

Psst Want to buy a truck mount?

Because of its wide spread of users and applications, truck mounted platforms have held up better than other access sectors this year - both from a manufacturing and rental point of view. Here we take a look at the main features when buying a machine.

Small platforms - under 30 metres working height and the majority mounted on 3.5 tonne chassis - are mainly purchased by the rental companies and have therefore seen a slippage this year in the number of units sold. Truck mounted lifts over 30 metres however have a higher number of end user buyers or specifiers (particularly 50 metres and over) and have continued to do well in most European countries, particularly the UK. The same dynamics are true in the van mounted lift market, where a large number of buyers either purchase their own equipment or, increasingly, look for Contract Hire/leasing terms.

The Italian manufacturers - primarily Multitel, GSR, Oil & Steel and CTE - tend to dominate the 3.5 tonne market, with German-based Wumag, Ruthmann and Finnish Bronto tending to take the lion's share of the big truck sales. Some Italian companies such as Multitel and to a lesser degree Oil&Steel, Bizcocchi and Socage/Cela are trying to make inroads into the 50 metre plus market to take share from the top three, but it is a long process that is more brand and image driven rather than the performance and quality of the product and in this sector price is way down the priority list.

So what should you look for when buying a truck mounted platform? In the following paragraphs we have compiled a quick 'buyers' guide' which identifies the main points, requirements and pitfalls when out shopping for such equipment. Feedback from distributors indicates that only a small proportion of buyers really understand the product and can decipher the literature correctly so many - it would appear - buy with the heart and not the head.

Outreach

Talk with anyone in the truck mounted lift sector about what they look for in a truck mount and outreach will be near or at the top of their list. But what do they mean by outreach? For most it is the maximum outreach the platform will achieve. It is normally measured from the centreline of rotation - i.e. the centre of the truck chassis, not from the side or from the outriggers so make sure it is enough for your applications.

Outreach is also usually quoted as a single, maximum possible figure based on minimum platform capacity with heaviest chassis. Working outreach is often used - normally half a metre beyond the platform guardrails - but occasionally based on operators with extra long arms!



What ever you choose, make sure the outreach is enough for your applications



Height, outreach and capacity - decide what you need

Outreach needs to be viewed throughout the whole working envelope. If on a machine of say 46 metres you have a choice of a better outreach across the whole envelope above say 10 metres or below 10 metres which would you choose? The maximum outreach is probably at four or five metres above ground level, but who buys a 46 metre unit to work at this height other than on the very infrequent job? Far more important is the outreach at say 25 to 30 metres high. So make sure you compare outreach between different makes of platform in the working area that suits your work.



Ask the question or have a demonstration to ensure the required outreach and height



Check the platform capacity and its working envelope

On smaller machines the standard platform capacity is 200kg but not all platforms that claim a 200kg payload will operate throughout the envelope without a problem, particularly if the weight in the basket is close to the maximum and it is not perfectly still. Some manufacturers have started to offer capacities of 220/225 or 230kg to cope with the increasing bulk of the user, although again take care. A 220kg payload decal on the platform is sometimes no better in practice than a 200kg payload if the overload /weight sensor is not designed to deal with a load that is not perfectly static or perfectly evenly distributed.

On larger truck mounts capacities of 600 and 700kg are available from many manufacturers, however the outreach and even height can be reduced at these higher payloads, so make sure that you check.

Do not accept all you read

Not all manufacturers' brochures give the true picture of machine's capabilities. While the vast majority have been diligently prepared, errors and omissions can range from the slightly misleading to the downright

Platform capacity

Another area that needs further clarification when comparing platforms is capacity. A large platform with a 120kg payload to achieve maximum outreach is almost pointless. Lifts with working heights of between 40 or 50 metres are usually put out with an operator, the minimum capacity should be at least 200kg, however some manufacturers quote 120kg figure on their literature (which gives an increased outreach figure.) It is also a fact of life that platform users are getting heavier.

untrue. For some the platforms can only achieve the performance information when used by 2.5 metre tall gorillas with 1.5 metre long arms. For others there is the small print which says 'depends on carrier chosen'. It shows a working envelope for the platform mounted on a say 12 tonne chassis, while the brochure photographs are of the platform mounted on a smaller 7.5 tonne chassis. The message is clear - ask relevant questions and if possible check it out in a practical test and tell the supplier that you are ordering on the basis that it will give the performance of outreach and height as agreed.

