

Scaffolding for non-scaffolders

We all appreciate that one of the most expensive overheads in your business walks on two legs and arrives every day at 9am and leaves at 5pm. So, when a product comes along that suggests it can reduce your labour costs and provide a more flexible and safe way of working; it might be worth investigating. Scaffolding is not normally a subject I would get excited about; however, analysis of the data suggests this particular product requires deeper scrutiny.

I would have my knuckles wrapped by the manufacturer if I did not dispel the image conjured up by the word scaffolding. There are significant differences between scaffolding and the Lobo Work Platform System, the subject of this article. The differences are technical and commercial, hence the excitement.

Firstly, we are unlikely to see this product on a building site, so can dismiss the concept of traditional scaffolding with heavy tubes and planks of timber. Think more of an adult's version of Meccano that can be assembled without the need for any tools and is used by manufacturing companies for production and maintenance.

Enough about the product; let us look at the cost benefit that may save your company thousands of pounds. The manufacturer of the system has supplied me with countless examples of companies who use it in preference to expensive and inflexible scaffolding contractors. It needs to be said up front that the system is not the answer to every scaffolding requirement, but for any internal, facilities, plant or machinery applications it a strong contender.

CASE EXAMPLES

We all accept that the way data is presented can have different interpretations, but looking closely at the figures they do appear to stack up. There are well documented case studies that clearly show the cost saving advantages, revealing impressive results with only a minimal investment. The customers' studied are not all from the same sector and range from double-glazing installers to large manufacturing multinationals. Whilst they come from a diverse industrial

base, they all appear to have similar cost issues.

The company sights NASA, Boeing, Airbus, Miller

Brewing, Anheuser Busch and Sainsburys as only some of their best known customers. The actual use may differ due to the versatile nature of the product but the cost saving benefit applies to all. All these companies and many more besides, have to employ external scaffolding contractors. They have to comply with the working at height regulations, sometimes for reasonably simple maintenance tasks.

This can be expensive, as it is time consuming (labour costs) to erect and the scaffolding stays up for an agreed minimum rental time, which can be a week or longer, with overrun penalties. Lobo points out that their system can be assembled by anyone (once trained), quickly and easily and then packed away when not in use.

The additional benefit of having your own system is that it is available seven days a week and can be deployed whenever you want it more quickly than traditional scaffolding. The knock on effect could mean greater production uptime, with the obvious cost saving implications.

The case studies I looked at revealed a payback time of between one to nine months, with a capitol spend of between 10% and 40% of the existing scaffolding budget. This only applies to the first year as, once you have made the investment, it is plain sailing from the pay back date onwards.

REAL-LIFE COST SAVINGS

National Double Glazing Company (12 depots)

Annual spend on scaffolding services £624,000
Total purchase price of a system £65,000
Annual ongoing cost of the system £12,000
Annual Cost Saving £547,000

Chemical Plant

Annual spend on scaffolding services £35,000
Total purchase price of a system £12,000
Annual ongoing cost of the system £1,000
Annual Cost Saving £22,000

International Brewer

Annual spend on scaffolding services (1 site) £98,000
Total purchase price of a system £15,000
Annual ongoing cost of the system £1,000
Annual Cost Saving £82,000

There are ongoing, annual operational costs, but looking at the big picture these figures make impressive reading – cost savings alone could decide the issue: it might be that you are able to cut your scaffolding costs in half or even reduce it down to zero.

Big budget holders, for example oil and chemical companies, spend millions each year and may feel resigned to paying these huge sums year after year. Now perhaps there is an alternative, where the cost benefit analysis adds up and your reliance on scaffolding contractors can be reduced into the bargain! 🌟

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