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On the cover:

A Maeda MC405CRME about to replace C sections on an air Seychelles Boeing 767.



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The electric scissor lift celebrates 35 years as a mainstream product, we take a look at some of the pivotal developments in that time and how they have influenced the current product offerings.

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With only a few weeks left until this year's big show opens its doors, we take a look at who is exhibiting and what to expect. Although a number of major manufacturers have pulled out there is still plenty to see.



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more about some of the innovative ideas built into the four acre facility.

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c&a

comment



Forward planning

We have covered many niche products in recent months - trailer cranes, spider lifts and this month spider and compact cranes. Despite their differences and appealing to totally different customers they have a surprising amount in common. And more importantly, they are fairing better than most in the current climate.

Specialist, niche products are always a 'hard sell' at the outset, with the concept often having to be sold before focusing on the machine. So a good salesman rarely takes no for an answer. It has been heartening to report on companies within these specialist sectors that are expanding their sales and increasing profits, a rare event if you believe the national media's reporting of the economic crisis. The picture gets even better for rental companies, with limited availability and growing demand generating better than average hire rates and good residual values.

So what's the problem?

Those of us in the lifting/access industry know that such equipment is available and what it can do, But I think we often assume that potential end-users know it as well. WRONG.

A recent visit to a £200 million retail and residential site in the West Country being run by a major contractor highlighted the problem. Several concrete framed buildings were to be clad with window panels and glass, lifted into position by the site's tower cranes. Unfortunately the tower cranes were tied up on the essential task of making sure the frame was still going upwards - no time for windows.

With glazing required to carry out the internal work, a major problem was building. Fortunately a new operations manager had heard of mini cranes and you would think that Robert is your mother's brother. However when the building was designed, there was little thought given to moving equipment around. The layout was exceedingly restricted, with narrow access to each floor and once there, very little headroom in which to operate. Fortunately there was a spider crane small enough with the lifting capacity to carry out the work - but it was very, very close.

In a way this proves how the 'right' equipment can solve such 'impossible' problems. However, I think it highlights a more major issue with the construction industry - both designers and builders - not giving enough thought and planning to material handling up front, particularly with the peculiar shaped structures popular at the moment.

So don't just assume that other people know that such specialist equipment is available and what it can do. Most do not. This negative is also a positive as it shows just how much more potential there still is, even in today's gloomy climate.

Mark Darwin

Please mail, email or fax any comments you may have, to the editor, stating if we may publish them or not.

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