

WHITE PAPER:

WHY YOUR LIFT TRUCK FLEET DESERVES A TURNKEY MOUNTING SOLUTION

Here's how installing a turnkey mounting solution on your lift truck fleet can help speed up operations, improve driver efficiency, and improve your bottom line.



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INTRODUCTION

The stalwarts of any distribution operation, lift trucks serve multiple purposes in today's fast-paced warehouse and distribution center (DC) environments. To ensure that those vehicles and their drivers stay efficient and productive in today's "want it now" e-commerce distribution world, more companies are using tablets that enable inventory tracking; assist with cross-docking and put-away; maximize material movement; and reduce the number of "empty" forklifts driving around the facility.

The same technology that helps companies replace their manual, paper-and-pencil inventory management methods also presents new challenges for firms that now have to create a safe, secure, and ergonomic experience for drivers. Charged with picking goods, staging orders, and then getting those orders loaded onto a vehicle for distribution, forklift operators are often at the mercy of IT departments that select tablets and handhelds that meet the facilities technology requirements, not knowing whether those devices are compatible with their existing lift truck fleets.

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- Tom O'Brien, Gamber-Johnson's
Material Handling and Logistics Sales
Manager

"Managing that middle piece, where the technology has to be securely mounted to the actual vehicle, can be difficult," says Tom O'Brien, Gamber-Johnson LLC's material handling and logistics sales manager. "The IT team that's ordering the technology ensures it will connect with the infrastructure in the warehouse or DC, not really understanding the equipment mounting and operator training that has to take place to make the investment worthwhile."

The challenges don't end there. In the fast-paced fulfillment environment, the technology itself has to be easy to use and include all of the adaptations that users want (i.e., keyboards, scanners, etc.). Without these peripherals, the technology itself quickly becomes a burden versus an efficiency-booster. There also has to be a place on the vehicle for those extras—something that IT purchasing departments don't generally understand when placing orders for 150 tablets.

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THE REVOLVING LABOR DOOR

Struggling under the pressure of a tight labor market, companies are trying to squeeze as much productivity as they can from their existing workforces. Many DCs, for example, rely on temporary labor to help them get through peak seasons. These temporary workers need to be trained in equipment and technology usage, but they don't generally stick around long enough to make that training pay off.

"A company using long-term temps typically has a revolving labor door," says O'Brien. "The more adaptable and user-friendly that firm's technology and equipment is, the better."

Gamber-Johnson's turnkey mounting solution, for example, helps companies stay adaptable even when their labor turnover is high. That means using solutions that can quickly adapt to any worker's experience, size, weight, and preferences.

"A 5-foot-tall forklift operator who weighs 110 pounds versus a 6-foot-tall operator weighing 250 pounds will need their onboard computers placed in different ergonomic positions," O'Brien explains. "No matter what type of technology is put on the vehicle, our product will be ergonomically-correct for any operator with some simple adjustments."

THE EQUIPMENT-AGNOSTIC APPROACH

A mobile device that's too big for a specific forklift, a ruggedized tablet that doesn't come with a keyboard, or an onboard computer whose screen is too small to safely view while operating a forklift can all wreak havoc on a company's fulfillment operations. In a world where seconds count, and where customers are expecting orders to be delivered within a day (or even less), companies need turnkey vehicle mounting solutions that can be deployed quickly.

"We work with end users, solutions integrators, fleet managers, and operations to figure out the right solution for every vehicle," says O'Brien. "Then, we manufacture brackets that adapt to any vehicle operating in any environment." The brackets themselves are vehicle-specific, but they're also agnostic in terms of what type of technology gets mounted to them. This adaptive approach works particularly well for the many

companies whose fleets include multiple vehicle brands, makes, and models.

Gamber-Johnson's device-agnostic approach also applies to docking stations—something that more companies are requiring in their transition over to ruggedized tablet solutions. Because the mounts are vehicle-specific and clamp onto the lift truck, the installation process is easier and requires no drilling (in most cases). This ensures longer lifespans for the mounts, which can continue to be used even as companies upgrade their technology.

"It's no longer about just trying to figure out which bracket matches with which piece of physical technology," says O'Brien. "It's about designing a universal bracket for the device that's being mounted."



YOU'VE GOT THE POWER

Gamber-Johnson's turnkey vehicle mounting solutions adapt to virtually any lift vehicle. Lift vehicles are usually LP, gas, diesel electrically powered. Those devices require clean power (i.e., with no danger of spikes or under-voltages) in order to operate at maximum efficiency (and while being charged or powering other devices). Using an isolated power supply, ensures that there's always enough power for the device—and that the power is evenly distributed.