Outrigger spread

The outrigger spread is of course important for two reasons. Firstly the unit has to fit into the space available and secondly the greater the outrigger spread the further from the job you have to set up so the more outreach needed. The smaller the chassis is for the working height, the wider the outrigger spread needs to be. An increasing number of lifts are equipped with fully variable outrigger systems where the outreach is automatically reduced when outriggers are not fully deployed/extended. While this can be a very useful option, information on outrigger spread and outreach is seldom shown on a brochure and often not even on a specification sheet so this needs to be verified. On smaller machines an increasing number of manufacturers are now adding models with straight line /straight down outriggers that set up within the vehicles travel width, ideal for inner city working and tight areas.

Lifetime costs

While many large rental companies will only keep a platform for a set number of years - perhaps four to seven for a smaller models and six to 10 for a larger units - life time costs may not be terribly important to them, although this is less true today

than it was in the past. Residual values vary according to the manufacturer's reputation and its product support quality. As the market matures it is also likely to reflect the life-time operational costs. Light weight or light duty platforms are not built to have the same life span as heavier duty models. Modern high-yield materials used continually near or at their design limits over a long period of time are likely to experience fatigue and even cracking much sooner than their heavy duty cousins. As such the used market will down-price such units as they age. Some evidence of this is already starting to emerge and the trend is expected to continue in the future.

Support and back-up

While every salesman will always assure you that their platforms never go wrong, what happens when they do is an extremely important consideration. But how do



More manufacturers have models with outriggers within the width of the vehicle



A large outrigger spread means setting up further from the job



C&a truck mounts

Decide the type of platform you need and research the market

you find out if a producer really has the practical level of support that your business requires? Start by talking with those who already use the particular brand. If they say it takes weeks to get spare parts, or they are not available in August, then it is not good news. If they say it seldom goes wrong but when it does the spares arrive the next day then it is worthy of real consideration. Different manufacturers have different set-ups in how they support machines in different countries. What matters is not the system but the end result. Minimum down time and minimum cost to put it right is the name of the game.

Plan ahead

Decide what type of platform you will require well ahead of when you need it and thoroughly research the market as to what is available. Don't wait until the last minute because you will end up buying what is available and not what you really need for the long-term benefit of your company. What you need in each size range is the machine that will have a high level of user satisfaction not what just happens to be available ex-stock at the time of purchase.

The future?

The truck mounted aerial lift has long been seen as a product which is more resistant to recession and economic boom and bust than purely construction related lifts. There is no reason to see this changing in the future, the choice is getting ever wider even if in some cases this makes the selection process even more difficult. The trend in Europe for truck mounts on chassis cabs of less than 3,500kg will continue,

although in some countries a significant market for platforms on 7.5 tonne chassis cabs will remain and possibly even grow. These smaller units are likely to see increasing numbers of models with in-line outriggers.

On the larger 30 metre plus models, the divergence in philosophy that has emerged in recent years between lightweight, lighter duty platforms on lower GVW chassis cabs and heavier duty higher capacity, longer life cycle units will continue, providing you, the customer, with a wider choice than ever.

An increasing number of lifts are equipped with fully variable outrigger systems where the outreach is automatically reduced when outriggers are not fully deployed/extended



Keep on truc'King

As an access equipment distributor that also has its own sizeable engineering capability, King is different, perhaps unique in the UK. Mark Darwin visited King Vehicle Engineering managing director Mark Carrington to find out more about the company that distributes a full range of truck and van mounted platforms, designs and manufactures its own low loaders and heavy duty trailers and a range of highway maintenance equipment. And is looking for more...

A few months ago, Market Harborough-based King Group reported a 25 percent increase in revenues and an 87 percent increase in profits for the year to March 2009. Since then, business has been harder but, it would appear, it is in far better shape than many.

"30 years ago when I started working for York Trailers, I learnt quickly from a very good boss - a Canadian entrepreneur called Fred Davies - the Joe Bamford of the trailer industry - who used to be very quick to take tough business decisions," said Carrington. "When we saw the wobble in the UK housing market in 2007, coupled with noises emanating from Germany about sub-prime rates and banks overlending on poor quality loans, it was clear that the market had overheated and was about to blow. Seeing the long overdue recession approaching we eased back our expansion plans and tried



Mark Carrington

to retain cash. Perhaps it was more good luck than good planning, but it meant we were better placed to make planned changes rather than having to make rapid decisions."

