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PIONEERS IN TUBE LASER CUTTING

*De Vries Constructie &  
Lasertechniek - NL*

**Market opportunities above 40kg/m**

With 3 tube lasers from BLM GROUP, De Vries Constructie & Lasertechniek is a major supplier of cutting work for structural steel in the Dutch region of Brabant. The company is among the pioneers in tube laser cutting and has seen the market for precision cutting grow strongly over the past 20 years. "Tube lasers have brought us where we are today. And there is still plenty of potential in the market, especially for the larger sizes and beam steel profiles. That is precisely where we want to distinguish ourselves, but at 40 kg/m, we are now at the upper limit," project manager Martijn Kanters and director owner Jos de Vries tell us.

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Jos de Vries saw the potential of laser cutting technology for plate and tube at an early stage. The investment in an ADIGE-SYS LT Combo in 2004 marked the first step into laser cutting technology. “We saw particular potential in the steel market especially in pipes, tubes and profiles. But the market was not then familiar with laser cutting technology for tube, let alone profiles. Engineers back then were still constructing in strip and thinking in conventional operations such as sawing, milling and drilling. Over the past 15 years, this has changed dramatically and the demand is for cutting. We now have three tube lasers from BLM GROUP, namely LT712D, LT722D and an LT8.20 with 12.5m input and 8.5m output. Laser cutting accounted for 30% of turnover in 2009, but now it accounts for 65%,” says Martijn Kanters.

#### Steel structures

De Vries is mainly involved in supplying semi-finished products. “With our expertise, speed and good quality, we manage to attract a lot of work to us. For instance, we also supply supporting construction work, such as transport equipment and collision barriers, as well as to machine builders and the regional transport industry. We also do the design, manufacture and installation of steel structures, such as stairs, fencing, scaffolding, building structures and interior products.”



#### Logistics

According to Martijn Kanters, there is a lot to be gained from good logistics routing in the company. “In the limited space, we still managed to load all three tube lasers on two sides. So that the tube lasers can be loaded both at the rear with bundle loading for large series and small numbers with the step loader at the front. Because the machines face each other at the front, we can check, collect and prepare the output for dispatch on pallets in one central location.”

#### Construction market

“While we distinguished ourselves with tube laser cutting 20 years ago, we cannot do that now. In recent years, the supply industry in the Netherlands in particular has invested heavily in tube laser cutting technology. If we want to grow with the demand, the market is now too big to be unique in that field,” Jos de Vries explains. “Instead, we are looking for

something our colleagues cannot offer. Now that the construction market and their engineers are also increasingly discovering the possibilities of 2D/3D laser cutting, we expect a growing demand from that corner. To serve that market even better, a tube laser with a loading and product length of 18 meters and a loading weight of over 40 kg/m would fit in well. So we are looking for growth in the larger formats (> ø 240 mm) and greater loading weight (> 40kg/m). In our current premises, we have only minimal room for expansion. New building would be a solution in this to grow even further.”

#### Programming

BLM GROUP, of which ADIGE is part, is particularly distinctive with their software ArTube. Developed specifically for tube machining, this software package is the key element linking software and hardware, making it easy, productive, flexible and efficient to use BLM GROUP's tube lasers to their full potential. The 3D STEP files, in which most orders are now delivered, are imported into ArTube and converted directly into optimal cutting paths,

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significantly reducing programming time. “In addition, we also use ArTube to engineer structures ourselves. In the steel structures market, TEKLA is the standard. Until five years ago, that did not provide usable STEP files and we had to redraw everything in ArTube. Meanwhile, that software has also evolved and we can import orders from TEKLA directly into ArTube.”

#### BLM GROUP leading in tube laser

“The choice of the ADIGE plate/tube laser made by Jos de Vries back in 2004 turned out to be a good choice in retrospect,” agrees Martijn Kanters. “BLM GROUP's tube lasers are extremely robust, given the high weights the machines process. This manifests itself in high reliability. From the point of view of quality and software, they occupy a distinctive position in the market for tube lasers.”

#### Family business

De Vries Constructie & Lasertechniek breathes the atmosphere of a close-knit family business. Besides father Jos, who runs the daily management, three more family members work in the company, including daughter Britt, who takes care of the transport of products to customers in the region. Thanks to its small size (25 permanent employees including temporary staff and interns) and strong commitment, De Vries manages to keep staff turnover low. “A quarter of the production employees come from internships. For us, this is a good way to attract new employees. But ultimately we don't want to grow beyond 50 employees, because otherwise it will be more difficult to maintain the family character of the company,” explains Jos de Vries.