



## CASE STUDY

### **BRIGGS EQUIPMENT BRINGS HEALTHY OPTIONS FOR FLEET MANAGEMENT TO WHITWORTHS**

**A strong partnership and innovative fleet technology from Briggs Equipment has meant that fruit snacks specialist, Whitworths, is beating the competition in a challenging market and reducing its damage costs by up to 50% annually.**

Healthy food is a demanding business. Stock has to be brought in, handled and moved around quickly. Seasonal peaks demand flexibility and a quick response. Retailers and the public's tastes are fickle and margins and loyalty can be hard won. For Whitworths the pressure was on to find value enhancing initiatives across its supply chain, so it turned to its materials handling partner, Briggs Equipment, for the solution.

Whitworths is market leader in the healthy snacks market, offering a host of award winning, first-to-market innovations. Its Fruits 25g range was the first fruit snack in the UK to feature the Department of Health's 5 A DAY logo on-pack, and its latest new Love brand range of real fruit bars comprising only of 100% real fruit pieces. It was important for the company to retain its market-leading position through maximising economies of scale and improving efficiencies in its operations, in particular its materials handling activities.

"We had a fleet of 70 trucks, many of which were in continual use across all aspects of our operation from raw materials intake, to production, packaging, and finished goods," says Chris Owen, Whitworths' Supply Chain manager. "However, our damage bills were significant."

"We wanted to manage this better and reduce our costs. It was also important for us to improve our efficiencies through maximising our fleet utilisation and minimise downtime. So we started talking to Briggs."

Briggs wanted to thoroughly understand Whitworths' diverse needs, so it undertook a series of five detailed surveys to assess the site and its different areas of operation and the different machine specifications that would be required. The survey also considered operator selection and training and various site and maintenance issues.

Jason Rudkin, account manager at Briggs Equipment, was keen to standardise and rationalise the fleet to improve usage and operations. "We looked at the fleet, and reduced it from 70 to a total of 56 trucks," comments Rudkin. "Through specifying trucks that could multi-task and work anywhere across the site we increased the flexibility of working and allowed operators to use any truck for any operation. Whitworths' site uses a unique drive-in racking system, so we built all the counterbalance trucks with drive-in racking modifications, which allow them to use the Caterpillar ® trucks to drive in and out of the racking, thereby dramatically improving their speed of operation. It has also helped to improve safety on site through the reduction in manual handling."

### Culture Change

Whitworths top priority was to manage its fork lift truck operators better. "Operators needed to be held more accountable for the damage they were causing and the effects this was having on the operation," Chris Owen explains. "We needed a way to monitor impacts and damage as they occurred so that we could address and act on the problems as immediately. We were targeting for 50% year on year reduction in damage costs, so we needed an effective solution and quickly."

As a result, Briggs fitted almost every single truck in Whitworths' fleet with InfoLock's truck management system. This included driver login procedure and a wireless system that transmits data on impacts and damage from the trucks as the incidents happen, updating the main LogIt system in real-time. "As well as providing thorough reports, the system also alerts us when impacts occur," comments Chris Owen. "This has helped to provide greater accountability for accidents and damage and helped to reduce damage around the site significantly."

## Technological Innovation

Whitworths complemented the technological innovation with a company-wide drive to raise awareness of health and safety and eradicate the damage culture. Briggs played a key role in this through running training and awareness seminars with senior trainers and briefing sessions for the drivers. This included putting numeric values on the damage they were causing. Leigh Edgley, field service manager for Briggs has a long-standing relationship with Whitworths. “The LogIt system also monitors the impacts caused to the trucks by uneven or poor flooring, for example when the truck runs over expansion joints in the floor,” says Edgley. “Through this we were able to suggest improvements to the flooring across the site and improve the performance and life of the truck tyres, which has also saved on running costs of the fleet.”

The all-in maintenance contract includes an hourly truck usage rate. To make this as flexible as possible for Whitworths, Briggs set the annual hours by machine type which means that Whitworths can pool overall machine hours by type of machine, thereby getting maximum usage of each truck and reducing overall life cost. Briggs also put a set of stringent Service level agreements (SLAs) in place and set up quarterly review meetings to ensure that these were regularly monitored and reviewed. These included 90% service level uptime, first fix ratios, guaranteed truck replacement after 12 hours, and an ability to off-hire ten per cent of the fleet each year.

Whitworths’ fleet consists of a mixture of Cat® gas and electric counterbalance, reach trucks, low level order pickers, and power pallets on a five year contract. The trucks have in-built intelligent management systems, which allowed a speed limit to be set across the site and also limits drive speed when cornering and controls drive speed under load.

A number of other initiatives were carried out as part of the contract including a new battery changing system and changing bay as well as an automated battery top up system. These save time and also make battery changing and maintenance safer.

“Briggs designed a bespoke contract that suited our needs, both now and for the future. We have a great working partnership that has been built up over a number

of years and communication is excellent. Briggs do whatever it takes to solve our problems. Their on-site engineer is very proactive and keeps the trucks running efficiently. They give us a good service and we reward them with our loyalty. It's a win-win situation," comments Chris Owen.

Whitworths manufactures over 950 different products and produces 130 million snack packs every year making over 190,000 deliveries and using 50,000 tonnes of fruit in its production. Its materials handling solution through Briggs Equipment is now a real value adding activity, helping to increase profit margins and help Whitworths to gain even greater competitive advantage.

**ENDS**

#### **Editor's Notes**

#### **Briggs Equipment UK**

Briggs Equipment UK, with its acquisition of Finning Materials Handling, became the sole distributor of Caterpillar counterbalance trucks and warehouse equipment in the UK, offering a range of trucks suitable for all applications – over 130 types of materials handling equipment in total. The company, which is head quartered in Cannock, provides innovative, tailored and cost effective solutions for new or used lift trucks, to buy, lease or short-term hire along with comprehensive customer support services.

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