By SED 2008, King still had many three axle, step-frame trailer forward orders from dealers and UK exporters buying construction equipment at auctions and shipping it to Russia, the Baltic States and Ukraine where they would then sell the trailer as well.

"It seemed fairly obvious that the Eastern European countries that were

McNally was the customer for the first Wumag 103 metre platform from Skyking here seen carrying out maintenance on the HMS Victory



driving the northern hemisphere economy were spending the oil premium price - up from \$100 to \$170 a barrel - which would stop as soon as the oil price reduced," he said. "At this time we had up to a dozen UK companies each putting in orders for batches of six or more low loaders but we decided to concentrate on UK user companies that we knew needed and could pay for the equipment after the Russian 'gold rush' dried up. Fortunately we saw the warning signs early and decided not to speculate too much with things involving cash," he said.

reduced dramatically but all the ratios - such as asset base relative to turnover - are about right."

Seeing the crash ahead of some others enabled Carrington to realign the company gradually but even so, it still had to make some redundancies. "King had to reduce its workforce by about 35 percent (from 110 to 70) but these were predominantly in the trailer manufacturing division and not one came from the access division."

"We cut the trailer build because it is the small companies that quickly stop buying and the trailer side



Typical of King's heavy duty trailers is the 5 axle, full steer ballast trailer, one of a number of trailers built for Reading-based Terranova cranes

"When the banking crash happened, cash immediately became king. Companies had to realign stocks and build a cash buffer. We've seen this situation before - losing money becomes less of a problem than running out of cash."

King was overstocked but was able to reduce the overall levels.

"Look at our accounts year on year. Yes, the size of business has

was hit hard, with many operators of low loaders depending on short term contracts to move construction equipment - sales of which fell dramatically as the construction industry either stopped investing or couldn't find bank finance" he said. "The access and traffic management divisions have not seen such a massive overall downturn but the overall profile of the business has changed dramatically."



For 45 years King has been best known for being UK's largest lowloader builder

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King is focussing heavily on the utility market and the new Landrover mount is now undergoing evaluation with customers and will be officially released into the market in the Spring of 2010.

The King group consists of King Trailers, King Transport Equipment, a specialist project engineering division and King Highway Products whose access division includes the UK and Eire distribution of Wumag Palfinger and GSR truck mounted platforms and also traffic management products from Nissan in Germany, Quixote and Trinity from US. The Traffic management division has now become a bigger proportion than access and within access smaller access truck sales (less than 30 metres ie GSR) have reduced whilst the market for bigger access (over 30 metres ie Wumag) has held up much better as it is less dependent on the construction industry.

"King has not cancelled one Wumag order though some business has taken time to finance which has required Wumag's patience and goodwill," said Carrington, "and in this financial year starting 1st April, we have already delivered five big platforms of more than 50 metres with more to come. King Highways' turnover (about £7 million with about half coming from access) is likely to be the same as last year, so we are probably in better shape than most."

"The UK is currently delaying decisions prior to the coming general election and we are now seeing the downside of poor government decision making - Government is not about economics, it is about the politics. Germany has already had its election and has gone through the pain of putting off decisions. The UK

Not many suppliers have the kind of capability of King's project engineering division which built two of these trailers for Airbus wings.



carries this legacy of debt, probably because of the volume of the financial economy based in UK and it is going to be more difficult for us to dig ourselves out of the recession. Generally UK companies are weaker than their European counterparts. In Germany companies have to retain more profit on the balance sheet whereas UK businesses appear to receive less government assistance and boards seem less committed to long term strategy so, buying and selling companies and asset stripping etc leaves companies very weak."

"I worry about the short-term effects of a change of government because the cuts with the Tories are likely to be deeper. There's no doubt that the current Labour Government has squandered the proceeds of the boom years and a change of government is necessary, though Gordon Brown is an unfortunate victim of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I am not sympathetic to him, but Tony Blair jumped off the bus at the right time. Brown and Blair were a double act and it was Brown's own policies that he has now been left to deal with."

In the Pre-budget speech, transport and the military were areas identified to make savings. But with large military trailer contracts, will this affect King Trailers?

