

eureka

Issue 25

Autumn
2015

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE MATERIALS HANDLING PROFESSIONAL

User experience

Why designers increasingly focus on how the user feels



A shining example

Safe Site Award winner shares ideas for practical and cultural change



Prevention versus cure

Plan ahead to protect your investments, maximise uptime and reduce costs



eureka issue 25

The magazine for the materials handling professional

Welcome to another issue of **eureka**, packed with ideas and advice to make your business more profitable.

We start with a feature on 'user experience' – an approach which is revolutionising the way in which products, services and systems are designed.

Mark Nicholson explores the science, the practical application and the evidence of its effect in driving innovation and competitiveness. Whether you are a seller or a buyer, you cannot afford to ignore the feelings of the user.

Good attention to site safety boosts productivity, not just through avoiding forklift accidents and related delays but through developing a culture in which everyone really cares about working safely and effectively. G's Fresh Beetroot, winner of a major award for its site safety measures, shares the secrets of its success with **Mark Nicholson**.

Another essential when it comes to maximising profit is planned preventative maintenance. **Gian Schiava** looks at some of the many ways in which companies can protect their counterbalance and warehouse trucks, keep them in action and maintain their efficiency. Maximum uptime and reduced costs can be difficult goals to juggle, particularly in view of the many other demands on a manager's time, but professional help is available to make it possible.

Returning to the subject of safety, we conclude with an article from **Ruari McCallion** on saving costs by avoiding forklift accidents. Some companies regard accidental losses as inevitable, but with careful collection of information on incidents, and analysis to deduce root causes, they need not be so. For this to happen, a different approach is needed from both managers and truck operators – including an end to the 'blame culture'.

Please do send us your views on **eureka**, and your ideas for future topics, by emailing comment@eurekapub.eu or via our website www.eurekapub.eu.



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eureka's commissioning editor is **Monica Escutia**, a Bachelor of Communications – Journalism. She is a Spanish national and fluent also in Dutch, English and Italian. Having previously edited a variety of international media she has spent the last 13 years in the materials handling industry – the first four as a parts sales representative for several European countries, before becoming the EAME Manager Marketing Communications for Cat Lift Trucks, based in the Netherlands.

Don't forget to visit the **eureka** website www.eurekapub.eu where you have access to the archive of useful articles and features. You can also post comments and suggestions about the magazine and future articles you'd like to see covered.



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4-7
User experience
How does it feel?

Research into user experience – the way someone feels about using a product, service or system – is challenging traditional attitudes to the design process. Mark Nicholson discovers that the user-focused approach is a key to radical innovation and lasting competitive advantage, as proved by recent product successes.



8-10
Safety case study
Safe by design and culture

The award-winning efforts of G's Fresh Beetroot to improve site safety stand as a fine example to all. In Mark Nicholson's article the company shares its ideas, which have combined site design modifications with safety systems and equipment, new procedures and – above all – changes in attitude toward safe operation.



11-13
Fleet maintenance
Prevention is better than cure

Materials handling equipment is a significant capital investment, so it makes sense to maintain its efficiency and maximise its life expectancy. Gian Schiava examines the main issues, the measures that managers should be taking, the difficulties they face and the case for outsourcing maintenance to specialists.



14-15
Accidental losses
Fewer bangs, more bucks

The cost of forklift accidents goes way beyond that of the physical damage and is a drain on resources that should be more clearly understood. Ruari McCallion suggests approaches to identifying and addressing root causes, through data collection and analysis, and highlights the need for culture change at all levels.

"It was Archimedes who observed that the power of levers could be used to move the entire world." This publication is named after his famous exclamation of 'eureka!', literally, 'I've found it.'



Events Calendar

Date, Event, Location, Website

10 - 13 November 2015

LOGISTICA 2015

Jaarbeurs Utrecht, Netherlands
www.logistica-online.nl

Overview

Logistica, the most important trade show on logistics and material handling within the Benelux region, will be held between 10 and 13 November 2015. *Logistica* is trend-setting, innovative, complete, industry-wide and packed with action. *Logistica* not only promises to be a buzzing trade show; exhibitors will show plenty of novelties too. Dive right in and be wowed by all kinds of solutions designed to cut costs, use space as efficiently as possible and improve ergonomics in the workplace. If you are a professional in the industry and are looking for logistics solutions, you certainly should not miss this trade show. It will bring you right up to date with the latest developments in a single day.

