Mixed Fleet
One Solution

Capture every move of every machine in fleets of all brands, shapes, and sizes. All in one platform. A platform that will transform your data into instantly usable insight on every moving part of your organization.

Connect Your Private Fleet At
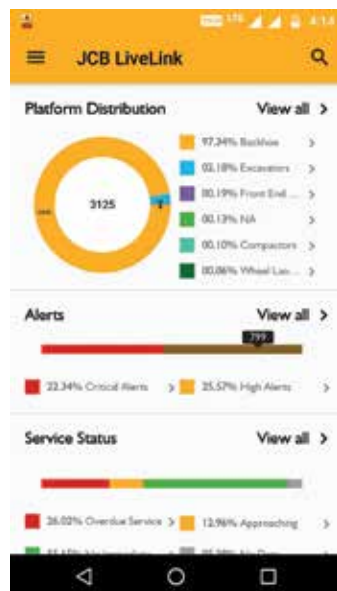trackunit.com

Trackunit®

All encompassing technology

This time last year we ran an article purely on 'technology' for the first time. While we often cover developments in rental management software, the past year or two has seen a step change in what is possible as it is increasingly interlinked with the new technology being built into the equipment we report on, as well as the vehicles and services that surround it. This can include monitoring machine performance and servicing through to live delivery tracking. Linking this into a company's management software enables the technology to make a real difference in terms of efficiency and customer service. The pace of change is moving at an eye watering rate, accelerated by the increasing ability and high speed connectivity of the smart phone.

While manufacturers are building this latest technology - such as telematics - into their new models, it is only useful if it can be fully integrated into a company's management software. Almost every rental business or fleet owner now uses some form of rental management software alongside their basic accounting software in order to enter orders, track inventory and availability and raise invoices and delivery notes etc. Companies are also

The JCB Live Link Mobile app.

increasingly using their Customer Relationship Management packages to help make their sales and service teams more productive and provide customers with an improved service.

The vast majority of companies in the developed world now use standard rental software packages, thanks to the modest cost of really good off the shelf systems. The rental software providers are also constantly updating and improving their products thanks to the fact that it has become a highly competitive and dynamic global market - particularly in the UK and North America. The standard off the shelf software not only eliminates the high costs of installing and maintaining expensive custom software, but it also increasingly dovetails well with 'bolt on packages' including telematics inputs, mobile devices and 3D lift management /planning software. The latest developments in technology and telematics have the potential to make dramatic improvements in rental company efficiency while providing an enhanced customer service, but only if it integrates well with a company's rental management software.

It is one thing generating mind boggling volumes of data accessible with a live feed, but somehow it has to be filtered and accessible, otherwise it can be worse than useless. Many small to medium size companies have only relatively recently begun to get more out of their basic systems and generate key documents such as quotations, delivery notes, contracts, damage recording and notification and invoicing etc…. Let alone make the most out of tracking sales prospects, calls and meetings in order to update sales forecasts etc.

Everything has changed

The way we live our business and private lives has also changed to a greater degree than many of us might realise. We are all now becoming used to window

shopping on line, as well as checking a supplier's inventory, ordering and paying for products and then tracking the delivery process in real time. The goods are then signed for electronically, and an invoice is produced automatically and sent by email. We are not only familiar with this process but are increasingly expecting it and can get sufficiently irritated when it does not work properly to switch to another supplier which has an online sales system that does work well.

The rapid growth in the number of aerial lifts, telehandlers and cranes equipped with full telematics systems over the past year or two has the potential to completely change the industry, in that it can provide information on almost every aspect of a connected machine and send it to a

wide range of devices from a smart phone, to a tablet or computer. The ability to log when each machine is working, if it has developed any faults - minor or major - if it has been refuelled, recharged, abused, used dangerously or simply requires maintenance is mind blowing and all this alongside the original more basic track and trace ability.

It is all very clever stuff, yet this is just the tip of the information iceberg, if the information is easily available at your fingertips all manner of things are possible, however sorting it all and turning it into a format where it can be easily used may be one of the great challenges we face before the benefits really start to flow. After all most people do not use a fraction of the possible functions on the simple devices they are highly familiar with - such as smart phones, computers or even cameras - even though they have the potential to provide some real time saving benefits if we would take the time to learn how.