"The military is driven by demand so while they may have less submarines or aircraft carriers, the current logistics fleet investment will carry on," he said. "One of the strategies King has adopted is to focus our marketing on second level government money - the key industry sectors where money is being invested such as wind farms and utilities - supplying the big contractors winning those contracts. King has been fortunate in that we have been able to develop certain niche market areas and business. We want to focus on people who are contracted to government - the PFI companies etc. This is where we need to concentrate our marketing effort - public utilities, road maintenance rather than construction and nuclear decommissioning - areas where money has to be spent in the long term."

King history

Formed in 1962 by Vern King a Canadian Engineer, the company had more than two decades manufacturing low loaders before being bought by Boustead plc - a

A buoyant area for King has been vehicle mounted crash cushions to the motorway network supplying more than 130 units in 2009



British company with major investments in the Far East, particularly Malaysia and Singapore - in the mid 80s. However, when the colonies started to be dismantled Boustead sold off many of its companies, eventually selling the remainder to a Chinese company before reinvesting the proceeds into a disparate band of UK engineering companies manufacturing products including car facias, aircraft seats and King Trailers.

During the 1990 recession it again got into trouble - almost being delisted from the UK stock exchange - and started to dispose of companies. At this point Carrington had been with York Trailers for 18 years eventually running its £20 million trailer axle subsidiary but the company had also undergone several ownership changes and was also clearly struggling in the 1990 recession.

Carrington left York and briefly worked for Hendrickson, a US truck suspension business with a UK subsidiary based in Sywell, Northampton, which had King as a customer. An MBO plan was hatched with three existing King directors and with the financial backing of 3i, the team bought the company as it came out of recession in 1994.

"Our strategy was to build on the well-respected brand that King had built up for niche trailers and specialist engineering," said Carrington, "as well as building a portfolio of more profitable niche products and developing a vehicle engineering business based on specialist equipment. Within six months our first foray was in access platforms, as King had previously

manufactured the old BT pole erection auger trucks."

"Market Harborough had access technology," said Carrington, "in town was Spencer platforms and Simon was in desperate trouble and on the point of imploding. So we decided to be the new Simon using our design and build skills, taking on staff and starting with van mounts."

However Carrington was also after another access product to distribute and found Italian platform manufacturer GSR - predominantly an export company with three main markets, excluding the UK. GSR did have a distributor (Access Sales in Bristol) but sales had been very poor.



The Skyking 125RA is a compact and popular 3.5 tonne van mount

"I went to see GSR to talk about possibly taking over UK distribution and at the same time we were in contact with David Price who was about to launch Nationwide Access," said Carrington. "The two went together perfectly - GSR was aggressive and wanted to get into a new market and Nationwide was looking for something that was a bit different. Price liked the GSR product but with CE marking on the horizon agreed to purchase GSR platforms only if we could guarantee they would be CE compliant. Vincenzo Gentilli the owner of GSR made the commitment that whatever the cost he would ensure the

King has won a number of contracts with UK MOD - this one is part of an order for eight, 22 metre Skyking aerial platforms for aircraft maintenance



Z booms have become very prominent in Skyking's range. This 29 metre Skyking 290PX is the largest in a range of four models available through King's partnership with GSR.



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platforms would comply and Nationwide gave us an order for 35 units from 14 metres to 27 metres, the biggest platform in the GSR range at that time." In the event, Gentilli's anticipation of what would be required for CE marking meant only minor changes when the regulations were defined enabling Nationwide to be only hirer who could claim a 100 percent CE marked fleet.

That deal launched Skyking, Nationwide became an important player and GSR became UK market leader. With King mounting the slewing up kits it used its engineering skills, allowing the GSR product to stay competitive whilst King would benefit from GSR's reputation and undoubted engineering skills.

"We were mounting the 22 metre platform on a 7.5 tonne chassis when Simon still needed a 12 tonne chassis for its 65ft machine," said Carrington. "The GSR platforms were simple, easy to maintain and operate. We were not just dealers, as an engineering company we got the overall concept which was unique at the time."



The 61m WT610 to Orion was the biggest machine when delivered at SED 2008

"Industrial production engineer Vincenzo Gentilli is passionate about his platforms and builds in customer benefits," said Carrington. "GSR has been an exceptionally committed partner. With its modular range there are few unique spare parts with many being common between ranges - pins, rams, seals etc - keeping the parts list to a minimum. The company also steers clear of problematic electric controls. We have an excellent relationship with GSR which listens to feedback and tries to produce products for the UK market. Currently we need telescopic van mounts to offer an alternative to dominant supplier Versalift and to a lesser degree Gardner Denver."

