



GUIDE

# 10 top tips for tomorrow's warehouse

These are the top ten questions you need to ask before choosing your warehouse equipment supplier.

Your intralogistics operation will keep on changing. With that evolution comes great opportunity. Here are ten key questions to ask your warehouse equipment supplier when specifying or renegotiating your fleet to secure flexibility for your changing warehouse.

## 1. IS THE DEALERSHIP OWNED BY THE OEM OR IS IT INDEPENDENT?

The main priority for OEM-owned equipment dealerships is usually to sell trucks and keep the factories going. In contrast, an independent dealer's priority is to build a long-term relationship for years to come and prioritise the needs of the customer. With that different mindset, the focus is on finding the right solutions for the specific operation, rather than pushing whatever meets targets set by the factory. It is about more than the metal. It is about providing a solution to support your operation, including flexibility through any periods of change. This solution may feature more than the forklifts and warehouse equipment, it could extend to scrubber driers or access platforms for example, all under one contract. Having all your contracts in one place, with the dealer as a single point of contact, makes it easier to manage.

## 2. CAN YOU OFFER CUSTOMISED OPTIONS, TAILORED FOR MY OPERATION?

Your operation has its own specific materials handling needs, so find out if the equipment they supply is customisable and whether their solutions meet your needs. You may require specially engineered options, a choice of cabin, or pedestrian platform, or operator assistance systems to support your operation. Perhaps you require a single robotics enabled truck, or an entire fleet, installed quickly and without too much interruption to your business. Maybe you require multipurpose equipment that can be used for more than one function in your warehouse. Alternatively, it might be as simple as knowing they understand your operation well enough to supply the right mix and number of trucks.



## 3. DOES YOUR MATERIALS HANDLING EQUIPMENT MEET MY OPERATORS' NEEDS?

Are operator satisfaction, staff retention, or labour shortages a problem? Ask about the design of the materials handling equipment offered. The design of a warehouse truck can impact on productivity. If an operator feels comfortable and well equipped for their shift, they may become more motivated and productive.

Having ergonomically designed trucks, with intuitive controls can help operators feel secure, supported, and motivated in day-to-day operations. This might also help retain staff where there may be high staff turnover. Intuitive, standardised controls, also make it easy for operators to familiarise and switch between equipment as required.



#### 4. CAN YOU OFFER MULTIPURPOSE EQUIPMENT ABLE TO PERFORM MORE THAN ONE FUNCTION?

If you are looking for a pallet truck and an order picker, for example, have you considered whether just one machine could be used for both jobs? Using multipurpose equipment could help to reduce your potential fleet size. An independent dealer should prioritise your needs over the OEM's. Rather than selling you as many trucks as possible, they will help you find the best solutions for your warehouse. And sometimes that might mean one truck that can perform two or more different functions.

When moving goods between indoor and outdoor areas, do you need a piece of equipment for operating outside and one for inside or is there an option that could serve both areas? Perhaps your need for multi-purpose equipment is to support with changes in personnel, or fluctuation in demand.

#### 5. WHAT IS THE SERVICE LEVEL OFFERED FOR THE LIFE OF THE TRUCKS?

You need reliable materials handling equipment to keep your operation running smoothly. It needs to be supported day in, day out, and around the clock. With an independent equipment supplier, your operation could be supported by a trained engineer that is often located in the same town, minimising your downtime and making it easy to plan maintenance for your convenience. Find out how responsive they are and if they are able to offer 24/7 service and maintenance support for ultimate flexibility.

#### 6. WHAT AFTERMARKET OPTIONS CAN YOU OFFER ME?

Whatever materials handling equipment you buy or lease, aftermarket should never be just an afterthought – but for some OEMs, it can be. Spare parts supply for routine maintenance and repair can be critical to keep your operation running efficiently. Additionally, you may require specially engineered options to customise your equipment fleet. Or operator assist options to support safety for your operators and other people in your operation. Ergonomic features on equipment from different cabin, seat, or rider platform options, to an iPad stand, or the right sized bottle holder, might make all the difference to your operators, and positively impact productivity.

#### 7. HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT ME WITH SEASONAL / OPERATIONAL PEAKS?

An independent dealer may offer short term hire fleets and reliable used equipment to support peaks in your operation. This means they have the flexibility to support you with unexpected downtime, or for an expected or unexpected operational peak. It might be due to personnel shortages, a lost contract, or a sudden increase in demand as your market changes, or simply expected seasonal peaks.



## 8. HOW FLEXIBLE ARE THE CONTRACT TERMS?

Once you are tied into an equipment contract, it can be very difficult to make any changes to the equipment as needed, and sometimes those agreements might be set at as much as 10 years. In uncertain times, many organisations are looking for shorter term contracts, or contracts that offer the flexibility to change equipment at shorter notice. Of course, it depends on the individual company's policy, however, a local independent dealer may offer greater flexibility in a contract.

Even if they cannot offer that, asking the question will help to highlight any uncertainty about the future of your operation. That will enable them to work out the materials handling solution that best suits your needs. They may also be able to offer warehouse simulation software to help better plan for the unknown and map out possible scenarios in your changing warehouse.

And finally, don't forget to read the small print.

## 9. DO YOU HAVE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE OF MY MARKET?

Unlike a global supplier, a local, independent dealer is well placed to truly understand your local market conditions, local challenges, local customers, and local market trends. And they are not constrained to only sell goods approved by or supplied by the OEM. If you already have a preferred local supplier of racking or other ancillary goods, for example, they are likely to be familiar with that company. That means they may be able to supply those goods as part of their package, to support your materials handling equipment. A one-stop-shop for all your warehouse solutions, with one single contact to manage everything.

An independent local materials handling equipment supplier also means local engineers, and local salespeople, all of which genuinely understand your needs.

## 10. HOW WILL YOU HELP ME AS MY BUSINESS GROWS AND CHANGES?

An independent dealer can offer impartial advice and solutions that go beyond electric forklifts, pallet trucks, VNA machines, order pickers, and reach trucks. They can understand the possible challenges and changes your business might face and offer the solutions that best suit your needs. An independent dealer may also have the flexibility to help you change the equipment for your site, as your needs change. They also often have more control of costs than an OEM-owned supplier, and a robust framework.





## YOUR QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

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- 1. Is the dealership owned by the OEM or is it independent?
- 2. Can you offer customised options, tailored for my operation?
- 3. Does your materials handling equipment meet my operators' needs?
- 4. Can you offer multipurpose equipment able to perform more than one function?
- 5. What is the service level offered for the life of the trucks?
- 6. What aftermarket options can you offer me?
- 7. How can you support me with seasonal / operational peaks?
- 8. How flexible are the contract terms?
- 9. Do you have local knowledge of my market, to understand my needs?
- 10. How will you help me as my business grows and changes?



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