



HANDLING THE WORLD'S GOODS

The geographical size of the Netherlands, less than forty-two thousand square meters, belies its huge commanding position in global trade. To facilitate the movement of goods valued at trillions of dollars, the Netherlands has constantly expanded the Port of Rotterdam, the largest in Europe, as well as Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, the world's fourth-busiest in passenger traffic.

"If you are looking for a foothold in continental Europe where business culture is similar to that in the United States, and for a global hub for the United States with excellent logistics possibilities for the rest of Europe and the world, then the

of total U.S. FDI, destined for the Netherlands last year.

"The United States has been by far the largest foreign investor in the Netherlands for the last thirty years. Of six thousand eight hundred companies investing in the Netherlands, there are about one thousand eight hundred from the United States. The Netherlands is the third-largest investor in the United States, providing about seven hundred thousand jobs. These are huge figures for both the Dutch and the U.S. economies," Pulles said.

The Dutch information technology and creative industries have emerged as strong contributors to the Dutch economy, as shown by the success of companies like TomTom and organizations like Appsterdam.

"I think we in the Netherlands have market leadership in computer vision and computer graphics technology. We're leveraging that knowledge base," said Pieter Aarts, CEO of Ned-sense, a Dutch technology and design company responsible for the highly successful NedGraphics and the pioneering LOFT technology.

"The connection between the United States and the Netherlands is unique. The United States brings scale, success, and leadership in e-commerce, as well as leadership in winning omnichannel strategies. What we provide is leadership in technology. That's why I think that this relationship between the Netherlands and the United States is successful," Aarts added.

Nedsense recently launched its LOFT technology, a 3D experience tool that allows users to

customize existing living and office spaces on their computers, tablets, or mobile devices.

Through LOFT, Nedsense brings together home furnishing makers, real estate companies, and consumers, diversifying sales channels and enhancing customer experience. Naturally, Nedsense looked to the United States as a launching point for their pioneering technology. (See *related article*.)

"The U.S. market is our primary market to sell LOFT technol-

ogy. In terms of ecommerce, the U.S. market has been successful, and it's still growing rapidly, especially in home furnishing," Aarts said.

Innovation in the Netherlands' biggest and fastest-growing sectors has showed no signs of slowing down.

Given the collaborative culture among government, education, and industry, the country has remained a preferred destination for business and investment, particularly for U.S. firms.



Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans of the Netherlands

Netherlands is the place to be," said Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans.

Over fifty percent of all port activity in Europe is covered by the Netherlands, and the majority through Rotterdam.

"The country is a gateway to the European market, a market with over 500 million wealthy consumers. We have always been dependent on international trade and the business attitude is very much geared towards international business," explained Bas Pulles, commissioner of the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency.

The Netherlands' global commercial success is evident in its economic ties with the United States.

From 2009 to 2012, the country has been the top destination for U.S. FDI with over 645 billion U.S. dollars, or 14 percent

Virtual showrooms open 24/7

Dutch high-technology developer Nedsense has enhanced the house-hunting experience and removed the guesswork in furniture shopping through a platform that allows customers to furnish apartments or office spaces to their individual style from the convenience of their computer, tablet, or mobile device.

"From the start, we imagined LOFT as 3-D technology that could convert photos of a room into a 3-D rendition very easily. LOFT should also be able to model interior furnishing products in 3-D in order to place them in a virtual space," explained Nedsense CEO Pieter Aarts.

"We launched the first prototype of LOFT in September 2009 and made sure that the technology was ready when we engaged Crate and Barrel in December 2011. That was our breakthrough in the United States and found that it was the perfect launching platform in retail in the U.S. market," Aarts added.

The real estate sector also benefits from LOFT technology by allowing potential buyers to personalize empty apartments virtually.

"A major U.S. real estate company has more than six hundred thousand unique monthly visitors to its website. It deals with tens of thousands of new leases every year. Once LOFT is integrated into their website, customers will be able to view their rooms in 3-D and virtually place furniture from the Nedsense-LOFT database," Aarts said.

"During the first phase of the Equity Residential rollout, we will also include at least five hundred stock-keeping units of three retail brands," he added.

Retailers will have the opportunity to bring their products to customers at the precise moment they are considering a new home or office. This pioneering LOFT technology is successfully opening sales channels between the real estate and retail sectors.

"We're the market leader at the moment. There's no competition yet, but that will surely change. So, we have to stay ahead of the competition and win this race in 3-D visualization in home furnishing," Aarts stressed.



Nedsense CEO Pieter Aarts



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