



TOP TRENDS INFLUENCING YOUR INDUSTRIAL FORKLIFT SELECTION

In tough industrial materials handling operations, no two applications face the same challenges. Even stakeholders across a single organisation will have different priorities when it comes to selecting lift trucks. To identify the right lift truck solutions for the toughest industries, it is important to balance these needs by taking into account a number of key considerations.

// INDUSTRIAL LABOUR MARKETS ARE FEELING THE PINCH

Across various markets, materials handling operations are reportedly experiencing labour shortages. This means many lift truck operator roles are filled by new or inexperienced operators. While this fills seats, there is a learning curve and novice operators may lead to more product and facility damage, which can lead to decreases in overall productivity, and cost implications. Language barriers are also a consideration if recruiting workers from overseas. These factors make it imperative that lift trucks selected are intuitive to use, and easy to get started with.

In a tough labour market, retaining skilled and knowledgeable lift truck operators can be of real benefit to a business. There is pressure to decrease picking times and increase throughput to boost profit margins, so, keeping an operator comfortable and happy across a whole shift is important.

Improving user experience for operators

In the toughest industry applications, work is labour intensive and can be physically demanding. There also may be extreme heat or cold alongside other harsh environmental conditions. For instance, high noise levels, dusty or dirty atmospheres, or corrosive fluids to handle. So, the lift trucks selected need to work extra hard on ergonomics to provide operator comfort in-cab.

There are also increasing worker safety expectations. Especially where high levels of agency staff are used, there is a possibility of expensive damage to equipment, goods, and infrastructure. Trucks are also working in ever more congested and compact warehouses, all while handling the same loads as before, and needing to avoid collisions. Pedestrian interaction also means a strong focus on safety is non-negotiable.

When selecting materials handling equipment, businesses should consider ways that this can help to combat operator discomfort, fatigue, and truck incidents. For example, considering how improved load stability, improved visibility, and assistive technologies may increase an operator's confidence to get the job done efficiently and safely.



// PAIN POINTS FOR PURCHASING MANAGERS

It is no surprise that those responsible for purchasing have a keen eye on budgets. But this isn't always about trying to get something for the lowest initial purchase price. Some purchasing managers may be looking to balance the outright spend on a truck purchase, with lower monthly costs, around maintenance, repair, or fuel. A low Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) can result in a more beneficial long-term impact on their capital expenditure (CAPEX).

However, others will need to achieve quarterly KPIs around costs, and will be looking for short term value. Here, factors like enhanced support and extended warranties will play a part. Fuel, energy, and water costs may also be a consideration if these fall into the purchasing budget. Telematics across a lift truck fleet can be a dependable tool for purchasing managers, in assessing the real cost of a forklift once in operation.

Filling expertise gaps

Importantly, those in a purchasing role are not necessarily lift truck experts, certainly not in very large organisations where materials handling equipment will be just one thing they are looking at acquiring. Here, a relationship with the right forklift dealer is essential to provide application-specific consultancy and identify the right solution, and potential alternatives. For instance, options to align with environmental targets. This process can help avoid over-specifying trucks with features that are not needed and will unnecessarily drive up the price.

What's more, when done right, these dealer relationships can help purchasing managers to increase their understanding for next time they are sourcing equipment. They will know what to look for when it comes to fuel efficiency, or environmental performance, and understand why all-round visibility matters.





// OPERATIONS AND SERVICE MANAGERS HAVE NEEDS TOO

Some organisations will have various personnel in operations and service roles. Others will assume these responsibilities as part of another position. However, most will share the common goals of maximising uptime and minimising downtime in the face of unrelenting demand.

Compressed margins in the industry are also reducing new equipment budgets, meaning the life of equipment in service is often extended. They must do more, with less. In some cases, operations are running on significant numbers of old and under-maintained equipment, that can leave applications vulnerable to interruptions.

Overall truck maintenance and downtime can cause major operational disruptions, and when this is unplanned, it also results in unforeseen costs.

When it comes to truck service, the aforementioned labour shortages apply here too. Suitable expertise is not so easy to come by, and that could have a knock-on effect on keeping trucks operating optimally, or on carrying out essential maintenance so that equipment is up and running.

