

The primacy of data

Ute Filippone, business manager EMEA & UK, ID Systems tells HSS editor Simon Duddy that data is becoming key in forklift fleet management.

Ask people what fleet management is and the answer will involve the hardware installed on forklifts that measures performance and impacts. While this is a key part of the system, Ute Filippone, business manager EMEA & UK, ID Systems, sees a time when the hardware will be a distant second in importance compared to the data collected and how it is analysed.

"We will most likely come to a point where you can have the OEM hardware on the forklift and feed the data into our system," explains Ute.

"In the end, we will have mixed fleets with mixed fleet management hardware, but all feeding into same database, because that's what the customer will want."

Ute predicts the customer will use the data with other feeds from departments such as Accounts and Purchasing to provide deeper analysis.

"The key then is how quickly and easily the customer can get what he needs out of the data. Our PowerFleet IQ is a great analysis tool, that can help, for example, companies with five to 10 sites to define KPIs, then, if you see a movement you don't like, drill in to find a solution."

Fleet management can offer demonstrable benefits but it requires a bit of cooperation by the customer. You need to engage with the tool to find out where the pain points are in the operation. Then you can move to tackle them.

Ute explains: "If you want to find the right solution, you need to spot the problem areas - is there a lot of damage? A lot of accidents? Are you losing a lot of product? Then tailor make a solution for the customer which delivers the best ROI."

Equally fleet management can help customers use trucks more evenly. In most DCs there are favoured trucks and not so favourite models. Depending on the lease you may have to pay extra money on over-utilised trucks while there are others under-utilised.

But it's not just about controlling costs. Fleet management can have profound positive effects too.

"Fleet management is not just about letting people go and lowering number of trucks, it is about increasing productivity, getting more movements and more lifts out of your equipment. Our industry must as efficient as possible if we are to thrive in a very competitive global marketplace," says Ute.

It can be easy to assume that one fleet management package is much like another. Not so, says ID Systems.

Ute urges end users to ask how easy it to implement a system with existing infrastructure? If the customer has a functioning Wi-Fi network, ID Systems can use that, meaning no additional monthly costs for data transmission.

"Access to data is an important point. When some fleet management providers host a client's data, they only offer access to the last 30 days. But if you have damages skyrocketing in December, you'll want to look at last December and see if it was the same. To access this a customer would have to contact the provider, so there is a delay.

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Fleet management is the core business of ID Systems, and Ute says this makes a big difference for customers, who want a



supplier who is neutral to manage their forklift data.

Ute explains: "I had a meeting the other day with a potential global customer, 'we want neutral data' they said straight away. This is because different OEMs measure operations differently, so it is difficult for the customer to make useful comparisons using uniform practices and definitions if they have a mixed fleet. If you use ID Systems you are benchmarking all makes of truck to the same basis for measurement and you get a more robust data set."

Data-driven insight into operations can provide benefits other than an efficiency boost. Health & Safety is a key consideration, particularly in the UK where laws are stricter than most other countries.

"Directors can be fined millions, and even sent to jail, so if you can implement a system which helps you understand underlying causes of accidents, and tackle them, then it helps - both in reducing incidents; and in demonstrating in a legal setting that your company takes safety seriously, if something does go wrong."

In conclusion, it is interesting to see the evolution of ID Systems to a point where it sees itself becoming more of a service provider and data company than an IT and hardware firm.

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