



## CASE STUDY

### THE ACID TEST FOR LIFT TRUCKS

Polyflor is the UK's leading supplier of commercial flooring. It produces 20 million sq metres of flooring every year and exports to more than 60 countries from its UK base. In a recent review of its handling operations, encompassing 66,000 tonnes of vinyl product across 10,000 pallet locations, the company needed to ensure it chose a forklift fleet that was truly fit for purpose. So Polyflor let its drivers decide which fork lift was up to the job.

Briggs Equipment, the UK distributor of Cat Lift Trucks, was shortlisted alongside five other suppliers for the 35 truck deal, and presented with a 57 page specification document. "It was the most thorough and detailed tender process we have ever been through. Everything was specified down to the finest detail of the performance of the trucks, charges for damage, parts provision and discounts on parts prices," says Tony Worrall, Briggs Equipment's account manager. "But the most encouraging aspect of the whole process was how involved the operators were in the final decision."

At Polyflor's main site in Radcliffe near Manchester, the fork lift trucks have to work 24 hours a day moving rolls of flooring weighing up to 1700 kg. The operators have to navigate around production areas and across to the warehouse and storage areas, taking long shuttle runs outdoors and up steep inclines across uneven surfaces.

Chris Jenkinson, head of procurement at Polyflor, says, "We focused on the lifetime cost of the machines, and when you break it down much of this cost is about operator comfort and productivity. Rather than looking at the cheapest product we focused on brand and quality. We needed machines with a reputation for robustness and reliability, which would be able to handle the demanding nature of the application and win our drivers over."

Polyflor felt that the only way to find the right machine for the job was to hand them over to the operators. Each of the six suppliers sent five demonstration trucks and 20 of Polyflor's drivers were selected to put the machines through their paces. Chris and his team designed a

questionnaire for each driver to complete. This system allowed an objective comparison of the handling and performance criteria of each of the six brands of trucks across all the operators.

To Polyflor's management team it is critical that their drivers are engaged and motivated in their work. The lift truck operators are seen as the most important link in the efficient flow of materials at all stages of production, and sometimes they are under enormous pressure to get product out the door.

Chris Jenkinson explains, "We knew that if we involved them in the decision making process it would reap rewards, not only in terms of increasing their motivation at work but also in terms of ensuring that the company made the right decision in choosing a product that was truly fit for purpose. Briggs Equipment has been very accommodating and flexible and really understood the importance of getting driver input in the process."

It soon became clear that the Cat product was the operators' choice. The product handled well, and felt safe and robust in the applications. It had the power for handling the heavy rolls across difficult terrain in the longer shuttle runs as well as excellent manoeuvrability for the 1.8m warehouse aisles.

In addition, some of the operators visited Briggs Equipment's Orbital centre in the Midlands, to talk to the engineers who build and service the machines. They watched as an experienced engineer stripped down a power pallet truck, to see inside the guts of the machine and get a feel for the robust engineering construction.

Briggs Equipment supplied a mixed fleet of 35 machines consisting of 2.5 tonne LPG trucks, 3 wheel electric counterbalance trucks and platform power pallet trucks for the warehouse. In addition, 2.5 and 3 tonne diesel machines were supplied for the longer shuttle runs in the production areas. The electric machines required special modifications for handling the 2m long rolls of vinyl, so Briggs fitted special rotator attachments to the counterbalance trucks. The power pallet truck was modified for the heavy duty application.

The final consideration was about how to measure and evaluate the performance of the fleet in operation. Polyflor took a novel approach to this and decided to monitor how many hours the trucks were not working. Chris Jenkinson explains, "We run a cost accounting financial model and this means that it is more useful to us to understand the costs involved if a truck is not working and the reasons for this. This goes counter to most measurement systems but Briggs listened to us

and was able to design an IT solution to meet our needs. Through Briggs we now have a good measurement and reporting system that will ensure we get the extra mile out of our fleet.”

-- ENDS --

Images to accompany release:





## Editor's Notes

### Briggs Equipment UK

Briggs Equipment UK, with its acquisition of Finning Materials Handling, became the sole distributor of Cat Lift Trucks 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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