"GSR has the van mounted product but is not currently price competitive," said Carrington.

"We do well with the reverse articulated platforms but not telescopic van mounts - we need a competitive machine."

GSR is King's longest standing relationship although it has not been an easy year for small access platforms. Always on the look out for a product to complement GSR, King identified German truck mounted manufacturer Wumag for the larger machines. After almost five years of trying, King won the UK distribution of Wumag in 2002. GSR accept that because of the lack of conflict, the company would be stronger with a more diverse portfolio. When King started with Wumag, sales were low but the company sold eight units in the first year and has continued to sell big units and has become the best export market for the company.

"Rental companies liked the Wumag but the product hadn't been supported well in UK," said Carrington. "We have therefore upped our product support game enormously and have three service engineers which operate as a 'flying

doctor' service from Market Harborough for the more technical service and repair work, with local engineers for routine service work. Much of the GSR general service and repair is carried out by local subcontractors. I think we have now proved that we can supply the level of support needed to keep this type of equipment on the road and this sets us apart from competitors on big machines."

In June 2008, Palfinger purchased Wumag. The acquisition certainly created support for Wumag at a time when as an independent company things could have been more difficult. King is providing support for the existing Bison Palfinger fleet in UK and is looking at the market for the Palfinger range in UK. The UK market for the smaller platforms is



The biggest ever order was the £20 million deal to supply 89 trailers for the Challenger tank

driven by price and simplicity. With most machines being purchased by hire companies it is often the hire rate that drives the purchase price. With growing demand for platform purchases from users, specification features and applications become more important and some of the smaller Palfinger machines being proposed will fill some niche markets very well. Presently King sees no conflicts in the GSR and Palfinger product offerings and the company feels the products are very complementary.

"GSR is developing a range of bigger Z booms with a new mid range 25 metre unit and plans for a 32 metre unit in the near future, but there is also still opportunity for cheaper, smaller 14 metre telescopic."

At the bigger end there is still considerable demand in the 50-70 metre platform market. King's enquiry rate is up dramatically and buyers are finding it easier to obtain finance as the credit crunch eases.

"Finance can be a problem as the amount of deposit required is larger and interest rates are higher," said Carrington. "However the products we sell are high quality and have good residual values so finance companies feel reasonably comfortable supporting our business if the customer has a sound business himself."

We have recently supplied 70 metre machines to Extreme Access and Blade and I believe that there will also soon be another 103 metre platform in the UK which will be available for hire."

With a good engineering base King is in the ideal situation to build specialist platforms such as a 4x4 mounted unit. "Our engineering is a strength which many other companies haven't got. The utilities sector is still relatively strong and still has a budget to spend so we decided to launch a Landrover-based platform using the Matilsa

trailer boom. The unit is currently on trial with customers which is the final part of our development process and is now available for sale. We currently have other 4x4 applications going through the workshops which will keep us busy until March 2010 - some on Unimogs, a few on Iveco chassis and one on a Landrover."

Bluelift?

Carrington feels that it took the Bluelift product on at absolutely the wrong time. The distributorship ended at the beginning of last year and is now distributed by Bravi UK.

"I think both of us were not quite ready at the time and when we hit the credit crunch we were forced to put our efforts into our established products before we'd established a foothold for Bluelift. It's basically a fine product which is a shame because when the market recovers, King would be interested in another complementary product to Wumag and GSR - and it could possibly be another spider platform. In the meantime when everyone is doing their best to establish volumes for their existing products, diversification is for the brave."

King has recently opened an IPAF training centre at its offices in Market Harborough. And whilst it agrees that there are lots of training centres around it is proving to be a decent revenue earner which covers its costs.

"We aren't training a lot compared with many of the hirers but will try to increase the numbers," said Carrington. "It is making money but ultimately it is another piece in the jigsaw to make a complete access company."

Overall the company has successfully developed around selling niche application engineering and not 'pile it high and sell it cheap' and will continue to develop its business by getting close to customers and understanding their needs.

One of 20 trailers supplied to Nationwide Access



New all electric truck mounts

Versalift unveiled a new range of electric vehicle mounted lifts on Smith Electric Vehicles chassis in Copenhagen in December. One of the vehicles - a Versalift ET36LF mounted on a Smiths Transit-based Edison chassis cab, developed in partnership with Scottish and Southern Energy - joined a parade at the Bright Green fair at the Climate Conference, Copenhagen.

