



# WE RISE BY LIFTING OTHERS

Skyjack aims to support the rental industry during the good times and the bad. Through Skyjack's **WE RISE** campaign, we want to encourage rental companies around the world to share their stories:

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- Customer care and protection
- Staff care and protection
- Unique approaches and practices for the "new normal"
- And many more

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# The changing face of rental software



With rental software companies constantly developing new solutions, updates and improvements it could be well worthwhile arranging a review with your current provider or even scoping out the market to see what else is available. We sat down with some of the leading providers from around the world to investigate underutilised features and solutions built into their systems, that companies in our industry all too often fail to take advantage of.

*"That's the crux of the business, if you aren't getting the invoices out the door, then there's no point opening the doors at all."*

Point of Rental

## Earning more for the same

The need to capture and record quotations for incoming enquiries may seem like an unnecessary and time consuming requirement in the moment, but if done correctly you can ensure quoted information is consistent, while providing greater visibility of potential work and minimising duplication.

Every company no matter the size will have some form of quotation/pricing offer process, however a surprising number of rental companies simply provide a rate verbally, or perhaps via an email or word document, while others use a CRM system which may

**FLEET  
COST &  
CARE**

Fleet Cost & Care links to JJ Curran Crane Company

*"It looks really simple, but there's a lot of powerful functionality hidden behind the scenes."* vWork

not be integrated with the rental management software. The challenge with doing this is that quotes can be inconsistent and inaccessible if that salesperson or document is not available to everyone.

It could also result in key items which are essential to the hire being missed and nearly always leads to a duplicated workload at several points if that quote converts into an order. From a reporting side, senior management will struggle to get an accurate view of the sales pipeline which can affect forecasting and key financial decisions made by the company.

To see how one rental software company has tackled this we caught up with Jack Curran, director of North American sales and Linda Jennings, director of global sales to discuss the quotation element of their software, helping customers work more uniformly and invoice faster. Based in Detroit, Michigan,

Fleet Cost & Care software is used throughout North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

If the Curran name sounds familiar, it is no surprise as its crane rental division, JJ Curran Crane Company has been a major player in the crane rental market for more than 70 years, providing the software business with wealth of hands on experience. It claims that its software is used by 40 percent of the leading crane rental companies in the USA.

Curran said: "Sometimes billable items get lost as job information flows from sales to dispatch, and then to the back office for billing. People don't necessarily know what's getting lost, but we have customers that after using the system bring in more revenue. It is not that they are actually busier or bringing in more jobs, it is just the fact that no one was actually invoicing for certain items, for example permits. Now that they have introduced the quoting element, these items are included, and they are seeing a difference of tens of thousands of dollars a month."

"They may have a powerful CRM system in place already but if it isn't integrated with their dispatch and billing processes then it typically requires someone else to re-enter all that information again when it becomes an order or possibly more times if they are entering a ticket for their account programme too. This is where it can become inefficient but there's a major chance that something doesn't get caught."

Fleet Cost & Care break the quoting element of the software into two options called NextGen and Atom. NextGen is a desktop version which

*"Sometimes things get lost, and people don't necessarily know what's getting lost"* Fleet Cost & Care

can use auto configuration, shortcut and copy tools throughout the quote, raising processes to make the whole thing as easy as possible and ensure the sales team can concentrate on selling rather than data entry. It allows users to easily capture all the relevant information at the time of quoting and provides an easy to use dashboard to review any open quotes to chase or convert into an order, enabling faster invoicing.



Atom is a mobile application designed for the sales team on the go. It allows users to view, create, manage and convert a quote into a contract or job and is designed to be intuitive with the hyperlinked quick views and search options.

Jennings concluded: "When we first developed Atom, our mobile app, you would think we had three heads when we explained it to customers. They were certain their sales staff would never use it. Seven years later there are thousands of daily users. We built it to be intuitive so those operators were fine - if they can use an ATM to get money out of a wall or operate a smartphone, they can absolutely use this."