25 - 27 January 2016

COOL CHAIN AND TEMPERATURE CONTROLLED LOGISTICS, EUROPE

Frankfurt, Germany
www.coolchaineurope.com

After the success of the 2015 meeting, the 15th Annual European *Temperature Controlled Logistics Summit* is returning to Frankfurt on the 25 to 27 January 2016. With 500+ attendees, this is Europe's Biggest and Longest-Running Gathering of Life Sciences Logistics, Supply Chain & QA Professionals and will bring together anyone who is anyone in the temperature controlled logistics world.

8 - 10 March 2016

LogiMAT 2016

New Stuttgart Trade Fair Centre, Germany
www.logimat-messe.de

LogiMAT, the International Trade Fair for Distribution, Materials Handling and Information Flow, sets new standards as the biggest annual intralogistics exhibition in Europe. Between 8 and 10 March 2016 international exhibitors and decision-makers from industry, trade and the service sector will be coming together at the new exhibition centre at Stuttgart Airport to find new business partners. The focus will be on innovative products, solutions and systems for procurement, warehouse, production and distribution logistics.

Improving user experience

How does it feel?

When developing your company's products or services, how much attention do you pay to the feelings of the people who will actually use them?

Mark Nicholson investigates the science of 'user experience', which is challenging traditional attitudes to the design process and increasing the competitiveness of those who embrace it.

"As a driving force of R&D, pursuing the best user experience really challenges the way of thinking and working – and through it a manufacturer can achieve innovative leaps in its products and services."

Perhaps the simplest definition of user experience is 'the way a user feels about using a product, service or system'. Researchers at FIMECC (Finnish Metals and Engineering Competence Cluster) are at the forefront of this field. Partly funded by Finland's government, FIMECC's research programmes include one on User Experience and Usability in complex Systems (UXUS) which aims to make businesses in Finland more competitive through radical transformation of their practices.

UXUS brings together experts from a range of disciplines, including psychology, human-computer interaction, economics and design, and involves deep co-operation between participating companies and the academic world. Leading the programme is Maaria Nuutinen, who is also a Research Manager at the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland. Maaria holds a PhD in psychology and believes strongly in the value of viewing products and processes from a psychological perspective.

"In general we trust too much in rational logic and numbers – and put too little emphasis on emotions, feelings, insights and empathetic understanding of human beings in the business world. User-experience-driven design and thinking is a way to explore this unutilised potential and turn it into innovation and renewal – and competitiveness."

A new way of thinking and working

At the heart of the user experience approach is a focus on seeking the opinions and involvement of users at all stages in the research and development of products and services. Customer input is important too, but it should be remembered that the customer or buyer is not always the person who will use the product or service. Essentially, the manufacturer wants to know how it makes the user feel.

"As a driving force of R&D, pursuing the best user experience really challenges the way of thinking and working – and through it a manufacturer can achieve innovative leaps in its products and services," says Maaria.

"Close collaboration between the partners in UXUS has given both the manufacturers and the research organisations new insights. I'd like to think that we have learned together, developing – for example – new ways to study and demonstrate user experience, to realise its benefits and to convince people of its business value, both within the participating companies and in discussion with dealers and customers."

Success all round

Having created a product or service that delivers a better user experience, companies must ensure that buyers understand why this will benefit them. "I would urge buyers to look beneath the surface and put themselves in the user's shoes when evaluating a product or service," says Maaria.

"They should consider, for instance, that if it makes users happier, their motivation will be boosted and this will lead to better performance in terms of efficiency and quality. Dealing with a company that makes user experience a priority gives the buyer confidence that his or her interests, and those of his or her business, employees and customers, are close to the supplier's heart. It also gives a positive message to existing and potential staff that the business cares about them and is forward thinking."

For Maaria Nuutinen and her research partners, it is clear that user experience and customer experience matter and will drive future success. "They are the keys to differentiation, to radical innovation, to renewal and agility – and to lasting competitive advantage," she concludes. →



Visit:
FIMECC

'Designing experiences' at Cat® Lift Trucks

The Cat Lift Trucks production facility in Järvenpää, Finland, has been a participant in the UXUS programme for three years now, but before that its teams were already pioneers in human-centred design and in the use of advanced methods for understanding and measuring user experience.