Regardless of which power supply is being used (12-32 V, 20-60V or 72-110V), Gamber-Johnson is able to recommend a power supply that will support the tablets power need. The company's 15-foot wiring harness was developed to enable fast, efficient installation and helps to complete the entire mounting solution.

Chad Sullivan, a design engineer at Gamber-Johnson, LLC, says the solution also works well for companies that are updating their older, bulkier vehicle-mounted devices in favor of lighter tablets that require docking stations. By providing the docking stations, power supplies, and mounts, the manufacturer gives companies a one-stop-shop for bringing their mounted technology up to today's standards.

"Employees need heads-up displays for order-picking and inventory control in order to do quick picks right from their vehicles," says Sullivan, who still sees numerous companies using paper, clipboards, and desktop-mounted computers to handle these tasks.

Using a turnkey mounting solution, the same companies can significantly reduce the amount of time operators spend off their vehicles, walking around trying to figure out what to pick.



TURNKEY SOLUTIONS IN ACTION

The benefits that come from installing a turnkey vehicle mounting solution on a forklift fleet are wide and varied. In some cases, the companies come out much bigger winners than Gamber-Johnson does, despite the fact that the latter applies decades of expertise and manufacturing knowledge to the situation.

Take the paper manufacturer that thought it needed new brackets for its entire lift truck fleet due to a technology refresh. In reality, the company was already using Gamber-Johnson's brackets and only needed to be able to add keyboards to its current setups. "Once I realized what they actually needed," O'Brien recalls, "we started working on a keyboard configuration that would adapt to the customer need".

Once installed, the new configuration didn't quite meet the needs of the paper company's lift truck drivers. "Based on how I use my vehicle," one female operator pointed out, "this setup isn't

going to work for me." This was a turning point for O'Brien, who realized that simply going with, "you need this bracket and this keyboard and we're done" wasn't going to work in this situation.

As it happens, the company's IT department was also unaware of these operator-level concerns. With about 100 vehicles in its fleet, that department could easily save about \$50,000 (or roughly \$500 per vehicle) once it incorporated the operator concerns into its buying decisions.

The company switched to using Gamber-Johnson's wiring harnesses, an all-in-one solution that requires no wiring, source fuses, or fuse banks. "We wound up saving the paper company a lot of time, labor, and expense, although the forklift operator was concerned that she had cheated me out of my commission," says O'Brien. "I told her that didn't matter, and all we want is for our customers to have the right solutions."

GETTING EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE

When choosing a turnkey vehicle mounting solution for a lift truck fleet, companies should ask themselves these four important questions:

1. EXACTLY WHAT DEVICE IS BEING MOUNTED?

Identifying your device ensures that you get the right dock or cradle to support your specific need and desired connectivity.

2. WHAT MODEL VEHICLE IS THE DEVICE BEING MOUNTED TO?

This is important because it allows you to select the best possible mounting solution for mounting and installation of your device.

3. WHAT IS THE VEHICLE'S VOLTAGE?

Knowing the voltage or power requirement of your lift vehicle ensures that you can get the appropriate power supply for your specific need.

4. WHAT ACCESSORIES NEED TO BE MOUNTED?

Cup holders, printers, light brackets, keyboards, power supplies or other peripherals may need to be mounted. Gamber-Johnson offers mounting solutions for many other devices in addition to tablets.

O'Brien says that this simple Q&A goes a long way in making sure companies get the best turnkey vehicle mounts for their specific applications. They also help IT departments more readily determine what type of equipment and technology they need to be buying for their fulfillment operations.

"It isn't necessarily sharing information with the operators that are using the equipment every day," O'Brien points out. "This is a great exercise for dialing in the complete solution and making sure everyone is on the same page."

ABOUT GAMBER-JOHNSON

Gamber-Johnson is a leading supplier of rugged mounting systems that safely secure mobile communication systems, computers and other electronic equipment in fleet vehicles, public safety vehicles, forklifts and other mobility applications. Their products are used by law enforcement, public safety, military, and warehouse fleets around the globe and are known for being rugged, reliable and responsive. Founded in 1954 Gamber-Johnson is located in Stevens Point, WI. To learn more about Gamber-Johnson visit gamberjohnson.com.





WWW.GAMBERJOHNSON.COM

3001 Borham Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481, U.S.A.
800.487.9220 | sales@gamberjohnson.com