



CASE STUDY

UNFAILING SERVICE AND SPECIALLY DESIGNED TRUCKS HELP EUROPE'S LARGEST PALLET NETWORK SAVE £500,000

Proven service and product reliability over the past nine years has prompted Palletways to renew a four-year contract with Briggs Equipment, which includes a brand new fleet of 54 LPG Cat® Lift Trucks.

The palletised distribution company runs a 24-hour operation, six nights a week, and undertakes an amazing 25,000 pallet movements per shift through its main distribution hub in the Midlands. Briggs' superb on-site service support and bespoke truck solutions keep this demanding operation running continuously, whilst meeting targets for considerable operational cost savings.

Palletways handles many different types of products for a wide variety of businesses: virtually every company in the UK will touch its distribution network at some point. It runs a highly efficient operation with 98.8% on-time delivery, and trunk vehicles running at 94% capacity, so fork lift trucks are critical to this operation. In an average seven-hour nightshift the fleet of Cat 2.5 tonne gas engine trucks effectively moves one pallet every second, loading and unloading up to 250 lorries per night.

Whilst Cat trucks are known for their robust design and are ideal for arduous applications, it is the quality of Briggs' service that ensures they run so reliably and efficiently. Briggs' on-site engineer conducts planned maintenance inspections on-time and, working from a dedicated on-site workshop, services and maintains the trucks to the highest quality standards.

The service level agreement not only guarantees the quality of the service repairs and a fast, first-time fix, but if ever a truck should go down in the middle of the night, Palletways' busiest time, a Briggs' engineer will come out and fix it for free. However, because of the high level of preventative maintenance, this service has never been called upon in nine years.

Graham Leitch, Palletways' operations director, explains, "Briggs offers uncompromising service performance in this demanding operation. They are 100% reliable: in three years we have never had a night with the machines not running. The trucks are one of the most reliable products on the market and also one of the most efficient. With our short shuttle operation, the lifting speed and hydraulic power of the trucks helps meet our time-critical operations."

Palletways two most critical KPIs are pallets moved per man hour and finishing time. The performance and uptime of the trucks is critical in meeting these. The number of trucks in operation is finely balanced to match the predicted number of pallet movements and this requires 100% uptime. For example, with an average finish time of 3.50am the hub is able to meet 98.8% delivery-on-time targets, but every 15-minute delay to the finishing time reduces network performance by 0.5%.

Early on in the relationship, which spans nine years, Briggs realised that a unique truck was needed to meet the requirements of the hub operation. Darren Field, Key Accounts Manager at Briggs, says, "Three years ago we sat down and designed the ideal truck for this operation. Today we have a gas truck, with fingertip controls, a duplex mast and a fleet management system. Real-time reporting enables managers to monitor completion of daily shift checks on all trucks.

"But the biggest improvements have been on prolonging tyre life and reducing damage to expensive components such as the differential, engine and gearbox. Cat's unique traction-control system, which is fitted as standard across the fleet, is the key to this. The system provides very sophisticated traction control and stops any wheel spin completely, even on wet or dirty floors." Field continues, "Previously, Palletways were getting through a set of front tyres every 300 hours. We expect the new system to quadruple tyre life, resulting in £92,000 annual savings."

Briggs also helped the company shave almost half a million pounds off the operational cost of the fleet by flexibly renegotiating contract terms from 36 months to 48 months and moving to LPG fuel.

The additional 54 new trucks bring Palletways' total Cat fleet up to 70 trucks. Nevertheless, there are peak times around Easter and Christmas where palletised movements can increase by up to 50% and exceed 35,000 movements per night. At its headquarters in the Midlands, Briggs keeps a fleet of short-term hire trucks for Palletways, all matched to its current fleet specification, which the distributor can call off at a moment's notice according to demand.

Whilst the trucks are critical to the efficient operation, the drivers are key to productivity. Dave Daniels, hub general manager, comments, "We have 58 drivers and we look after these lads. You only get what you put in and we believe we have the best drivers in the country. They deserve to drive the best trucks and our drivers love operating the Cat trucks. They spend a lot of hours working in the forklifts, on night-time shifts, and it's important that they are comfortable and find the trucks fast and easy to operate. We involved them by taking them to Briggs' national service centre where our drivers were involved in specifying and selecting the trucks and testing out the fingertip controls."

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Editor's Notes

Briggs Equipment UK

Briggs Equipment UK Ltd is a leading materials handling service provider and sole UK distributor of Cat Lift Trucks®. Providing a wide range of equipment for a broad customer base, Briggs provides innovative, tailored and cost effective solutions on a nationwide basis. With its headquarters and national support centre in Cannock, Briggs people assist and advise in the delivery of long term solutions that enable customers to develop more efficient and results driven businesses.

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