# Managing equipment and people

In the past rental software has typically focused on the machines and the equipment within the system. It is usually the first element of the software to be set up and is the most comprehensive part of the package, seeing as the contract, jobs and most importantly invoices revolve around the fleet. However there is a growing demand in the industry to incorporate a human resource element covering operated machinery, providing the ability to assign crane or platform operators to a contract or job.

With more than 20 years' experience, initially in the UK, rental software company inspHire now supports rental companies all over the world with additional locations in USA, Netherlands and Australia. We sat down with managing director Martin Bestwick and business development manager Dane Evans, to go through its built-in operator scheduler functionality. This function was recently developed to ensure that the correct staff are assigned to operated contracts as well as removing the need for a paper based process of operator timesheet authorisation. When asked to summarise the benefits this might deliver, Bestwick said: "Firstly it has been designed to enable our customers greater visibility and utilisation of their operators. They can be confident in the competency element, that the people and the machines they send to site are adequately certified by simply using the scheduler in the planning of the jobs."

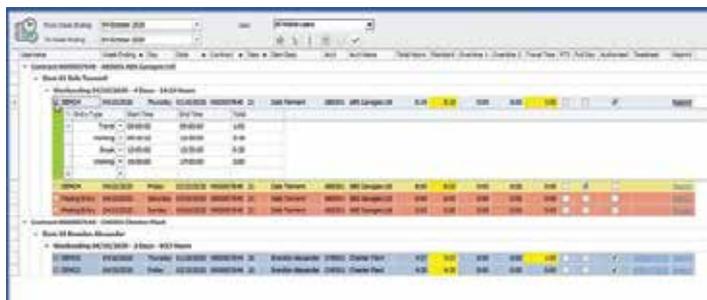


"With the current market conditions with Covid-19, it also provides a fully electronic process flow from allocation and managing operator availability through to the operator submitting their working hours, in turn reducing any physical contact and materials handed over on site."

*"Allowing greater visibility & utilisation"*

The operator functionality can be broken down into three key stages: dispatch, operator completion and timesheet authorisation.

At any point when an operator is required on a contract, it will pre-populate within the resource booking screen, presenting dispatch staff with an easy to navigate screen to view, plan and allocate operators or sub-contractors. The



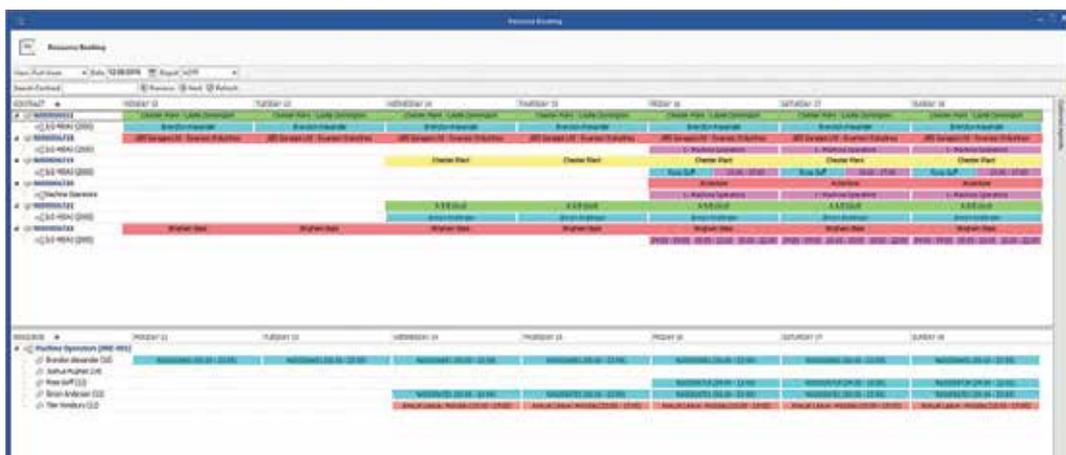
*Fed in from the operators electronically and bringing them into one centralised screen for the back office to review.*

