

Crown reduces costs and fleet damage for Yamaha.

Since replacing its ageing forklift fleet with Crown equipment and their Infolink® fleet management system, costs at the Yamaha Schiphol motorcycle parts distribution centre have plummeted by 10% while fleet damage is over 30% lower.

Parts for Yamaha's world-famous motorcycles are distributed throughout Europe with a 24 or 48 hour turnaround from the 30,000 sq. m. facility. It comprises an automated high bay warehouse with 17,200 pallet locations plus a further 11,000 in standard pallet racking and an inventory running to 35,000 line items.

In a drive to improve efficiency and reduce costs, Yamaha decided to invite tenders for a new handling fleet to include three-wheel counterbalanced lift trucks, order pickers and a reach truck, all of which had to be equipped with a simple and easy to manage fleet management system, to replace its existing seven-year-old leased equipment.

Central to the requirement was a better ROI (return on investment) and better control and monitoring of the fleet – which works a two-shift pattern with multiple operators across all trucks. In the absence of accurate, real-time data it was very difficult to monitor equipment damage, which was running at an unacceptably high level.

To achieve the improved ROI, it was decided to purchase as opposed to lease, and integral to the tender was an easily-implemented fleet management system.

Three suppliers were invited to tender and following the presentation by Crown, a visit to an existing Crown user was arranged for Gerrit Viveen, head of the technical department at the Yamaha sites in the Netherlands, France and Italy, who was in charge of the project. Gerrit was accompanied by a group of Yamaha's truck operators, who were able to see the Crown equipment in action and also gain hands-on driving experience.

The operators were very happy with what they saw, in particular when they tried out the Crown trucks – with their excellent ergonomics and inbuilt safety features being singled out. They were also very enthusiastic about the robust build quality.

Yamaha scored the three contenders on price, truck features, service costs, driver appeal and the supporting fleet management system. Because Yamaha was planning to purchase the trucks outright instead of leasing, the robustness and potential longevity of the trucks were very

important factors in the decision-making process, which resulted in the contract being placed with Crown.

The implementation of the new truck fleet went smoothly, as did installing and commissioning the Infolink® system. Support from Crown technical personnel during set-up and going live was very much appreciated.

Initial feedback from the operators was very positive. "They are very pleased with the trucks – particularly the ergonomics. Compared to their old order pickers there is much better visibility and much more space for their warehouse management system equipment such as monitor, scanner and printer," said Gerrit Viveen.

"It took a little while to get to know the Infolink® module because it was very new. Now we are more familiar with the system and its benefits have become more apparent."

Gerrit Viveen is pleased with the better operational control afforded by the Infolink® system. "It enables more efficient use of the trucks, gives a complete overview of equipment usage and because the operators are more efficiently controlled, they drive more carefully and we have far less damage – over 30%."

With Infolink® Gerrit can call Crown in for service based on hourly intervals instead of a fixed period. And whereas he expected to use the Infolink® module only for access control, he is using it much more as time progresses and new possibilities present themselves. These include:

- training needs are identified and scheduled in the correct timeframes as an operators fork lift truck licence expiry date is clearly visible
- monitoring of battery charging ensures batteries are charged when required rather than when an operator thinks it should be done – this ensures batteries are maintained in optimum condition for longer-life
- service codes appear remotely on his desktop monitor – no need to walk to the truck
- any damage to the truck can be traced back to an operator/location, enabling corrective measures to be implemented

Gerrit concluded. "Infolink® has given us so much more than merely access control and it's making a real impact on our bottom line. Damage has fallen by about 30%, and real-time usage and fault data means we have been able to opt for a preventive maintenance contract. Put simply, Infolink® has given us more control over every aspect of truck operation. Whilst I am not yet able to calculate the exact ROI, I estimate the annual cost savings compared to our old fleet will be between 10% – 15%."