During a recent presentation at Europlatform Oliver Colleau of Kiloutou spoke of his belief that new technology and automation will never replace people, but rather will help them work better. His company is busy adopting and integrating new technology into its MCS software system. Although at a relatively early stage it is already benefiting in many areas of the business, for example 50 percent of the calls to its technical help centre are now typically being fixed over the phone,

thanks in part to telematics and remote diagnostics highlighting issues that can be fixed without the need for an expensive call out. More critically it helps solve the shortage of skilled service engineers, just as planned delivery and collection routes can help reduce the number of delivery trucks and drivers required. He also noted that there is a growing demand for secure login to the equipment, ensuring that it can only be used by a client's approved operators and their sessions are logged including any incidents or damage and dangerous use. This technology also allows machines to be shared between different companies working on a site, then billed by customer. He said that this is proving to be particularly popular in high security areas such as airports and nuclear sites.

Real benefits

Speaking at the same conference Angus Kennard of Australian rental company Kennards spoke on how his company is beginning to gain real benefits thanks to a rental and management software programme it has developed in house on the Microsoft Azure platform. He said it is completely 'device agnostic' and integrates well with the telematics systems of most major manufacturers. The company is only at the beginning of what it hopes to gain in efficiencies from the information it receives from integrating the live data from its fleet into its management software. Like Kiloutou, it is already benefiting from a reduction in call outs along with more efficient delivery and collections.

Kennard also acknowledges the growing demand for security card locks on machines which can provide the ability to 'split the bill' between contractors sharing machines, on a site or even the ability to charge by the hour/day used. However he also noted that both scenarios throw up issues that need some work, including pricing tariffs that are designed specifically for pay as you go rental, rather than adapted from the current pricing levels.

Integrating telematics input data into the company's software can raise other issues and potential problems. There has always been the

Companies can keep manuals within their software for customers to download or to link to delivery notes

Palfinger has revealed its new telematics platform that aims to provide crane operators a practical app to improve efficiency

discussion as to who owns the data or has access to it - the machine owner and/or the manufacturer? Kennard was emphatic - "If we own the asset we own the data!" However regardless of who 'owns' it there are huge benefits in sharing it between the end user and the manufacturer in order that they utilise their equipment more efficiently which would hopefully lead to better rates! The manufacturer on the other hand could use the data to improve the product design and reliability etc...

Kennard also explained aerial work platform telemetry was just part of the global interconnected internet of things (IoT), and what is driving its uptake at a business level. Improved utilisation is a clear benefit, but like other speakers at the conference he pointed out that there are many different systems and telemetry products in the market, different asset types of varying levels of sophistication and age, and the question again was "where to begin?"

Customer needs

He said his company focused on identifying what the customer wanted from telemetry, and it is "much more then just knowing where the machines are". Customers on large, complex, multi-disciplinary contract sites need clear metrics to cover the whole site, all assets and tasks, which led Kennards Hire to develop its own IoT

platform, EasyTRAK.

Genie chief executive Matt Fearon said: "Information gained through the use of telematics can change the way product development and training is done by seeing how machines are actually used. We equipped 500 boom lifts with full telematics systems to see how telescopic booms were actually used on site. Most were regularly overloaded by up to 50 percent and some by more than double the maximum permitted load! As a manufacturer we decided to design out the overloading problem by increasing the capacity of the booms and then through training making the users realise the actual load that is going in the platform."

"With more machines fitted with telematics it won't be long before rental companies and manufacturers start sharing information such as repair records. This would highlight recurring problems that could be designed out to make machines more reliable. This may stretch the lifespan from say eight years to 10 or even 12 years with fewer repairs and extended service intervals."

Here are some of the latest software releases.

3D Lift Plan available 'On-the-Go'

Florida based A1A Software has introduced five new web tools - Sketch Pad, Crane Comparison, Load Chart Viewer, Crane Loads Calculator and Mat Calculator - for task specific lift planning activities in its 3D Lift

Genie launched its Lift Connect telematics system in April this year and has connected almost 9,000 machines
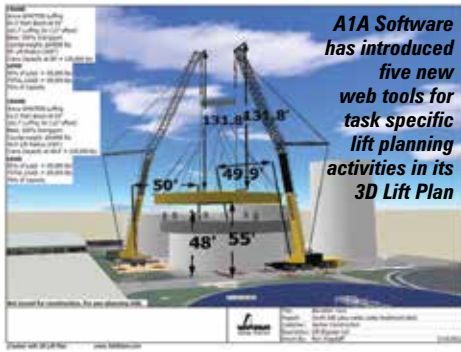
Make Today's Vision Tomorrow's Reality

Improve Your Service. **Cut** Your Costs. **Grow** Your Business.
Expand Your Knowledge. **Unlock** Your Potential.

inspHire

Hire Management Software

A1A Software has introduced five new web tools for task specific lift planning activities in its 3D Lift Plan

Plan. "These tools enable users to input or gather important lift planning information without creating a full lift plan," said president Tawnia Weiss. "For on the go decision making, these web tools provide quick, accurate information accessible from a tablet or other mobile device, that can later be integrated into a full lift plan."

