



Big is better

Linde and Century Yuasa working together to service Big W distribution.

When you're responsible for supplying all the stock to 83 Big W stores throughout NSW and Queensland, then you want maximum performance from all aspects of your distribution operation. The equation becomes even more impressive – or daunting – when you consider the process involves the movement of over 1500 pallets of stock each day involving 500 staff to manage, receive and distribute the stock from a 40,000 pallet inventory. And central to the smooth operation of this massive logistics operation are the 425 separate pieces of Linde materials handling equipment.

This is what Roger Gray, the Big W Operations Manager, and his team deal with on a daily basis at the Big W distribution centre at Warwick in South Queensland.

Reliability in pressure situations

Dealing with such a massive in and outflow of goods naturally depends

upon the reliability and performance of all equipment involved. Bottlenecks created through breakdowns and other equipment failures can extend right down the supply chain - especially now as we enter the traditionally busy Christmas period. The reliability of the Linde materials handling equipment was the key factor in them being awarded the entire contract for this crucial distribution operation. Linde Australia also teamed up with Century Yuasa Batteries to provide Big W with what many believe is the most comprehensive package in regard to reliability and service ever seen in the materials handling business. This service extends to Linde providing a dedicated on-site technician and Century providing full time battery technicians on site as opposed to battery handlers.

This arrangement came about after Big W put out the tender for their materials handling requirements upon the completion of the previous 5 year lease. That lease involved 2 different forklift companies and Roger felt

that this often resulted in difficult maintenance issues and excessive downtime.

Three companies subsequently tendered for the business with Roger and his team being very specific in what they were looking for. As Roger says, "We had worked with Linde previously and were aware of their reliability and professionalism. While environmental issues are a concern for us, with an operation of this size our big issues are reliability and performance. Areas that Linde excelled in and their ongoing service plan and on-site technician should ensure less downtime for equipment, especially towards the end of the 5 year lease cycle."

The Linde tender was complimented by the Century Yuasa battery supply tender. Century also demonstrated a greater level of professionalism compared to their competitors and have also implemented some innovative programs to reduce downtime in the long term. As Ash Gram from Century says, "We have

initiated battery handling procedures that now include preventative maintenance schedules rather than just being reactive to battery issues. This has already resulted in less down time but the real benefits should be seen in 2-3 years. For example, our technicians have already identified and immediately replaced damaged cables, a problem that could become worse if not fixed on the spot."

Day to day on-site care

Century offers Big W over 80 years of experience with a complete manufacturing and service facility close to the Warwick Big W distribution centre. This ensures that R&D, service managers and customer account management support are never too far away.

Similarly, the Linde on-site technician can take care of any day-to-day issues that might arise and communicate directly with the service teams at the

Queensland head office should any major problems arise (as yet there has been none). To further enhance the long term performance and reliability of the fleet, Linde FleetFOCUS also monitors each piece of equipment. The data received from FleetFOCUS is then collated and presented to Roger and his team every month by Robert O'Boyle and Dennis Meechan. This data also forms the basis of areas where further improvements in performance and usage practices can be made as each piece of equipment and each operator can be monitored and compared with each other. This ensures best practice in all areas, including health & safety, as Linde, Century and Big W move forward. It also details any damage and the action taken to repair it.

Custom designed solutions

Another feature of the Linde tender was the ability to provide custom designed and manufactured equipment to meet the very specific demands of the

Distribution Centre. The reach trucks in the DC must work in a very contained space and Linde was able to provide custom modifications to their trucks so they can operate safely and effectively in these confined spaces. The Linde range then provided the perfect options for the rest of the vehicles required including pallet lifters and auto trucks.

Operator comfort has also been an integral part of every Linde lift truck design. A comfortable driver is a productive one. As Roger says, "The Linde trucks offer fantastic driver comfort and suit the varying size of the drivers as they change from shift to shift. This is particularly important when the operators are spending 8 hours in the seat and lets them maintain concentration and high productivity."

As a package, the Linde Australia and Century Yuasa Batteries combination now provides Big W with a materials handling solution that can meet the extreme demands of this high volume and high pressure operation. The on-site technicians and preventative maintenance regimes initiated by both companies are aimed at providing performance and reliability in the long term, especially towards the end of the current lease period.

Such reliability is something that the thousands of Big W shoppers in NSW and Queensland will certainly appreciate, allowing them to confidently shop for what they want, when they want. **L**

"Big issues are reliability and performance, areas Linde excelled in"



Above: Roger Gray (Big W).

Opposite page: Robert O'Boyle (Linde), left, and Roger Gray (Big W).