Some lift trucks can offer features to help lighten the load on service managers. For instance, telematics can include

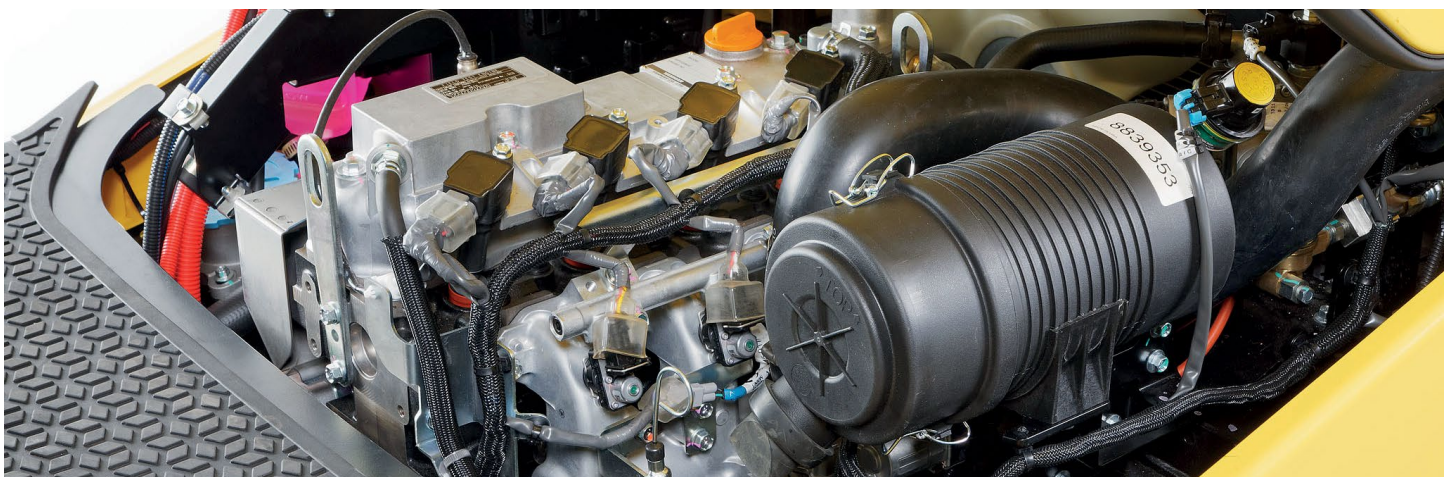
systems that routinely flag maintenance requirements. These systems can also instigate helpful daily operator checks which may give early warning of maintenance issues. Inspections are also vital, as infractions can lead to heavy fines. Telematics also enables impacts or other issues to be automatically flagged so the problems can be addressed faster, and downtime minimised.

Supporting the greener agenda

In addition to a focus on uptime, Operations Managers increasingly have a focus on areas such as emissions. Across intensive industries, there is growing awareness around energy and water usage, with a desire to be more sustainable. With increased emphasis on emission reduction and green initiatives (on a company, local, or national level), Operations Managers must also consider the power sources for lift truck fleets in the organisation. Typical targets may be set to reduce tailpipe exhaust emissions, or noise levels.

Matching trucks to industry demands

Every application has specific requirements related to the challenging conditions under which material handling equipment must operate. In addition, there are factors particular to each industry that influence which lift truck is the ideal fit.





// WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN WOOD SUPPLY CHAIN HANDLING

Operator productivity

Many timber sector businesses are challenged by workforce shortages, facing a limited pool of suitably qualified candidates for roles, and high staff turnover. The voice of the operator is louder than ever. Ergonomics and lift truck operator are therefore key factors in selecting a lift truck.

What an operator achieves across a shift equates to productivity and efficiency, which has an impact on operational profitability. Businesses are acutely aware that drivers need to feel comfortable, so they can operate precisely and productively.

To address these issues, businesses should look to lift trucks that give operators in tough industrial applications a comfortable workplace. Businesses should always start by selecting a lift truck that is ergonomically optimised as standard.

Easing tough conditions

Materials handling operations are diverse across the timber supply chain, yet tough conditions prevail throughout. Operations always have an outdoor element, which is likely to be a rugged environment. Timber chips and ground debris are commonplace, and dusty atmospheres are to be expected. There are also weather conditions to deal with. These environmental factors are therefore of paramount importance in the forklift selection process. For instance, do operators need a fully enclosed and air-conditioned cab to be comfortable? Or do the lift trucks need to be equipped with a reverse fan solution to protect the internal workings from dust and help reduce cleanouts?