The new lift has a 160km range from the Lithium Ion batteries. A typical working day with the aerial lift consumes around 10 percent of the battery power, leaving around 140 to 150km of range for travel to and from the job. The 13 metre working height unit has a Gross Vehicle Weight of 3.5 tonnes, while 7.5 tonne and 12 tonne models have also been developed. The units are considerably more expensive than standard vans or trucks, but the operational costs are considerably lower, leading to a five year pay back on the extra investment at current fuel and taxation levels.

Steve Couling, managing director of Versalift UK said: "This is one of a whole host of low emission vehicle options that Versalift will be releasing to the UK market in early 2010. As market leader we feel that we must also take the lead in new innovation and emission reduction. It is our top priority for next year." The machine on display has returned to the UK where it will go into service and be evaluated over the coming months.

The new 13 metre Versalift on a Transit-based Smiths Edison truck.



The new machine went on display during the Copenhagen climate summit in December



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When the going gets tough...

Visiting SAIE in Bologna, Italy last October, you would have been forgiven for thinking that the 3.5 tonne truck mounted lift market was booming. The truth is that this part of the market, so strong in recent years, is currently going through a soft patch. Surprising then to hear that Europe's highest volume truck mounted lift producer - Italian-based Multitel Pagliero - has had a reasonably good year and recently purchased more land as part of its plans to increase production capacity by up to 50 percent by 2012. Mark Darwin visited the company's head office in Manta near Saluzzo in the Piedmont region of Italy to talk to president Renzo Pagliero and find out why the company is doing so well.

Visiting Multitel's headquarters for the first time it is immediately obvious that the company has done well in recent years. An impressive, modern three storey building built in 2007/8 has re-housed staff that worked in offices scattered around the Manta 1 production facility. Recent expansion has resulted in four production areas - Manta 1 to Manta 4, producing more than 1,000 truck mounts last year with working heights from 13 to 83 metres. The new plot of land earmarked for an additional building and purchased at the beginning of December is a few miles away and is needed for both truck and spider lift production. Renzo Pagliero's plan is to build up to 1,500 truck mounts a year by 2012/13.

While 2009 production fell short of the record number of units shipped in 2008, the company has had a profitable year and continues to develop.

"We have increased our market share in Italy, restoring our position as market leader while achieving the



Multitel's largest platform the 83 metre J2-383TA working in Southern Italy



Final testing on an Italian contractor's window cleaning lift - note the cab

highest production levels for platforms over 28 metre in our history with record numbers of 35 metre, 60 metre and 65 metre models produced in a single year," says Pagliero. "We also have achieved the highest ever sales in Germany, the UK and in several Far Eastern Countries."

Not a bad year then, but it has not all been plain sailing. Sales in France, historically its largest market, are down substantially falling from €30 million to €10 million, as are sales in the USA (affected by the strong Euro amongst other factors) and in several other markets.

The introduction of the articulated MX range in 2006 has made a big impact on Multitel's sales of 3.5 tonne GVW machines.

"Prior to 2006 we were weak in the smaller chassis machines particularly as Italy is 80-90 percent articulated," says Pagliero. "We have delivered more than 1,000 MX200 platforms in less than four years and are now market leader both for the small and larger platforms in Italy."

"Revenues are down 27 percent on 2008 but this was record year. Germany has been our big success, building up sales over the past five or six years by breaking into leading rental companies such as Gardemann, Mateco, Gerken, GL Verleih, Schmidt and many of the Partnerlift/System Lift companies coupled with the increasing popularity of 3.5 tonne units compared to 7.5 tonne machines," he said.

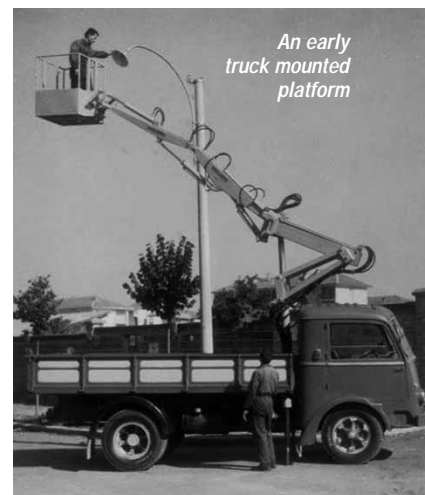
In recent years about 65 percent of output has been exported, however this figure has been distorted by a 30 percent increase in the Italian shipments this year. Belgium, Holland and Scandinavia are all important export markets as, perhaps surprisingly, is Poland.

