



CASE STUDY

BRIGGS EQUIPMENT PROVES “JUST THE JOB” FOR WICKES DISTRIBUTION

For site managers, operating a large materials handling fleet can be both complex and costly. Servicing times need scheduling so as productivity is not compromised. Failure to get the balance between need and availability just right wastes money. In addition, Businesses operating a range of equipment from different manufacturers, or with geographically spread facilities, face further challenges. With many fleet providers opting to franchise out the service arrangements, communications between those franchises, suppliers of equipment and parts, and their own distribution networks can prove difficult.

Briggs Equipment, formerly Finning Materials Handling, has been working with home improvement giant Wickes to address many of the issues, such as communications and multiple manufacturing sources that can result in preventable costs. The results ranged from a reduction in maintenance costs of some £150,000 per annum across Wickes' four sites, to tangible improvements in the environmental impact of the fleet and risk management.

Wickes Distribution is one of the largest home improvement product suppliers in the industry. Its four distribution centres are located many hundreds of miles apart and supply 170 stores throughout the UK. In 2003, the Briggs team undertook a review of Wickes' immediate and longer term requirements, including detailed site surveys and identification of areas of potential cost and efficiency savings. Some of the key recommendations included:

- Limit truck speed to reduce tyre wear and extend the life of the battery.
- Reduce accidental machine damage by restricting access to approved drivers only via a security key pad.
- Match truck working hours to service provision more accurately and review annually.
- Monitor repetitive damage issues on machines and essential floor repairs and review at monthly meetings.
- Match battery size to the application and maximise charger efficiency.

SITE SURVEY

Ian Bennett, Strategic Accounts Manager at Briggs Equipment UK says: “A site survey is an integral part of the fleet management programme. If not completed correctly in the first instance, machines may be specified incorrectly and future specifications become much more problematic. A detailed site survey looking at equipment use, application and shift patterns provides an effective overview of a fleet as well as the basis of any future recommendations.”

Initially, Wickes Distribution was operating a mixed fleet of predominantly BT Rolatruc and Komatsu trucks, but following the site survey, the Briggs team highlighted a number of key areas where savings could be made. One such change was to convert the entire fleet to Cat Lift Trucks because its design is such that it eliminates many of the over-contract damage issues associated with the BT and Komatsu range. In addition, parts commonality across the Cat range ensures greater parts availability. Also, Briggs' 600 service engineers are regularly trained on Cat products, increasing service efficiency and maintaining uptime. Today, the company makes more than 30,000 deliveries per year, undertaken by a fleet of over 150 Cat Lift trucks.

In keeping with Wickes' strong commitment to the environment, both the order pickers and the reach trucks are powered electrically. In addition, the counterbalance machines, which are used for short shuttle runs between the warehouse and the lorries, are gas powered and come equipped with a 3-way catalytic converter, designed to remove up to 99% of the carbon monoxide emissions and other harmful gasses.

Ian Bennett continues: “With the Cat Lift Truck range, we are supplying electric and gas powered machines that leave a minimal environmental footprint, but at the same time maintain the same level of performance traditionally associated with the brand.”

The new fleet is supported and maintained by Briggs' network of service engineers which has a 98% next day parts delivery service as well as a 90% first time fix rate. Operating under a contract hire agreement, Wickes are able to schedule-in regular maintenance checks with Briggs' services teams at agreed intervals, preventing any loss in productivity. The hassle-free maintenance contracts are also highly flexible ensuring that if the needs of the business change, the servicing package and the equipment on site can be modified.

In addition to the contract hire agreement, Wickes Distribution also has resident engineers on each of the sites. These engineers, supported by the Briggs servicing network, provide security and assurance to Wickes Distribution, ensuring percentage uptime is maintained across the sites. The resident engineer is capable of

making any minor repairs to the fleet, coordinating servicing times with business production timings, as well as assessing fleet optimisation and monitoring health and safety considerations.

Graham Bellman, group transport manager for Wickes distribution, says: "Service support was an essential part of the specification process and it was important that it formed a major part of the new package as a centralised function of our operation."

He continues: "A key gripe of mine within the industry is the tendency for fleet companies to franchise out the service contract to regionally based companies. With no communication between each servicing contractor, trend spotting and analysis across the network becomes very difficult."

The Briggs team recognises the importance of having a centralised service function, through which all calls and problems can be logged on a day-to-day basis. Using a single contactable number, the data collected from across the sites is analysed for fleet optimisation. Most importantly, national trends and problems across the network are more easily logged and monitored, making it much easier to identify problems.

Ian Bennett, adds: "When operating an extensive fleet of equipment across a number of sites, effective communication is paramount. Without this essential contact, it is very difficult and expensive to manage and maintain a fleet effectively over long periods of time. This centralised servicing function was something Wickes was very keen to include within the package."

The residential engineers and service support package from Briggs ensures that there is always somebody on hand to provide advice and support if required. With increased service support and resident engineers, Wickes is able to look in more detail at other areas of the business, including health and safety and training.

SAFETY

Working alongside the Briggs team, Wickes Distribution implemented a number of new safety regulations across sites, including new rules surrounding battery handling.

Ian Bennett comments: "Batteries require proper maintenance and management to prolong service life and increase efficiency. If they are not maintained and handled correctly, batteries cannot perform to their maximum potential and may pose health and safety risks. With some careful guidance, it is possible to implement a safe battery handling package that can be rolled out across a number of sites."

Graham Bellman comments: “Having worked with Briggs Equipment UK for the past ten years, they have listened and understood the demands of the company and the business in which we operate. Machine downtime is a major concern for any business, potentially costing large sums of money if goods cannot be delivered on time. The Briggs services team and the resident engineers are our answer to this problem, providing peace of mind on site, carrying out essential maintenance work and repairs across the fleet and ensuring uptime and productivity is maintained.”

ENDS

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 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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