

How QVC meets their customer's delivery expectations with InfoLink® fleet management from Crown

Every day, 45,000 packages leave the warehouse of Germany's largest teleshopping provider, QVC. In addition to product quality, customer convenience is a key priority for QVC. If a commodity is ordered after the product has been shown on TV, the customer wants fast delivery. A new fleet management system ensures that the required turnaround times are adhered to by the Dispatch department. The QVC fleet of Crown forklift trucks is fitted with InfoLink, which ensures that communication between fleet and fleet manager is seamless.

Customers can order goods from QVC around the clock. As well as teleshopping, an online shop and email order catalogue make it possible for customers to purchase from the comfort of their own homes. But the product's path from order to customer is long. The incoming orders for one day are combined and passed on to the Logistics department for delivery. In the warehouse, 250 employees working in three shifts make sure that customers are served quickly and efficiently. A fleet of Crown lift trucks is in operation for this purpose seven days a week, 365 days a year. "No customer wants to wait longer than one week for his or her order. Thanks to our efficient intralogistics, indeed 90 per cent of our customers on average can take delivery of their orders in just two days," [says] Gerold Felix, Senior Manager Outbound Logistics at QVC eDistribution Inc. & Co. KG.

The highest standards of flexibility are thus on the agenda. Because the logistical work starts when the consignment is first assembled for delivery. Depending on the daily offers, there are a varying number of product pallets to deal with. For example, on a single pallet you can fit] 20 pressure cookers or 400 cream cakes. As a result of the variety,, with 18,000 branded items and product promotions that change every day, the load on the lift trucks is constantly varying].

Insight into fleet utilisation

To maximise the need for flexibility at QVC, the lift truck fleet was renewed by Crown Lift Trucks and in the process the InfoLink fleet management system was also incorporated. Today there are, among other forklifts, there are ergonomic pallet trucks from the WT 3000 Power pallet truck series in use, as well as electric three-wheel counterbalanced lift trucks from the SC 5300 Series. The WT is particularly productive due to its' "flexride" operator platform which reduces shock to the operator by up to 80% over ramps and dock boards. The SC 5300 is especially suitable for use in three-shift operations as batteries can be removed from the side: this allows batteries to be swapped out quickly for recharging, thereby guaranteeing uninterrupted operation.



The WT 3000 has [lit. = offers] suspension that can be adjusted to the operator's bodyweight, hence improved driver comfort

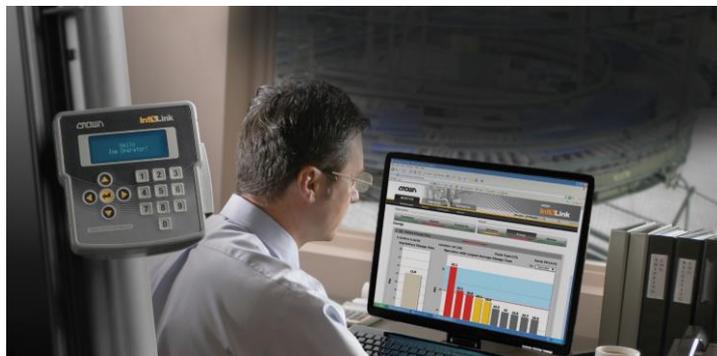
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The fact that the SC 5300 battery can be swapped out quickly [lit. = Through the option of fast swapping the battery] [means] there is no idle time for the forklift truck in three-shift operation

“When we started our discussions with QVC, various independent in-house solutions were in operation for managing the lift truck fleet. In addition because different departments in the various business units had access to the lift trucks and were reordering new lift trucks independently, the existing fleet was not being efficiently used,” is how Jörg Sowa, Crown Dortmund branch manager, summarises the initial situation.

The InfoLink software installed on all lift trucks came to the rescue. Now real-time data and historical data are available to the duty fleet manager in the warehouse, on his computer screen. To guarantee cost efficiency, exactly as many vehicles are utilised as are needed to cope with the various job requirements. Improvements have also been implemented in operations management, from vehicle maintenance through to route planning. In addition, statutory requirements governing the safety of the vehicles and drivers are always top of mind.



The InfoLink system processes real-time data and historical data for decision-relevant information, thereby saving time and money

Compliance with safety regulations

Only authorised individuals can operate the lift trucks. At QVC, this is ensured by an electronic chip on the staff access card. On it are stored details of safety briefings and training periods required for authorisation to operate the various types of forklift trucks. As part of the process of logging onto the forklift truck, InfoLink checks for a permit that is valid for the type of vehicle.

The fleet manager is given a simple overview of each operator's licence status through a simple traffic-light system. If the indicator is in the green area, there is no danger that

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drivers fail due to missed training periods. If the deadline for renewing the operating permit is approaching, a yellow bar indicates the update of the annual safety briefing. Before the deadline expires, a follow-on training session or examination by the company doctor is set up automatically, so that all fleet staff are always available for the smooth delivery of goods. To ensure operational safety, the process of logging onto a lift truck always includes a safety inspection of the vehicle.



The user-friendly interface makes it possible to monitor the performance of a fleet at a glance

Accident-free travel in the warehouse

At QVC, a WLAN system functions as the interface between the fleet manager and his fleet. In the warehouses, wireless points have been set up with product information to which Crown InfoLink is connected. As a lift truck passes a WLAN point, a data transfer takes place. Analysis of this information allows for efficient route planning and improved operational safety, because accident black spots can be eliminated.

If a lift truck should collide in the warehouse, the head of department receives a message via InfoLink. In the event of severe impacts, sensors in the lift truck *instigate* a complete shutdown]. On his monitor, the manager obtains a display of the location of the accident and can view the vehicle affected. The recording of the event, together with the force involved and magnitude of the impact, helps in deciding whether the lift truck should be restarted. If the vehicle is damaged, Crown technicians repair the lift truck as quickly as possible under the maintenance contract.

Gerold Felix explains: "The important thing for us was that we could set the level of the impact that would trigger the shock condition in InfoLink. That way, our drivers are encouraged to treat the forklift trucks carefully

For the Works Council, the audit trail covering the sequence of events leading up to an accident involving personal injury played an important role in their positive acceptance of the system. In addition, absolute confidentiality in the handling of driver data was mandatory. All personal data was entered into InfoLink by QVC itself. The fleet management system is hosted by the server at Crown head office in Munich. From there, a contact person looks after the system in close consultation with the eDistribution department.

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Fine adjustments after the implementation phase, such as the readjustment of the impact intensity that brings about a complete standstill, mean that operations now run smoothly. Automatic recording of operating hours is also reassuring. Manual processes are a thing of the past. Today the Dispatch department uses InfoLink to check that the fleet is being utilised efficiently. For QVC, information on the lift truck fleet is the key to success for the fast and smooth delivery of goods and thereby satisfied customers..