"Poland likes buying second hand units and over the last 10 years has taken about 200 units from us, 65 percent of them used. They will even pay to have units converted from right hand drive - but only if it is a Multitel," says Pagliero. "To succeed in export markets you need a good back up and support system as well as a good product. We think we have the best spares back up in the business and this is an integral part of being an export-led company."

Whilst Pagliero sees some demand for 100 metre plus platforms in Italy, producing one is not one of his short term goals preferring to focus on a new 75 metre unit. Multitel has already sold two units, the first for Italian rental company Eurotechno should be unveiled at Bauma before being delivered to the customer.

"Platforms up to 60/65 metres can always be rented out in place of smaller units while the largest machines have problems with weight and size and therefore not as easy to keep busy," says Pagliero. "We are the only European company with a complete range of truck mounts from 13 to 83 metres."

Multitel also builds tracked spider lifts in co-operation with Palazzani,



An early truck mounted platform



Production in the very clean and well organised Manta 4 facility.

mounting its MX170 articulated boom onto a Palazzani chassis. "Palazzani is not strong below 22 metres so the joint venture suits us both. I am happy with the 17 metre machine and a 22 metre unit using our MX225 boom will be introduced at Bauma. Whether the next model will be smaller or larger remains to be decided," said Pagliero. "To date we have produced 80 units with a high proportion sold being the Multitel model."



Renzo Pagliero (R) explains some features to Melvyn Else from UK distributor Access Industries

According to Pagliero, the main advantage of its tracked machines is the low weight. "The new 22 metre machine will weight just 2.5 tonnes which is about 500kg lighter than competitors, important when transporting on a trailer. The 17 metre unit is about 15 percent lighter."

Mutitel claims that its philosophy has always been to try and produce a good quality durable product with a long life expectancy, low lifetime maintenance costs rather than 'value engineered' products with reduced price and quality. It has

also shied away from installing overly sophisticated electronics into products unless they are justified by the benefits.

"We do not have cracked booms and the other problems that are common with value engineered and /or overly -sophisticated products. Our growing success over the years is due to the fact that customers appreciate the product quality, reliability and low life maintenance costs. Customer loyalty is such that a Multitel customer seldom looks elsewhere for his next truck mounted platform," says Pagliero.

Mutitel is a family owned business which was founded in 1911 by the grandfather of current owners, brothers Renzo and Sandro Pagliero who took over the day to day management from their uncle Pietro when he died in 2004. The company initially manufactured agricultural machinery before moving into loader cranes. It was from these cranes that the first truck mounted lifts



The new head office at Manta 1



A boom section for the new 75 metre platform to be launched at Bauma

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were developed in the late 1950s and early 60s. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's the company increasingly became an aerial lift, rather than a crane manufacturer.

The company developed its first aluminium booms in the 1980s, although it was the 1990's before aluminium boom models assumed a significant importance within the product range. Unlike many other Italian companies, Pagliero has always designed and built its own product line.

The company claims that it was the first to mount a 16 metre platform on a 3.5 tonne chassis cab that was

genuinely legal and below the stated 3,500kg weight limit. Over the years this was followed by 20 and 22 metre units - the success a result of using aluminium alloy as a boom material.

While a few other access companies have used aluminium booms, only Multitel does so on all machines up to 27 metres. On the larger platforms the lower booms are made from steel while the upper booms and jibs are aluminium. Extruded aluminium allows the designer, using a CAD /CAM system, to optimise the design varying the thickness of material at different parts of the boom section, based on stress analysis.

The most notable feature of the larger Multitel platforms is the ability of the jib to rotate 300 degrees about the main boom - an additional 90 plus degrees compared to competitors - giving the capability to work up behind a bridge structure or similar object. Multitel also claims that because of this geometry its platforms offer more outreach at high level than competitor's corresponding machines.

It may be two or three years before the company achieves more than 1,000 machines in a single year again, but Pagliero does not rule out matching its 2008 revenues in 2010/11 but with a mix of platforms containing a higher ratio of larger machines.

