

**Sector :** Wholesale distribution

**Customer :** Nick Firth Tiles

**Product :** ICE diesel counter-balanced

## GROWING TILE SUPPLY BUSINESS GETS FIT-FOR-BUSINESS FORKLIFT SUPPORT

Successful small businesses like Nick Firth Tiles, based in Sheffield, pretty much form the bedrock of the UK economy. Small and medium size firms employ the majority of the UK workforce and according to latest government figures have combined turnover of around £1.6 trillion. So it stands to reason that they also represent a sizeable segment of the UK forklift truck market and their service and product needs also demand close support and service.



Nick Firth Tiles, which is in its 15<sup>th</sup> year and enjoying its best growth and profitability to-date, is a typical successful small business. It's built a solid market and expanding customer base on a resolute belief in service and understanding their customers' needs.

Directors Nick Firth and Scott Fairbank have both spent virtually all of their working life in the ceramic tiles business and have built an extremely busy enterprise working increasingly on commercial contracts for the growing but very demanding pubs, restaurants and retail sector. They work closely with architects, designers and other specifiers for new and refurbished property tiling contracts, offering the latest in contemporary design, supported by high quality and responsive service.



It's a business environment that calls for very efficient stock management and control to ensure that customer deadlines are met and construction projects fit tight schedules. Now over 60% of turnover is based on serving the commercial contracts market nation-wide reflecting their growing reputation in the sector.

Whilst they don't run a fleet of forklifts with a sophisticated logistics operation, warehouse and stock management and reliable materials handling is every bit as important and key to overall business efficiency as a major logistics operator.

Scale may be different but the essential ingredients are constant. Nick Firth Tiles for example has a stock that runs to over 500 lines and a supplier base spread across Italy, Spain and Portugal. They need to have an inventory management and warehouse system that sits comfortably with the demands of a business geared to servicing nationally based contacts and local retail customers is crucial.

A recent decision to acquire a new forklift, a significant decision in any small business, was based on the same principles that Nick Firth themselves apply in their customer relationships, trust reliability and service. Price, as always, is important but according to director, Scott Fairbanks, they wanted the reassurance that they were working with a supplier that took the trouble to get to know and understand their business.

"It would have been easy, if time-consuming, to line up the various fork lift manufacturers, told them what we were looking for and simply let them compete for our business. We could have then just taken the best offer", said Scott. "Instead a local Dealer – CAM Fork Lift Trucks - based a short distance away from us developed a close interest in our business and provided us with a service that is pretty much tailored to what we need".

CAM Forklift offer TCM forklifts – a European specification and EU built forklift that is exclusively channelled through its dealer network. TCM believe that the local knowledge, insight and relationship building with local businesses is a valuable component in their business philosophy and offer.



Launched earlier this year, TCM have selected a dealer-led approach, providing the ability for dealers to shape local packages and deals that are more tailored to their customer base and which allows them to augment deals with relevant products and services which dealers also offer. It implies an infinitely flexible approach to provide customers with a single source supplier to meet more of their needs in a single package.

Although lease and contract hire options were considered, on this occasion Nick Firth Tiles went for a simple outright purchase arrangement with a solid support and maintenance contract as the preferred option. The diesel-powered 2.5CB fork truck was delivered in less than 8 weeks with the cost spread over a number of payments which also helps to manage the cash. Besides the 3 year warranty that they can comfortably rely on, CAM Fork Lift Trucks also provide a regular planned maintenance schedule and a rapid breakdown response service. Although according to the warehouse manager Steve Sutton, despite the constant daily use, they have found truck reliability to be reassuringly good. And in any small business avoiding disruption is a much valued commodity.



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