Design Manager Kero Uusitalo says: "User experience is our main strategic goal in R&D and we build it into every product we design. As a result, when a customer or operator tries our truck for the first time he or she feels amazed at how good it is to drive and handle. To achieve this requires that everyone connected to the design project must understand how vital this approach is to us. We are not just designing forklifts – we are designing experiences."

The same attitude is found throughout the staff at Järvenpää, where the marketing and communications team as well as R&D has been very active in the UXUS programme. Its effect on the success of the business is very obvious, according to Kero Uusitalo, who reports that users testing the latest models say they are the best in the market. As a result, the company is having to work very hard to satisfy the huge demand for its new 80 volt electric in particular.

So how does Cat Lift Trucks gather information on user experience? Kero explains: "We need to work with drivers from the various customer segments, covering many different applications, and we also invite customers to drive. In total we involve about 50 to 100 drivers in the process. We go out to customer sites to observe what happens in drivers' daily lives and we ask them about their needs and wishes. We also bring some of them to our site to test prototypes. To gain other useful perspectives, our R&D staff, our in-house professional drivers and a group of inexperienced first-time drivers also test and comment on the trucks."

He adds: "Our design engineers build trusting and equal relationships with the drivers, in which they feel comfortable about giving their honest opinions and describing their feelings. Videos shot during tests are an important additional tool. Often we can tell whether drivers like something or not by the expressions on their faces."



1

Red Dot Design Award

Excellent user experience and clever design were the main attributes cited by the judges this year when presenting Cat Lift Trucks with the prestigious Red Dot Design Award for the Cat EP25-35(C)N 80 volt electric counterbalance truck.

A thorough user experience study was the starting point for the development of this product, which resulted in a number of major innovations. They include the Responsive Drive System, which responds to the operator's movements to ensure that 'take-off', driving and load handling are always smooth and safe. The system seems to 'know' how the operator wants the truck to behave at any moment.

Design Manager Kero Uusitalo says: "Differentiating our products from those of the competition requires constant development. As this product demonstrates, by concentrating on improving the user experience we are able to take great leaps forward in every area." ■

Article feedback is welcome: editor@eurekapub.eu



3

"I would urge buyers to look beneath the surface and put themselves in the user's shoes when evaluating a product or service."

1. Drivers are encouraged to give honest opinions and describe their feelings.
2. Cat NR-N2 reach truck. "It fits like a glove," was the feeling expressed by one driver using it for the first time.
3. The Red Dot Design Award judges praised the Cat EP25-35(C)N 80 volt electric counterbalance truck for its excellent user experience. This truck seems to 'know' how the driver wants it to behave at any time.

Reach truck in focus

A good example of how the user experience process has benefited Cat products can be seen in the NR-N2 reach truck. Recent upgrades offered on this range have included a cold store cabin option and a 13 metre mast, but Design Manager Kero Uusitalo has gained most satisfaction from the fine tuning of its Anti Sway Control (ASC) system.

"When we fitted the new ASC to a customer's reach truck for the first time, the reaction was overwhelming. The driver was greatly impressed to find that we had made the handling of loads at high lifts even more comfortable as well as controlled. The customer, who had already chosen our reach trucks over those of the major competitors because of their superior user experience, said he would definitely take trucks with the new system if given the chance."

Reflecting on this response, Kero says: "These are the moments when you know your work has paid off. The many hours we spent at a testing site with the software engineer, making adjustments to achieve the feeling that drivers wanted, were all worthwhile. I recently had a similarly rewarding experience when a driver using our reach truck for the first time instantly said, 'It fits like a glove.'"



2



Visit:
VTT Technical
Research Centre

Safe by design and culture

No matter how successful a company has been in operating forklift trucks safely, there is always room for improvement. With this in mind, eureka is keen that good ideas should be shared between users through case studies.

Mark Nicholson reports on one business whose efforts to increase site safety have won a major award.

In 2015, **G's Fresh Beetroot**, based in Cambridgeshire, England, was presented with the Safe Site Award in the prestigious FLTA Annual Awards for Excellence. This honour is awarded by the FLTA (Fork Lift Truck Association) to recognise teams who have looked carefully at their sites, studied the way in which lift trucks are used there, identified any weaknesses, taken remedial action, and shown improvements in their safety records as a result.

