

November 2016

Walker Transport

MATERIALS HANDLING SUPPORTING GROWTH IN INDUSTRY-LEADING LOGISTICS BUSINESS

Walkers Transport is on a journey. It's an ambitious expedition and not without challenge. Based on 25% business growth in recent years, they plan to travel even further with the continued acquisition of new business supported by a development strategy that is geared to achieve organic growth across its existing 350+ customers.



As a key member of the Palletways network, their large and impressive Leeds logistics centre and headquarters also plays an essential role as the network's northern distribution hub. Along with its other premises based in Rochdale, Walkers Transport represent a core strategic partner to Palletways, whose 200+ members work collaboratively to deliver the most efficient and economical pallet network across the UK and Europe.

In simple terms, Walkers Transport is an established and widely respected logistics partner, offering its customers a turnkey storage, handling & haulage solution; for a wide and diverse range of business sectors.

Their operation based in Morley, Leeds facilitates the movement of around 4,500 pallets every 24hours which inevitably involves peaks of high activity. In turn this necessitates immense concentration of resources and process control, ensuring that their complex logistical infrastructure responds precisely and at pace.

According to Commercial Director Mark Fletcher it all adds up to a business that is focused on excellence. "Our growth plans are ambitious which is why the business continues to invest in

both its people and processes to increase not only our capacity but also our capability within a highly competitive sector”.

An important element in meeting this business strategy, is to ensure it works with the right partners in the supply of their materials handling assets. A business that is focused on managing the logistics of palletised goods is highly dependent on an efficient materials handling operation and its forklifts need to be reliable, economical and effective.

“CAM Forklifts is a key materials handling partner, who are working very closely with us to develop our fleet, explained Mark. We recently took delivery of several new generation TCM trucks that have the design and engineering strength to provide us with the level of reliability and operator comfort that meets both our current and future needs”.

On the day of truck delivery, TCM Dealer, CAM presented a training session to introduce the drivers to their new equipment. Of course, they were also on-hand to respond to any needs that arose. “It was a bit like being measured for a new suit, with each truck tailored to suit the driver. Each small adjustment making the truck more comfortable and easier to operate” explained Mark.

The new trucks have been fitted with the latest monitoring equipment designed to record both truck and operator performance. This will allow the truck to be monitored to provide information that can be used to design and optimise the materials handling operation.

“We are focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, rather than just cost reduction. This latest on-board monitoring system allows data to be collected at both truck and driver level to observe movements, behaviours and efficiency as well as the all-important health, safety and welfare of our warehouse teams”.

Crucially the ability to profile truck operations contributes to the opportunity of improved mapping and routing of trucks, stock location and process flows that will boost productivity and enhance the levels of service enjoyed by its customers.

One of the other challenges the business faces which can become a barrier to growth is the recruitment and retention of drivers. It’s a problem faced by the whole sector which is failing to recruit and train sufficient numbers of drivers to support an expanding transport sector. As training and developing drivers is a lengthy and costly process, retention is highly desirable.

At George Walker Transport the problem is being address by closely looking at how the driver’s experience and working day can be improved. Everyone can imagine the daily frustrations and challenges that drivers face, often resulting in delays and inefficiencies to their business.

To tackle this issue, Walkers Transport have recently introduced several new initiatives, including an aspirational target to get every driver loaded and on the road within 20 minutes of their arrival at the depot. This is further supported by their continued investment in equipment that includes 23 new trailers and motorised pallet trucks, making is much easier for drivers to offload at deliver points.

Mark goes on to say; “To reach that 20 minute loading target means the complete infrastructure, including our materials handling equipment needs to be designed and ready to operate at its optimum every single day.”.

“We are really pleased to have CAM working with us on this project to improve such a vital part of our operation” said Mark Fletcher. “They have shown the level of commitment and understanding of our business that we need in a materials handling partner. For us reliability of the trucks is critical but in the event of a problem we need a highly responsive partner, which is why we like the personalised and single point of contact that CAM offers us.

The geographic advantage of having a forklift partner so close means it can respond to every eventuality quickly. Engineers are regularly on site to offer proactive support and maintenance. This is assisted through their agreement to hold a critical spares inventory on site to ensure that parts are on-hand to provide an immediate solution.

The expectation is that by investing in their materials handling operation and supplier partnerships, Walkers will create a stable and repeatable platform to gain benefits in productivity, fuel efficiency, maintenance and safety. All of these factors combined will help the business deliver its ambitious business goals and ensure it is well positioned to keep pace with the anticipated growth over the coming years.

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CASE STUDY