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Of course, the loads being handled also rely on the performance of the lift truck. Long planks or wood, or oversized unpalletized loads, may affect truck stability. To support operator confidence and handling precision, specialist attachments or stability systems may be considered. Different fork options can also be matched to the application. For instance, rubber coated forks may help prevent damage to materials such as chipboard or OSB, while unpainted polished forks may provide a smooth surface for lifting wooden products.

Certain applications, such as sawmills, also include an element of indoor activity. Where trucks are habitually used for in/out operations, the lift trucks selected need to meet the needs of both differing environments. This is one factor that has driven interest in electric lift truck power over recent years.

Power options

With no tailpipe emissions, electric forklifts are often seen as the optimal choice indoors, and this equipment has become progressively tougher for outdoor use. However, with electricity prices rising globally, LPG and diesel trucks are back on the table for many businesses selecting a fleet. Especially as the latest IC lift truck developments have greater fuel efficiency, and the potential to deliver comparable total emissions to an electric model. That said, power sources such as hydrogen, e-fuels and HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) are all considerations in the wood industry.

Remaining competitive

In the competitive wood industry, having a healthy cash flow is key for success. Keeping a low cost of operation across the chosen fleet enables timber applications to pass on savings to their customers, which can help them secure more business. Therefore, wood businesses should also consider whether purchase or lease of their forklift fleet is the best long-term option, depending on the usage intensity of the trucks.





// MATCHING LIFT TRUCKS TO METAL INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Metal and steel applications can be some of the toughest materials handling environments out there. For example, extreme heat is encountered in metal foundries, and metal recycling operations produce abrasive dust. Specifying lift trucks for these types of environments may require very specific solutions to protect the operator and the truck.

Improving awareness

However, the metal industry covers a broad spectrum of handling activities. For instance, many industrial manufacturing operations will require a fleet of lift trucks to handle finished metal goods in production areas and warehouses. This is a very different type of environment, where noise and other distractions are factors that can represent a risk, especially if the truck is working in the vicinity of pedestrians.

These applications should consider selecting lift trucks with features to support driver awareness. For instance, blue and red spotlights, red line awareness lights, and alarms may be available to help indicate to pedestrians where a truck is, and that it is moving or working.

Visibility of varied loads

As in any manufacturing operation, there are time pressures, so there can be no compromise on lift truck productivity. Different semi-finished or finished products must be handled with high precision and minimal damage, every shift. On these occasions, lift trucks should be selected that cater to the type, shape, size, and weight of the metal loads. Attachments may play a part, but all-round visibility is the foundation. Operators need the ability to see their surroundings quickly and clearly, and excellent fork tip visibility can benefit productivity further.

Staying competitive

More than 70% of global metals production comes from outside the EMEA region, making it a competitive market. Yet with metal providing the backbone for many other global industries, there is great opportunity. Reducing the total cost of lift truck ownership is one way that metal businesses can stay ahead of competitors. Right sizing the fleet, extending the useful life of equipment, and monitoring and reducing its environmental impact can all help manage overall production costs.





// BUILDING THE RIGHT FLEET IN CONSTRUCTION APPLICATIONS

Robustness and reliability are the cornerstone of any lift truck selected to support a construction application. Whether that is mining for raw materials, concrete manufacturing, or handling bricks and blocks. In such tough environments, having the opportunity to customise a lift truck for the particular application's requirements really come into play.

Promoting safety first culture

In harsh operating environments, operator safety and comfort are key. Lift truck operations should run within a strong culture of safety, and many organisations will have a set of protocols that must be followed to help reduce incidents. These can sometimes dictate the need for awareness solutions, such as visible and audible alerts and lights. Here, telematics can also be used to help track that lift trucks are accessed by suitably trained operators and can monitor and alert to training updates.

Dust, dirt, and other challenges

In construction materials applications, lift trucks will often be used outside in dirty or dusty environments with poor ground conditions. Despite this, the right lift truck and cabin can help keep operators comfortable and focused across the whole shift, supporting productivity.

Dust can also result in wear to lift truck parts and components. Considering the quality of a truck's construction is therefore an important step. For instance, lift trucks with sealed electrical connectors, oil-immersed brakes, tilt cylinder boots, and mud guards may provide some applications with support. Heavy-duty air intake can also help reduce service intervention requirements.