system automatically carries out a compliance and certification check, highlighting any operators that do not hold the correct certification for the particular piece of equipment, or any that have allowed their certification to lapse, removing the need for hire desks to make ad-hoc judgement calls or lose time sourcing this information manually. Once allocated, the job automatically feeds into the inspHire mobile application under timesheets. This is where the operators have the ability to receive and view their schedule as a calendar or list view. They will be prompted by the app to perform any safety checks that

are in line with existing company procedure, ensuring their safety before starting work. Once they start the job it allows them to submit their travel, working and break hours electronically to be reviewed and signed off onsite if required.

As soon as the hours are submitted in real time by the mobile operator, it will create a timesheet back on the desktop version, automatically converting any additional hours into overtime and attributing the correct rate types, depending on the operator completing the work. Once authorised, the system automatically submits the hours through to billing to be picked up in the invoice run to the customer.

This function will have the greatest benefit to those companies looking to maximise both machine and operator utilisation, allowing dispatchers to make quicker and better decisions. It also eliminates outdated paper timesheets which often arrive back in the office having gone through a week on site - if at all! It not only gives those in the office real time information, but also allows for earlier invoicing, while reducing the amount of paper produced.



*The tiles will pre-populate when a contract requires an operator.*

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# Working on the workshop

As a rental company its critical to make sure equipment is maintained to a high standard, including arranging scheduled services to be carried out on time, repaired if damaged or broken, and inspected - all as quickly and efficiently as possible to get equipment back in the yard and rental ready. It is also important to keep records that the work has been carried out as well as track and attribute costs and be able to analyse the information. This is where a workshop module in your software may help a great deal more than you think.

We caught up with Point of Rental's Dan McKenna to learn more about its system. Having previously worked as a hire desk supervisor for 10 years before joining Point of Rental in 2005, McKenna was eager to go through the workshop module.

"In the last recession we saw a large number of our customers coming to us, having reached the full potential of what they could do with the on-hire, off-hires and invoicing etc... and wanting to see what else they could be doing, and top of the list was organising the workshop functions, and we are seeing a repeat of that now."

Previously a paper heavy process, any workshop jobs can now be raised digitally within the main system, automatically populating the scheduling screen as well as any reminders for any of those routine frequency based services which may be required. After checking relevant competency, these can then be assigned to the specific engineers via a mobile app.

McKenna adds: "What happens with that piece of paper, it could fall out the cab and that information is lost all together, dropped in a puddle, then no one can read it.



Point of Rental's workshop app

The engineer might be out most of the week, so it is not real time, and someone is still going to have to transcribe that back into the system."

*"We develop areas of the software based on customer demand"*

The mobile app can be used to view, manage and complete jobs while providing engineers with information on the machine as well as any risk



Previously a heavy paper based process, the mobile app can be used to view, manage and complete jobs

assessments and overdue services that may be required. The engineer can add details of any parts used, capture pictures and signatures or reschedule the job if not completed. All the while it is updating in real life in the scheduler and job ticket, where the information is collected and stored automatically. The time that was previously needed to collect all the paper job tickets can now be spent ensuring that any invoices are raised and charged back for customer damage, complete with signature, picture

and GPS tracking for accountability. You can also start to see exactly what that machine is costing you and make wider business decisions using the analysis codes.

"Customers can report on job analysis, how many breakdowns they may have on the first day of hire. The company now had the specific visibility of what is causing a machine to fail, or if more employee training is required or if the customer is simply not using it correctly."

## Alerted to vWork

**Communication within businesses is key. Without it misinterpreted messages can result in errors, frustration, and on rare occasions, an accident. vWork's communication tools use automated notifications to inform both staff members and customers of any updates or changes.**

vWork chief technical officer, Steve Taylor, explains: "Think of it like your pizza tracker, it sends the customer an alert at different stages, they can click on it and see the driver, driving towards them, so they know how far away their machines are."