For G's, the journey toward improving safety started – as any such journey should – with a thorough risk assessment. Distribution and Warehouse Manager Wayne Marshall, whose role at the time included that of Despatch Manager, says: "Our aim was to protect our pedestrian staff and our forklift truck operators by implementing new control measures and encouraging a culture of safe lift truck operation on the site."

He continues: "Avoiding collisions between trucks and pedestrians was particularly important, although the layout and size of our operation meant that it was not always practical to install hard physical barriers for segregation. In some cases that would simply have reduced the working area, which could have led to other safety concerns. We therefore explored the safety marketplace and talked to suppliers and other professionals to find alternatives. As our journey continued, we carried out further risk assessments and ended up with a whole range of solutions which work together effectively to address pedestrian safety and much more."

Separating pedestrians and lift trucks

The first aid to warning pedestrians of approaching lift trucks was a light system, fitted to each truck, which shines a clear blue spot on the floor several metres away in the direction of travel. Flashing beacons are also used to alert workers to the presence of forklift trucks in an area. In potentially hazardous aisles, corners and blind spots used by both pedestrians and trucks, two-way traffic light systems have been installed. A truck operator can set a red light to keep pedestrians away until the area is safe, and in the same way a pedestrian worker needing access to the area can set a red light to keep out trucks.

Where pedestrian barriers were needed, the company chose A-Safe products. The number of mirrors on the site was increased, to help operators and pedestrians see around corners and obstructions. At the same time, extra signage was added to warn of hazardous areas and to reinforce safety instructions.

Sometimes the answer to a safety problem lies in a very simple practice rather than high technology. When pedestrian workers need to enter a warehouse aisle to inspect products, they now place a movable sign at the end of the racking which tells lift truck operators to stay out. If the operator urgently needs access, he or she can walk over and ask the pedestrian to stand somewhere safe until the truck passes.

"Details of forklift-related incidents can now be recorded quickly, easily and efficiently via smart phones and tablets, giving us vital information on which to base further improvements."



Fork Lift Truck Association

Awards for Excellence

Training, behaviour and reporting

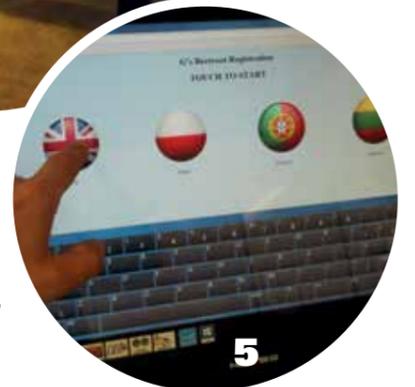
Training is always essential to site safety, so G's decided to invest in sending its Despatch Manager on an approved two-week course to gain an instructor qualification. This has raised the level of supervision on site and it allows him to test and train his team of 12 staff. He is now able to challenge any unsafe activity and to retrain operators immediately, when necessary, so that they always work to the highest standards.

G's insists that drivers of vehicles visiting the site should also follow its safety rules. On arrival, the driver signs in using a touchscreen system which transmits information to a tablet on the relevant forklift truck. The lift truck operator is then aware of the type of goods being delivered, and whether they are hazardous, and is able to take the required action including supervising the vehicle's entry. Displayed in four key languages, the sign-in programme has been written especially for G's and it includes the site rules which the driver must accept before entering.

The company has adopted a behavioural safety programme in which forklift truck operators are encouraged to have 'safety conversations' with their colleagues and document them. These may result from, for example, observing an unsafe situation or an especially good practice. Operators scoring high numbers of conversations and taking the best corrective action are recognised in quarterly awards.

"To support all these developments we have introduced a web-based health and safety management system," says Wayne Marshall. "Details of forklift-related incidents can now be recorded quickly, easily and efficiently via smart phones and tablets, giving us vital information on which to base further improvements. There is also a new system for pre-use inspection of trucks, in which operators report problems by simply handing in a document to the office so that the repair engineer can be quickly informed."

He concludes: "Together with the training and behavioural safety programmes, these measures have played an important role in changing our culture and generating a positive attitude toward safe operation." →



1. Blue spot warning system.
2. A simple solution: while this sign is in place, lift trucks must not enter the aisle.
3. Red and green lights – activated by forklift driver or pedestrian – and panoramic mirror.
4. A-Safe pedestrian barrier.
5. Touchscreen driver sign-in system.



SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

As G's has discovered, suppliers and other professionals can be excellent sources of information, ideas and advice on safety. **John Speck, Health and Safety Manager at Impact Handling**, the UK and Ireland distributor for Cat® lift trucks, offers the following ten tips as a starting point.

- 1  Ensure that staff at all levels receive health and safety training, and that this is regularly updated with refresher courses. This is the most important rule of all.
- 2  Register with the Health and Safety Executive (or your country's equivalent government agency) to receive regular bulletins on legislation and prosecutions – and ask yourself if you are compliant.
- 3  Make your risk assessments, method statements and safety handbooks easy to read and understand. Review them annually and after any incident.
- 4  Reinforce risk assessments by giving 'toolbox talks' and training at every opportunity – and insist that employees take ownership of their training by keeping records, acknowledging documentation and asking for help.
- 5  Monitor staff to ensure they are complying with safe working practices and company policy, to help create a culture in which safety is the first priority.
- 6  Make it easy for employees to raise questions and concerns, then follow them up and report back. This will reinforce the message that health and safety is everyone's responsibility and that everyone's opinion matters.
- 7  Hold regular safety meetings with employees and ask for their opinions and ideas. The best solutions to health and safety problems often come from the employees themselves.
- 8  Be prepared to discipline employees whose negligence or disregard for safe working practices causes accidents. There is no point in having health and safety rules if they are not enforced.
- 9  Employ the services of a good consultant or adviser. Your own designated health and safety co-ordinator will benefit from the additional insight and expertise of an expert who will visit whenever required to advise.
- 10  Register for OHSAS 18001:2007, the industry standard for health and safety management (which G's has acquired), or your country's equivalent. It will help you to set targets, while showing your staff and customers that you take safety seriously.

Do you have good safety ideas to share?

We are aware that great examples of health and safety can be found throughout Europe and we would love to include them in **eureka** as case studies. Would you like to see your company featured in this magazine? If so, please email comment@eurekapub.eu and we will contact you for details themselves. ■

Article feedback is welcome: editor@eurekapub.eu



Visit: impact-handling.com

Prevention is better than cure

Forklift and warehouse trucks are a significant capital investment, even when deployed on full rental or contract hire terms. Economies all over Europe show signs of recovery and it makes sense to keep a close eye on the bottom line to sustain this fragile growth.

Gian Schiava examines how fleet managers can use planning and prevention to reduce costs.

An incredible number of measures can be taken to improve the efficiency of a lift truck fleet. The ultimate goals are often maximum uptime and reduced costs – hence the constant juggling between these contradictions.

For clarity's sake, we have decided to divide the measures into those taken by the company itself and those taken by an external fleet management service; often provided by the forklift supplier. →



Do-it-yourself

Let us first look at what the average warehouse manager (or the manager of all vehicles on the premises) can do himself. Since many fleet management contracts cover the list below, we are looking at companies which at least partially own their lift trucks or buy them at the end of a leasing period. Managers have to make sure to protect the goods, but at the same time they are responsible for warehouse activity as a whole.

Besides being the fleet manager, they are also an HR manager, coach, designer of the warehouse flows, storage specialist, liaison person for IT-related issues, to name but a few of their roles. Ultimately they are responsible for the performance of the warehouse and for budget control – not to mention the countless reports to upper management and time-consuming meetings. That leaves little time to take care of the forklift fleet, but here are some immediate options:

Workplace conditions

Naturally the warehouse or the premises where the trucks operate needs to be tidy and in good order. For example, poor floor condition is one of the largest causes of avoidable damage expense. Driving over debris such as wood, plastic wrap, twine and banding can cause radiator or axle damage, and if blown into the engine compartment it can destroy the cooling system and potentially cause engine failure or a fire.



Driver training

Next, drivers need to receive training. It is important to teach them that speed is not equal to productivity. Drivers must be trained in pre-operational inspection, load-handling techniques, fuelling, battery charging and much more. And it should certainly not stop at initial training, as from time to time truck drivers need follow-up training to refresh their minds. By doing so, truck abuse can be minimised.

Safety procedures and monitoring

eureka has always been a champion of safe work practices. We have published many articles showing that setting up the right procedures not only protects the people or the goods but also contributes to less (unexpected) damage. Tangible safety devices can also be used, like speed reduction systems, warning signs or traffic signals.

