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lift your image

The Future of Construction equipment

The Construction Plant-hire Association's 2015 conference attracted a good number of delegates this year with the main topic The Future of Construction Plant Hire. Martin Frank, research engineer at Volvo Construction spoke on Intelligent Machines.



His company has taken a step back from further development to examine the benefits and true need of automation. The company has been testing fully autonomous machines, but has realised that there are benefits to be had from much less forward-looking technology including Smart View 360° cameras. He stressed however that it is vital the operator trusts both the benefits and the actual automation, stressing that they need to adapt to new ways of working, trusting intelligent functions to carry out some tasks.

Glyn Matthews, head of transformation at Speedy Services addressed **Technology Enabled Transformation - Improving Customer Experience**.

He pointed out that while manufacturers look at ways in



Glyn Matthews

which technology can help the operator, Speedy is focussing on ways on how new technology can transform its customer's experience. "We are all used to holding the latest technology in our hands with smartphones and tablets. Construction equipment users on site are familiar with the technology, yet in many cases hire companies are still using paper delivery notes and invoicing," he said. "Suddenly technology has become useable and we have a generation of customers who want online ordering and up to date information, but how many hire companies are delivering it? There is no point equipping a delivery driver with a huge tablet, capable of numerous functions when all a customer requires is delivery-sign-off, communication with the depot and back-office data transmission for instance."

He highlighted the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag and stressed how it is allowing Speedy to locate and track inventory and enable its ePod self-serve on-site rental store. It currently has 35 self-hire centres on UK sites - mainly in dockyards, power stations and on larger road contracts. The RFID tags are also helpful in the workshop, automatically bringing up machine history, service requirements and parts diagrams for the engineer, helping improve productivity.

Phil Ellis of Highways England spoke



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CPA

on Supply Chain Capacity and Capability.

"New technology is all well and good, but if we don't have the people and equipment to meet future demand, we risk missing much of its potential," he said. "Highways England has invested more than £1 million on a project to assess demands over the next five years and the industry's ability to meet those requirements. The industry has lost more than 400,000 people since 2007 and will need to recruit around 1.1 million new workers by 2020. The biggest skills shortage is at supervisor level. The industry needs to bring around 1,000 new apprentices a year into the road equipment sector, currently it takes on around 250 youngsters a year."

Sonya Hill of the West Midlands Police on Tackling the Skills Shortage.

The West Midlands Police is working with The Prince's Trust running a 12 week Prince's Trust Team Programme for 16 to 25 year olds who are unemployed, including those leaving care and young offenders. The trainees work on team working skills as well as fundraising for local community projects. The course involves two-week work placements followed by CV preparation and lessons in interview techniques. She asked that more companies sign up as business partners, and to offer work placements or employment. To demonstrate the success of the scheme, Hill was accompanied by Anthony Brown, who having been in trouble with the law, joined the programme. "I finished the course and went straight into work with Amey. It was the best thing that has ever happened to me," he said. See C&A November page 51 for more information.

Consultant Tim Watson spoke

on Preventing Unintentional Movement Of Equipment.

Unintentional movement can be caused by mistake if the operator pulls the wrong lever for example, or when loose clothing catches a control lever. "There are three important contributing factors - planning and management, machine design and operator competence." "A CPA study examined 11 accidents caused by unintentional movement of the machine. In four cases operator competence was a



Tim Watson

major factor, while 10 were down to lack of supervision, 11 involved poor planning and 10 had people within the machine's working range," said Watson. The CPA is developing guidance for operators, site managers and domestic users of equipment.

Sam Stacey, head of innovation at Skanska UK spoke on The Future of Construction.

Skanska is working on a range of projects to develop robotics for construction, using Oculus Rift virtual reality glasses and RFID technology. One of the biggest potential developments comes from temporary on-site production facilities. "We have come up with a method called flying factories. Once you get things off site you can start looking at automation," he said.