

#### Footbridge over lock gate

Van Kerkhof was recently commissioned to make the corner profiles for a footbridge over a lock gate. The construction parts for this are now cut on the large-format Lasertube machine. Leon Van Kerkhof: *“Compared to the traditional production method, we can do that with the Lasertube in 20% of the time. This is another good example of how the LT14 offers the market a tool that allows you to build large structures much more efficiently.”*

