

## Weasel® - innovative, creative, connected

**Innovative fashion logistics service provider, NextLevel Logistik® GmbH, relies on a fleet of Weasel® automated guided vehicles for its internal goods transport. The new vehicles from SSI Schaefer combine efficiency with maximum flexibility and cost-effectiveness, making them the ideal solution for automated goods transport that grows with demand. Companies and start-ups whose business fields and capacity requirements can change rapidly benefit in particular from using this system. Unlike conventional AGVs Weasel does not require complex sensor technology or control systems. Considerably reduced investment costs open new customer perspectives in terms of automated transport solutions. Especially companies and startups, whose business and capacity requirements can change quickly, benefit from this system since the benefits of AGVs can be deployed in new sectors.**

Increasingly short product life cycles and constantly changing market requirements call for a high level of flexibility. In some cases, tried and tested continuous conveyors are only able to satisfy this requirement to a limited extent. With the Weasel automated guided vehicle (AGV), SSI Schaefer now offers an innovative solution for internal goods transport that is equally impressive in terms of its flexibility and scalability. Changing customer requirements and fluctuations in demand can be managed at any time, both cost-effectively and at short notice. Thanks to these characteristics the Weasel can easily be integrated into a company's transport and picking processes, handles practically every transport task and brings numerous advantages. There are no access restrictions in the warehouse, creating room for personnel and material flows. Thanks to its compact design, Weasel can even be used in inaccessible zones. The Weasel uses optical track guidance, which can be quickly and flexibly installed in the warehouse, to conveniently transport goods directly to the picking station.

These benefits were what impressed NextLevel Logistik® GmbH, whose headquarters are in Eltmann near Schweinfurt. The company is a fashion logistics service provider working, among others, in the rapidly growing e-commerce sector and is known for its new and creative approaches to implementing customer requirements. Last summer the firm started their search for a flexible, expandable solution for their internal transport operations. "Due to the volatile capacity requirements for all the sales channels we serve in the fashion industry (B2B, B2C, NOS, retail, outlet), we wanted a barrier-free, automated solution," explains Managing Director Henrik Bugiel. "Our solution needed to be reasonably priced, flexible and quick to implement. Before making our final decision, we selected several systems that we then compared with alternative solutions, including conventional conveying systems." In the end the contract for the project was awarded to SSI Schaefer. "With their new Weasel automated guided vehicle, the intralogistics specialists offer us the perfect solution for our precise needs," says Bugiel. "Other providers simply didn't compare in terms of simplicity, flexibility and cost-effectiveness."

From bins and boxes to trays or miscellaneous products of various sizes (up to 35 kg), the Weasel handles practically every transport task. The goods are transported to the intended destination safely and securely. "We also like the AGV's ergonomic concept. Different structure heights guarantee optimum ergonomics for loading and unloading, and prevent employees working with an unhealthy posture," adds Bugiel. Another advantage is the easy integration into existing systems. Be it a fixed or needs-based integration for handling peaks in output, the Weasel is flexible in terms of system customisations and extensions.

Both manual and automated connections can be quickly established to the internal goods flows. This was reflected in the extremely short implementation phases at NextLevel Logistik® GmbH. "We were surprised at how quickly everything went," says Bugiel. "Within three days all the hardware and software for the system had been installed and put into operation." Efficient connections between goods-in, various work stations, goods-out and the waste disposal solution were established in Eltmann using the Weasel. The solution also boasts a special feature: "We wanted an automated RFID bulk reading system in the goods-in area. The Weasel

from SSI Schaefer enabled us to implement automated passage through the RFID reading tunnel.”

Standardised control software also permits use regardless of the customer – there is no need for any complex installation and customisation work. As a result, scaling of the system at short notice is no problem. Thanks to the ease of use and low maintenance costs for this AGV class, process control doesn't require specially trained technical personnel. A fleet controller manages the orders generated by the in-house ERP system and assigns them to the relevant vehicles following release. The determined route controls the Weasel via predetermined waypoints. In these times of Industry 4.0 a major advantage as the Weasels connect any operation areas and support all processes in the entire logistics environment. Power is supplied by maintenance-free rechargeable battery packs with a battery life of up to 18 hours. These can be exchanged effortlessly via a quick-change frame and recharged in charging cabinets.

The first expansion phase in Eltmann has been in operation since the end of 2014. Further expansion phases and areas of application are currently being planned. “An efficient, highly flexible and cost-effective transport solution that we were able to implement quickly and can expand as we like,” summarises Bugiel. “The transport tasks in our company between any number of sources and sinks at different locations are now barrier-free and automated. We benefit from comprehensive process control and are delighted with the evolving solution from SSI Schaefer.”

With the new Weasel automated guided vehicle, SSI Schaefer is once again demonstrating its flair for sustainable innovations and market-driven developments while expanding its broad product portfolio.

**Approx. 6,200 keystrokes**

**Box containing company information:**

NextLevel Logistik<sup>®</sup> GmbH is a German fashion logistics service provider working in, among others, the rapidly growing e-commerce sector. Headquartered in Eltmann near Schweinfurt, Bavaria, the company currently has 42 employees. From the 8,800 m<sup>2</sup> logistics complex, all sales channels (B2B, B2C, NOS, retail, outlet) for hanging and flat goods, including returns handling, are serviced quickly and efficiently. The company is convinced that logistical services will and must change fundamentally over the next few years. NextLevel's vision is to be the leading provider of alternative, future-proof and sustainable logistics for its customers.

Their aim is to meet all customer requirements in the areas of SCM, logistics and consultancy in a tailored manner while significantly reducing lead times. To achieve this overriding goal, all the necessary processes, procedures and value-added services for this offering are being developed and implemented separately. The company provides the following services for clothing: goods preparation for textiles and leather, quality control, repairs, labelling, container handling, production advice/monitoring, logistics advice, online shop creation, accounts receivable management, returns handling and logistical services (warehousing) from storage to picking and goods-out.

**Image and caption:**

**Weasel\_transport:** The Weasel handles practically every transport task for products weighing up to 35 kg

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**Company profile**

SSI SCHAEFER is the world's leading supplier of warehouse and logistics systems. The services it offers range from concept design and warehouse fittings with its own products to the implementation of complex logistics projects as a general contractor. The pooling of collective skills under the umbrella of SSI SCHAEFER lays the foundation for the development of market-oriented, industry-overlapping storage systems and for the conception of complete intralogistics solutions.