"This year we have trained teams that have previously worked on the 3.5 tonne products to build larger platforms," he said. "This will make the company much more able to respond to market demands in the future."

Multitel has seen a high rate of growth in its activities since 2000 and over the next few years it expects a 'shake-out' in truck mounted manufacturing sector. As Pagliero says "a good quality



More than 1,000 MX200 platforms have been delivered in less than 4 years.

product coupled with good back up and support is the way forward rather than producing models for the sake of adding something 'new' every year. Our 40 metre model is a classic example. Introduced in the early 1990's it has been a benchmark for large machines in France for many years. With an 11 metre jib and 365kg unrestricted capacity it offers 15.5 metres of outreach, with outriggers set within the width of the vehicle or 28 metres with outriggers fully extended - a footprint similar to many 30 or 35 metre lifts. Improvements over the years have been many including fully variable outriggers, but why change the basic machine if you nor anyone else can significantly improve on it?"

The original Manta production facility



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Cleaning up (and over)

Earlier this year, Slough-based specialist window cleaning contractor RJ Norris started using a 21 metre, CTE ZED21J truck mounted access platform in order to allow it to clean a wider range of buildings and thus tender for more work. The company was specifically looking for a lift on a 3.5 tonne chassis so that all of its staff could drive it. The company chose the ZED21J because it liked the up and over and zero tailswing features of the sigma riser and boom configuration, as well as the extra capability of the articulating jib.

The starting point though was to find a machine with the working envelope to reach windows and fascias over possible obstructions. Louise Herd of RJ Norris said: "The combination of the sigma boom and fly-jib offers clearance over canopies and glass structures. We also liked the fact that the basket is supported on the front rather than underneath, essential where close-up work is needed."

Norris targets cleaning contracts at colleges and universities throughout London and the Home Counties. It previously rented in access

equipment when needed. As the business grew and the number of contracts requiring access equipment increased, it recognised the benefits in owning and operating its own lifts and renting them out on a self drive or with operator basis when they are not required for cleaning work.

The ZED21J has an unrestricted lift capacity of 200kg, 10 metres out-reach up to 14 metres above ground level, the ability to lift and lower in a straight vertical line from this height and 360 continuous slew. The company also liked the simple controls. "The controls make



The jib and end mounted platform are ideal for certain jobs



Making the most of the lift's reach

window cleaning very fast and easy with potentially less damage," said managing director Richard Norris.



The CTE ZED21 working in a narrow street

High reach in the back of beyond

Finnish utility company Eltel Networks has purchased the first Mercedes Zetros off road truck to go into a civilian application. The unit is equipped with both a crane and a 30 metre work platform. Eltel will use the vehicle for constructing and maintaining electrical and telecommunications networks in northern Finland. The final product was developed in partnership between Hiab and Veho Commercial Vehicles. The 37 tonne/metre Hiab XS 377 E-6 HiPro loader crane offers up to 30 metres of lift height and 24 metres of outreach. The truck's chassis frame was stiffened prior to installation in order to reduce deflection from chassis flex. The Zetros truck features continuous all-wheel drive, a 326 horsepower, 7.2 litre diesel engine and a choice of manual or fully automatic transmissions. Standard wading depth is 800 mm with an option for 1,110 mm.

The cab has more space than traditional truck cabs with a flat walk through floor, three separate seats and room for tools and other equipment. The first project for the new vehicle involved working on a 220 kV cable from Levi to Sodankylä across a wilderness area with few roads or tracks.

The Mercedes Zetros is equipped with a Hiab crane and work platform attachment



Truck mounted course for fire fighters

IPAF has launched a special course for truck mounted aerial lifts used for fighting fires. The new three day course, already underway in the Netherlands is aimed at all fire fighters who operate aerial work platforms and ladder trucks and was requested by a number of fire brigades looking for a standard course tailored to their specific needs. The first day is for theory and practical sessions with the instructor. The second day is for practical sessions without the instructor and the third day for more practical time, followed by the examination with the instructor.

Successful candidates will be awarded a PAL Card with the category Static Boom (1b) Special - Fire. Courses will be held at the facilities of Dutch fire brigades using specific machines based at the fire station. The first training centre to offer the fire fighting course is Van Asten Rescue Training, of Roermond, southern Holland. The company is owned and operated by Jeroen van Asten, a former fire fighting MEWP operator and a certified IPAF instructor.



IPAF now offers a three day MEWP course for fire fighters