



TOP TRENDS INFLUENCING INDUSTRIAL FORKLIFT SELECTION

Tough industrial materials handling operations use forklifts to accomplish a variety of functions, each of which poses its own unique challenges. For a company to identify the right lift truck solutions to fulfill its particular needs, it is important to consider several key factors.

// INDUSTRIAL LABOR MARKETS ARE FEELING THE PINCH

Materials handling operations are experiencing widespread labor shortages. The labor gap in U.S. manufacturing, for instance, is expected to grow to over two million unfilled jobs by 2030, according to a [report](#) by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. Difficulties in fully staffing a skilled workforce can mean skeleton crews or that new or inexperienced operators are filling many lift truck operator roles. This latter approach fills seats, but there is a learning curve. A greater reliance on novice operators can lead to more product and facility damage, and the negative effects on productivity and cost that come in tow. This reality makes it all the more imperative that the lift trucks a company selects are intuitive to use. Commonality of controls and features across different forklift models can also help ease the burden when operators are training for certification in equipment types that are new to them.





TOP TRENDS INFLUENCING INDUSTRIAL FORKLIFT SELECTION



// IMPROVING USER EXPERIENCE FOR OPERATORS

In such a tough labor market, retaining skilled and knowledgeable lift truck operators is extremely beneficial for businesses, and keeping an operator comfortable and efficient across a whole shift is an important component. Materials handling jobs can be labor-intensive and physically demanding. Workers may experience extreme heat or cold alongside other harsh environmental conditions such as high noise levels, dusty or dirty atmospheres, and proximity to corrosive fluids. It's up to operations to mitigate the tough conditions and demands operators face, and that means lift trucks have to work hard on ergonomics to provide in-cab comfort.

Worker safety is also a critical challenge as operators push to get the job done without risking damage to expensive loads, equipment or infrastructure. Operators move product in congested and compact facilities, needing to maintain productivity while avoiding collisions and pedestrian interaction. A strong focus on safety is non-negotiable. But how can operations add layers of protection to the foundation that they establish through comprehensive operator training?

When selecting materials handling equipment, businesses should consider how their choices can help combat operator discomfort, fatigue and the likelihood of truck incidents. For example, consider how assistive technologies and improved load stability and visibility help increase an operator's confidence in getting the job done efficiently and safely.



TOP TRENDS INFLUENCING INDUSTRIAL FORKLIFT SELECTION

// PAIN POINTS FOR PURCHASING MANAGERS

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

Conversely, other businesses may be seeking to hit quarterly key performance indicators (KPIs) for spending and have a closer eye on short-term value. Here, factors like enhanced support and extended warranties will play a larger part. Depending on motive power source, energy and water costs may also be considerations if these expenditures are part of the purchasing budget, with water being of primary concern to operations using lead-acid batteries.

Once forklifts are in operation, telematics can be a useful tool to help purchasing managers assess the realized total cost of ownership of individual units as well as the entire fleet, by monitoring utilization, maintenance and performance data.



// FILLING EXPERTISE GAPS

Importantly, individuals in purchasing roles are not necessarily lift truck experts; certainly not in very large organizations, where obtaining materials handling equipment is just one of many acquisitions they make. Purchasing managers can find support through a consultative relationship with a forklift dealer who can provide application-specific advice and identify the right solutions and potential alternatives, for example, if the business needs to go a step further to prioritize safety. This process can help avoid overloading trucks with unneeded specialized features that will unnecessarily drive up the price. When handled correctly, these dealer relationships can help purchasing managers increase their knowledge for the next time they source equipment, such as what to look for when it comes to fuel efficiency, or understanding why optimum visibility matters.



// OPERATIONS AND SERVICE MANAGERS HAVE NEEDS TOO

Some organizations will have various personnel in operations and service roles. Others will direct that these responsibilities be fulfilled as part of another position. Either way, most will share the common goals of maximizing uptime and minimizing downtime in the face of unrelenting demand.

Compressed margins in the industry are reducing new equipment budgets, meaning equipment is expected to remain in service longer and businesses must do more with less. In some cases, operations are running significant numbers of older and under-maintained equipment that can leave them vulnerable to interruptions. Forklift maintenance and downtime can cause major operational disruptions, and when this is unplanned, it also results in unforeseen costs. Aforementioned labor shortages apply here too. Suitable service expertise is not easy to obtain, which could have a residual effect on keeping trucks operating optimally or on carrying out essential maintenance.

Some lift trucks 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 problems can be addressed faster, and downtime can be minimized.

Businesses should also take into consideration potential maintenance that may be required by the technology features they opt for on their lift trucks. For instance, some integrated stability systems require operations to keep up with maintenance that can be both frequent and involved, needing weekly inspection and lubrication as frequently as every 250 hours. By contrast, not all such systems require maintenance as frequently, or even at all.





TOP TRENDS INFLUENCING INDUSTRIAL FORKLIFT SELECTION




// GOING GREEN

In addition to a focus on uptime, some operations managers increasingly must also focus on environmental concerns like meeting emissions requirements. Across intensive industries, there are growing regulations that must be addressed. With increased emphasis on emissions reduction and green initiatives (on a company, local or national level), operations managers must also consider the power sources of the lift trucks used in the organization and the potential targets set to reduce exhaust emissions or noise levels.

// FINE TUNING FORKLIFTS TO UNIQUE DEMANDS

There are many considerations and factors that influence the right choice of forklift for an application. No two individual applications face identical challenges. Every industry offers its own and often challenging conditions, each operation is unique, and even different job roles will have varying perspectives about what is needed from materials handling equipment.

To learn more about how Hyster can help you fine-tune lift trucks for your specific application requirements and achieve a low total cost of ownership, contact an expert at your local **Hyster dealer** or visit <https://www.hyster.com/en-us/north-america/product-selector/>.

Hyster and  are registered trademarks in the United States and certain other jurisdictions. Hyster products are subject to change without notice. Trucks may be shown with optional equipment. ©2023 Hyster Company. All rights reserved.