

New forklift technology reduces costs

By GENE STOWE
Tribune Correspondent

Advances in hydrostatic (fluid drive) technology for forklift trucks have made them safer, longer-lasting, more reliable less costly to maintain and more environmentally friendly.

But many companies don't consider the long-term benefits when making purchasing decisions, says Tim Balint, president and CEO of Balint/Ryder Handling Equipment.

"It's a technology that's been around for quite some time, but very few people are taking advantage of it," Balint says. "It's a little higher priced to start. The payback has a lot to do with how often the unit is being used."

"In high-use applications, you can not only pay back the cost but you can also pay for the truck in maintenance savings in five

years. "I have one customer that saved in the area of \$130,000. They had a fleet of 12.

"I think slowly people are starting to catch on. So many times, people are focused on purchase price - what is the best deal."

Part of the problem is separate budgets for purchasing and maintenance departments, he says. The cost of fuel, repairs, brakes, transmission, downtime, oil changes and other ongoing necessities should be considered in evaluating purchase prices.

"The biggest problem is a lot of people don't track their true costs," Balint says. "You've got to look at it as a whole. We have to sell more to business owners or board members."

Balint/Ryder, of South Bend and Goshen, opened 40 years ago and has carried Linde forklifts since 1972.



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Tim Balint, president and CEO of Balint/Ryder Handling Equipment of South Bend and Goshen, stands in front of a Linde forklift.

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11

Purchase price just the tip of the iceberg

Editor's note: Tribune Business Weekly will occasionally publish approved editorials. Following is one such article:

By TIM BALINT

Shopping for a new forklift and want to save your company the most money possible?

Simple ... buy the truck with the lowest price, right? WRONG!

Day after day, buyers make the mistake of thinking the best deal is the lowest price. They focus on the "cost of purchase" and never even consider the "cost of ownership," that is, the true cost it will take to own and operate this equipment throughout its lifetime. Purchase price is just the tip of the iceberg!

Just like an iceberg, so goes forklift buying, and for that matter procurement of practically any other piece of equipment or machinery a company may buy.

Picture, if you will an iceberg. Purchase price is the tip, the portion that sticks out of the water, the part you can see, the "known cost." Lurking below the water are the "unknown" costs, the ones you can't see, the ones that can "sink the ship." These unknown costs include things such as fuel costs, oil changes, brake and transmission repairs, etc., and make

up what is known as "cost of ownership."

A common mistake made in procuring new equipment is neglecting to consider the questions "What is my true cost of ownership?" "What will I spend on fuel to power the unit?" "What are the required maintenance frequencies and costs?" "How often will I need to do a brake job and how much will that cost?" "What is the life expectancy of the unit I am considering?"

Failure to consider these important details can "sink the ship" just as if hitting an iceberg, costing your company thousands of dollars in unnecessary costs and repairs.

Technologies available in some forklifts today address and drastically reduce these unknown costs. One of the biggest technological advancements directly reducing cost of ownership is hydrostatic drive.

Hydrostatic, or fluid drive, eliminates or greatly reduces many of the hidden costs lurking below the surface, waiting to sink the ship. Hydrostatic drive is a direct drive system and requires no torque converter (a device that couples the engine to an automatic transmission). Torque converters require engine RPM (revolutions per minute) to "wind them up" causing the converter to engage and the transmission to move the

truck. This "winding up" of the converter can rob the engine of up to one-third of its power, resulting in higher fuel consumption and accelerated wear of engine components. Trucks utilizing hydrostatic drive have been proven to reduce fuels consumption by one-third to one-half that of a torque converter equipped truck. Over the span of five years, that can account for several thousands of dollars in savings.

Additionally, hydrostatic drive trucks do not require brakes to stop. Releasing the drive pedal simply closes off the flow of oil that is moving the truck, bringing it to a controlled stop without the use of brakes. Brakes are one of the biggest maintenance costs of a forklift. The elimination of brake replacement will save the owner thousands over the life of the truck.

Another advantage of hydrostatic drive is the drive pump has full power at engine idle speed. This means the engine can produce the same amount of power at approximately 1,050 RPM that a torque converter equipped truck can produce at roughly 2,250 RPM. This lower RPM requirement results in drastically reduced fuel consumption and increased engine life of up to 25,000 to 50,000 hours as compared to 12,000 to 15,000 hours in converter equipped units.

In today's "green"-minded society, it is important to also consider the ef-

fects of this equipment on the environment. We have already learned the effects of hydrostatic drive on fuel consumption, but another important consideration is the reduction of oil change frequencies. Some manufacturers, such as Linde Material Handling, are now employing oil change intervals of 1,000 operating hours as compared to their converter equipped counterparts which recommend oil changes at 250 to 500 hours. Over the span of five years, this can result in a reduction of 150 gallons of oil used and waste oil produced as well as 55 less filters purchased and waste filters generated and needing to be properly disposed of.

As you can see, the lowest purchase price is not the key to saving money. The key is to research and determine what the "cost of ownership" of your equipment is and compare it to the technology available today, then take the necessary steps to prevent your ship from sinking.

Editor's note:

Tim Balint is president and CEO of Balint/Ryder Handling Equipment of South Bend and Goshen, an authorized Linde forklift dealer.

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FROM PAGE 11

Forklift: Equipment now safer, costs less

"We cover basically the northern third of Indiana and the bordering counties of Michigan," Balint says. "The technology has been around since the early '70s. The technology's becoming more dependable and refined."

A typical forklift usually has a lifetime of 12,000 to 14,000 hours, he says, while the hydrostatic drive equipment usually last 30,000 to 40,000 hours because it operates on much lower RPMs. Some customers' equipment has more than 60,000 hours.

"Trucks utilizing hydrostatic drive have been proven to reduce fuels consumption by one-third to one-half that of a torque converter equipped

truck," Balint says. "Over the span of five years, that can account for several thousands of dollars in savings."

Because the trucks do not use brakes to stop — releasing the drive pedal closes off the flow of oil that is moving the truck — the cost of brake replacement is eliminated. Also, the trucks require fewer oil changes, saving an estimated 150 gallons of oil over the truck's lifetime.

For more information on Balint/Ryder Handling Equipment see the Web site at www.advantagematerialshandling.com.



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Tim Balint

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