A proper analysis provides the fleet manager with actionable data to improve the usage of the fleet.

Regular inspections

All vehicles age, and it is no different for lift trucks. To help avoid costly repairs and damaged loads, it is important to carry out daily or pre-shift inspections. The areas which require most attention are the forks, mast, chains and tilt cylinders. Most suppliers can provide comprehensive checklists.

Battery management

Today the mix of forklifts in a fleet tends to be predominantly battery powered. If the fleet is large enough, a separate battery charging room is needed. In earlier issues of eureka we have explained how these 'nursery' rooms need to be equipped and how proper battery management can extend battery life.



In-house maintenance (and parts availability)

Large companies with many vehicles (not just materials handling devices) may decide to employ engineers for the regular maintenance. One of the advantages is that the engineers tend to know the machines very well and contribute to decisions on replacement, thus avoiding a situation where repair costs go through the roof. The main difficulty is in keeping the right stock level of spare parts and controlling these costs, bearing in mind that most suppliers tend to charge more for last-minute emergency deliveries.

In general, the majority of these measures are not carried out as an overall fleet maintenance or management activity. Of course, they all reduce some of the unanticipated maintenance cost. Some companies even excel in resolving unplanned events – basically maintaining uptime at all costs. But didn't we mention earlier that warehouse or fleet managers need both uptime and low costs? Furthermore, without an overall approach and overview it is also almost impossible to understand beforehand what the fleet costs will be – and that is what every manager would like to know.

All vehicles age, and it is no different for lift trucks. To help avoid costly repairs and damaged loads, it is important to carry out daily or pre-shift inspections.

1. Poor floors are a major source of truck damage.
2. Well-maintained batteries last longer.
3. Good data, properly analysed, is a key to efficient fleet usage.

What do the professionals bring to the game?

We have now seen what companies can do themselves to keep cost down – and that is a lot! Our list is by no means comprehensive, as there are many more possibilities. However, it is always an uphill battle to beat what the professional forklift supplier can bring to the game. Let's take a look at some examples:

Preventative maintenance

The warehouse manager can expect a customised plan for on-site, scheduled maintenance services, including fluid level and lubricant checks as well as regular equipment inspections – all at a pre-determined cost. Operations will be evaluated and suppliers will take into consideration how many hours the forklifts run, the type of environments they are running in and a range of other factors.

Total maintenance and repair

Preventative maintenance can be developed further into a more comprehensive maintenance and repair support plan. In most cases this means all designated repairs are covered by one fixed monthly rate, which relieves the fleet managers of the task of chasing data for their monthly reports.

Data capture and analysis

Modern software is often used to see what is going on. This can include data registration of truck movements, registered charging time, uptime, fuelling data and much more. A proper analysis provides the fleet manager with actionable data to improve the usage of the fleet.



Fleet analysis: retain, retire, replace or relocate

The ideal solution is probably where preventative maintenance becomes part of a complete process of financing and managing a fleet. The warehouse manager receives monthly reports on maintenance and repair costs, along with recommendations on fleet size and mix, and information on security and damage issues. Training is provided where necessary to improve the behaviour of truck drivers.

In practice, by outsourcing the fleet management the warehouse manager can achieve better control over his costs, whilst freeing up time for his other managerial tasks. In this way, balancing costs and uptime no longer seems incompatible. ■

Article feedback is welcome: editor@eurekapub.eu

Minimising accidental losses

Fewer bangs, more bucks

Losses incurred through knocks, bumps, damaged goods, injury and disruption have tended to be accepted as part of the daily operation – but they shouldn't be.

Ruari McCallion has discussed issues and solutions with Martin Barrett of consultancy firm Suiko.

Accidents happen, and each one costs money – but discovering exactly what happened can be a challenge in itself. Traditionally, damage isn't reported; it is 'discovered'. Getting to the root causes may require a major shift in culture, according to Martin Barrett, Principal with consultancy firm Suiko.

Made to measure

"If a company is going to understand how these incidents happen then it will need to address the cultural issue of reporting it," said Barrett. Running the risk of a written warning is not exactly an incentive to report incidents promptly, or even at all. The change in culture begins with recognising that damage in the warehouse is just as serious as elsewhere. Root Cause Analysis (RCA) or a similar tool would be deployed to solve a problem in the production area; why not in the warehouse? An accident involving a forklift truck will not necessarily have happened because the driver is useless.