Customers can be alerted to confirm appointments, reminders or to inform them of any changes or delays. Rental companies can also benefit from this tool by being alerted directly of any job specification changes as well as the ability to post questions to anyone within the business.

These alerts can be in the form of email, pop-up notification or SMS text, with company branding, customisable body and can even be set to attach reports to alert emails allowing those alerted to start preparing if necessary.



# To hire or to rent?



The ability to create powerful documents

When it comes to rental software there are usually two main options: out the box or custom built, naturally both come with benefits and downfalls. If it is likely that the majority of your business practices are standard and in line with the wider industry, then 'out of the box' will be a cheaper and easier option to implement. Custom solutions can be tailored to your company and operations however this often comes at a cost.



As a true cloud-based software, written on an API, UK based HireHop says it can offer customers a high level of customisation and flexibility from an 'out of the box' system with the ability to change the software's pre-existing terminology with your own.

For example, if you prefer to raise an 'estimate' instead of a 'quote', it is not a problem with HireHop's software, as technical director, Justin Levene, explains: "Customise the language for each user and change any text or phrase in HireHop to your own preference. If you don't like words or phrases we use, not a problem, you have the power to change them."

It also has a powerful customisation tool which allows companies to design and update their paperwork with pre-set templated options and customise these to include background imagery, edit fields, text items, terms and conditions and even images relevant to the hire.

*"Powerful customisation throughout the system"*

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# Safety in software accident reporting

The number one concern for many companies is the health and safety of employees - whether office based or those working in workshops or in the field. We spoke with New Zealand's cloud-based job scheduling software company vWork, to see how it is helping rental companies incorporate health and safety processes from pre-start checks to complex onsite checks.

Steve Taylor, vWork chief technical officer, said: "Our software is scalable if you have a project over several days that requires three or four assets, deliveries of counterweights, traffic control and rigging crew/staff or just a single crane operator with a loader crane, who may just require a simplified version, you can build the system to support that."

Health and safety elements of the company's software allows users to create customised templates for accidents, near misses and equipment checks for the company's current processes. Hazard templates can also be pre-defined by the team in the office or by the sales team, when a site inspection has already been completed. Similar to other systems we have reviewed in this article,



the workflow has been designed to check the competency of mobile workers before assigning their workload, for example allocating an operator to a crane to carry out a lift. Part of this process involves the operator's acknowledging and documenting known risks or recording new risks prior to starting a job.

Taylor added: "On arrival to the site, the worker is required to complete a hazard review step, which will not allow them to proceed until they have gone through it and agreed that it's safe to do so."

As evident in our current state, life does not always go to plan and pre-defined list will not always suffice. vWork has overcome this by allowing users to add hazards that may not have been included in the original briefing. Other examples of relevant checks a mobile user might go through include rigging sketches, communication plans (hand signals/radio relay), counterweight checks and rigging. The final stage is the declaration that all items have been checked and it is safe to proceed



with a signature collection from the relevant persons.

vWork has a comprehensive alert system whereby as soon as a mobile worker logs a safety breach, automatic alerts can be sent to anyone nominated person according to the level of severity (see: *Alerted to vWork on page 52*).

All accidents and incidents can then be reported for your own business safety analysis or legislative requirement or for real time snapshots on the dashboard views in easy to digest widgets. Taylor concludes: "With the combination of the different triggers and filters, plus the ability to enter customisable recipients and content means that we see our customers using this element of the system to solve all kinds of operational problems."

## Conclusion

A key element that shone through whilst speaking with the various providers is that they do listen to their customers and are interested in what they want to do with their businesses. And it is definitely possible for customers to drive change, it is after all an increasingly competitive market, and changing supplier is not as tough as it once was.

As one software company said: "We develop areas of the software based on customer demand, for example the requirement to allow for pre and off hire inspection or stock holding depot options for our powered access customers" while another simply added "We are involving and enhancing as times goes on".

Speak to your provider, you are more than likely to find that the functionality and features that you want or would like are already be in there.