Where debris is an issue, on-demand cooling may include a reversing fan feature to blow debris out of the engine bay, helping to minimise radiator and engine bay cleaning. Debris on the floor can also be tackled by choosing a belly screen option and string cutter, helping to optimise uptime. A robust warranty will also give tough applications peace of mind.

Meeting demand with sustainability in mind

Green initiatives are also increasingly implemented with industry targets to lower overall emissions by 40% by 2030. Therefore, construction businesses should source lift trucks from suppliers who share their same sustainability goals and can provide consultancy and guidance around the right solutions to meet total fleet emissions targets.





// SOLID SOLUTIONS FOR CHEMICALS AND PLASTICS MANUFACTURING

Increasing plant productivity, through efficient use of resources, is a key factor in the chemical and plastics industries today. Lift trucks play key roles throughout these applications, from the transportation of raw materials, to feeding production lines, and in both indoor and outdoor storage areas. Across all parts of these industrial applications, there are also substances that may carry additional risks, or involve potentially explosive atmospheres. Those selecting a lift truck fleet have a thorough task ahead.

Awkward loads

Within plastics applications, raw materials often are handled in large bags, which are stacked on top of one another in a storage area. These loads are seldom palletised. Lift trucks must be robust and capable of handling these very particular loads

accurately to help reduce damage, and the associated financial losses. High visibility in all directions is therefore an important factor for operators, as is manoeuvrability, supported by accurate hydraulics and intuitive operator controls.

Plastic manufacturing operations may ultimately produce long or large items, such as pipes for example. These are wide loads to carry on the lift truck's forks, so equipment must be selected with a suitably robust mast. Here, specifying truck stability solutions may also help reduce the likelihood of tip-overs, especially when turning corners.

From the example above, it is clear that even in one industrial plastic manufacturing operation, the lift trucks may be handling very different loads. In this instance, solutions such as fork positioners may help unlock greater flexibility in a fleet as a wider variety of load sizes can be handled, including those with unusual sizes or shapes.





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The ability to control the forks to accommodate varied loads without exiting the operator cab so often can help enhance the operator experience, making the working shift more comfortable.

For operations looking for greater productivity, fork positioners may improve load handling times and accuracy, which can also help minimise damage by helping position the forks correctly. With speedier cycle times, this can also reduce fuel consumption and truck wear.



Damage avoidance

In chemical applications, other unusual load types may be handled, including drums, barrels, and IBCs. These typically contain hazardous materials, so avoiding damage and spillages is a high priority. Careful and precise handling of loads is a must, so operators need to be comfortable. In this environment, it is common for lift truck drivers to be wearing safety equipment and protective clothing, so selecting a lift truck with a spacious cab helps to enhance operator comfort.

Often, chemical production are intense operations that demand high uptime. If lift trucks are down and cannot complete the task, production stops. This is incredibly costly. Therefore, the reliability of the truck, and the ease of maintenance is a significant factor.

Handling in explosive environments

Chemical applications also carry the additional risk of potentially explosive atmospheres. In certain markets, the ATEX Directive dictates that trucks must be converted to prevent ignition of substances in the environment. The level of explosion protection will depend on the type or risk, such as vapours, gases, powders, or dusts. Areas will also be attributed a Zone (Zone 1, 2, 21, 22), depending on the likelihood of an ignition, which will further specify the measures that must be taken.

If selecting a forklift for an ATEX zoned application, chemical companies must ensure that the supplier has a reputable partner for the explosion protection conversion and lifetime support. Cutting corners risks the safety of people, as well as the business' infrastructure and reputation.



// FINE TUNING FORKLIFTS


There are many considerations and factors that influence the right choice of forklift for an application. What is clear, is that there are differences across industries. And that those in different roles within a business, will have a different view of what good looks like when it comes to materials handling equipment.

The new Hyster A Series lift trucks address these challenges with A+ Logic, a series of adjustable features to configure the truck to specific requirements. On a dependable Hyster foundation, features can be added to match an organisation's priorities, such as optimising the ergonomic environment for operators for specific applications, taking on challenging loads, or maximising fuel efficiencies. It's Distinctly Hyster, built for you.

As the trucks are scalable, businesses only specify exactly what is needed, helping to keep costs down. Hyster, and its global network of local dealer partners, can provide the advice needed on how to fine-tune A Series lift trucks for specific application requirements and achieve a low Total Cost of Ownership.

Learn more at www.hyster.com



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