"Warehouse operators should ask questions to ascertain whether the area is safe," Barrett stressed. "Is the lighting good? Is the turn too tight? Establish a structure for reporting 'accidents and incidents'."

Elsewhere in the enterprise, even minor events such as tripping over a piece of cable would be picked up and attended to. "We want to measure so we can help to change behaviour. Incidents, including near misses, should be recorded in the Safety Pyramid."

Walk the talk

The structure has to be credible in order to encourage those who will ultimately be operating it – the truck drivers, staff and operatives in the warehouse – if they are to embrace it, so it is essential that it is seen to be endorsed and committed to by senior management.



1. Martin Barrett, Principal with consultancy firm Suiko.



"It isn't just about the number of incidents, it's about the value."

"The process will involve rolling out what you are measuring, why and how. The leadership has to 'walk the talk'," said Barrett. He advises that management should be seen to audit incidents – and without the 'blame culture'. "Even if you can't find out who caused whatever damage there is, demonstrate that you are looking for opportunities to improve, not to reprimand."

There will still be human error but when the staff see RCA employed, that management is looking at safety and the working environment, and that accidents are being handled differently, it will create a more positive culture. Incidents will then become more likely to be reported in 'real time', rather than being 'discovered' later.

Objective analysis

"If a driver has to be retrained three or four times you may have to conclude that he or she isn't that good, but the fact that retraining is being provided, with a demonstrably objective system, will make a difference," Barrett added.

"Analyse everything: maintenance, lighting, floor surface, floor layout. Most companies will use 5S in the production area; it should be used in the warehouse as well." The longer-term objective of data collection is prevention. Any 'culture of acceptance' of accidents must be challenged and overcome.

"If a member of staff is in an accident that results in injury and time off work, people see it and get it – they understand that such things have a value, and they have a cost," Barrett continued. "Get the staff to see that if a pallet of goods is damaged, or if a truck or stanchion is damaged and needs to be repaired, there is a cost involved. It isn't just about the number of incidents, it's about the value."

Incidents should be classified according to type, analysed to discover their root cause and assigned a monetary value. Incident records should be made public, along with remedial actions. Damage to trucks should be recorded under safety statistics as well as repairs and maintenance; it gives another

Top tips for cutting accidental costs

- ELIMINATE THE 'BLAME CULTURE'** – encourage operatives to report by removing fear
- MEASURE AND MONITOR** – if you don't know what's happening, you won't be able to fix it
- RECORD INCIDENTS IN REAL TIME** – the sooner the problem is identified, the less it will cost to fix
- MONETISE THE ISSUE** – demonstrate the cost of damages, repair, missed dispatches and unscheduled maintenance
- PUBLICISE THE PROBLEM** – record all incidents and post up graphs of performance
- PUBLICISE REMEDIES** – show that the problem is being addressed

level of credibility. If there have been no incident reports for a few days, then senior personnel should be able to come down, walk the floor and observe that all is as claimed and as it should be.

Monetary value is not just the cost of repair: the overall value to the business must be quantified. What is the cost of any delayed orders; and the impact on insurance premiums or even on fleet lease costs? Greater involvement will help to raise standards.

Look after your own

"Create a level of ownership for the lift truck drivers," Barrett said. "Have official inspections at handover, just as you would if you were renting a car. Check over the vehicle's condition and do the same at the end of the shift." The accumulation of data, collected accurately, will lead to better decision-making, as well as improved morale and therefore productivity.

Something very simple can have a significant impact. Barrett related a (necessarily confidential) story of a company that found a particular area of the warehouse seemed to have higher than average incidents and damage. In the past, the automatic assumption would have been that the problem was with the drivers. However, dispassionate analysis found something else: it was the layout that was the issue – the area was too tight for safe operation. An adjustment to aisle width and more room for turning brought the accident rate significantly down. A reasonably low-cost solution delivered a rapid payback, saving on repairs, stock damage and vehicle maintenance.

Opportunities to reduce unnecessary expenditure can be ignored only by businesses with money to burn, and there aren't many of them about these days. ■

Article feedback is welcome: editor@eurekapub.eu



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