Sketch Pad allows those involved in initial job bidding or lift planning to draw on screen using their finger. After entering an address, a Google Map appears and it is possible to note the lift location, crane setup location and other site-specific information which is ideal for gathering initial information for a job estimate. The sketch can be saved to 3D Lift Plan and will auto-create a lift plan for the user which reduces steps and streamlines documentation.

Crane Comparison allows users to compare up to 10 crane load charts at a time. The graphic information is an easy visual reference of the capacities at various radii and boom lengths and is designed as a tool for sales people who are working with customers to identify the most cost effective crane choice that can get the job done.

Load Chart Viewer takes information in traditional load charts and presents it in a visual infographic presentation, displaying the capacities at various radii and height on a range diagram.

Crane Loads Calculator allows users to determine maximum outrigger loads for the specific crane configuration without creating a full 3D Lift Plan. Simply choose the crane, the load chart, boom length, load weight and radius and the calculator shows the critical setup information.

Crane Loads Calculator determines maximum outrigger loads for the specific crane configuration without creating a full 3D Lift Plan.

And finally **Mat Calculator** helps users to select the appropriate outrigger mats to ensure that point loadings are within the maximum allowable ground bearing pressure. This is a mobile variation on the feature integrated into 3D Lift Plan in 2017 which provides data for engineered outrigger pad products such as DICA's FiberMax or SafetyTech pads, steel mats or timber mats.

Resource Planner updated

MCS Rental Software has updated its Resource Planner within the MCS-rm hire management software, enabling rental companies to plan their resources from the availability and workload of its staff, while estimating travel and task times. Rental companies can make sure deadlines are met by visualising future resource demands, as well as receiving live status updates of those working on site.

"By allocating the employee with the relevant skillset and qualifications means that a hire company achieves better customer service and gets the job done right first time," said Nick Thomson, sales director for MCS. "The MCS Resource Planner helps teams to collaborate, enabling hire companies to respect their customers' deadlines. Resource planners can match tasks to skill sets and be able to handle their ever-changing priorities with ease. Not only will the company be able to give superior levels of customer service, they'll also get happier, more engaged team members."

MCS Rental Software has refreshed its Resource Planner to help hire businesses increase their productivity.

inspHire cloud sales intelligence tool

Rental management software provider inspHire, has launched the cloud sales intelligence tool, Vecta which allows rental companies to see the profitability and behaviour of a given customer, while providing an overview of opportunities available with each client. The software takes data directly from inspHire's software programme and presents the information in dashboards displaying daily figures, product trends, customer spending habits and more.

Sales director Martin Bestwick said: "This is just one of many exciting products we plan to integrate into inspHire and will provide our customers with an unrivalled level of granularity regarding the performance of their business."

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New software helps Bigman go paperless

Italian aerial lift sales and rental company, Bigman is using MCS software to help it go paperless. The company was using an old system with limited functionality and unreliable stock inventory levels making the company's expansion plans difficult to achieve. Due its location close to the border with Austria, it also required multi-lingual software.

"Our previous solution had no mobile capability and we wanted our drivers to use mobile apps to reduce paperwork," said managing director Maximillian Harrasser. "What appealed about MCS, besides its comprehensive software solution, was its multi-lingual capability and its wide ranging experience in the international rental community. Our ultimate goal is to go paper free. Since we switched, our drivers use the Transport Mobile app which allows is to send any last minute collection requests directly to the drivers' smartphone, adding it into their planned route, with the driver capturing the digital signature for the Proof of Delivery or Collection, all without paper. We save time as the driver has no need to return to the depot to collect paperwork and that satisfies our customers at the same time."

'Our ultimate goal is to go paper free' – Bigman

Bigman is using MCS software to help it go paperless.