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#### Tricked Out

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The next time you need a little pick me up, adjust the volume on your computer (up or down depending upon how disruptive you want to be to your coworkers) and check out [www.pimpmylift.ca](http://www.pimpmylift.ca). Inspired by MTV's Pimp My Ride, the website is the brainchild of the folks at MasterLift (Oakville, Ontario, [www.masterlift.com](http://www.masterlift.com)). It allows anyone to trick out their own lift truck with a custom paint job—leopard print and polka dots are a couple of my favorites. Then you can add flame decals to the side, neon ground glow, some custom rims and a spoiler, and the cheesecake (or beefcake) operator of your choice.

As entertaining as the website is, there's a real business strategy behind it, says Brian Brett, Masterlift's marketing manager. He says that lift truck dealers tend to

stress a fairly uniform set of product features, warranty terms and prices. But as supported by the growing emphasis on ergonomics (See "Design for Diversity"), operators are having more and more influence on equipment buying decisions.



"Our idea was to appeal to the operators on an emotional level," says Brett. "Our new trucks come with custom shifters, pedals, steering wheel, rims, and chrome dual exhaust. It really is the coolest looking piece of equipment you'll see in any warehouse."

It was too soon when I talked to Brett for him to gauge the success of Masterlift's pimpmylift marketing program. But as links have been posted elsewhere on the Internet in news stories and blogs, their website hits have exploded. Beyond the cool factor, some of the other benefits to customizing your lift trucks are the opportunity for corporate branding and reduced repair costs because the equipment tends to be treated better.

"Which do you think operators would rather ride for eight or ten hours a day: a beat up green forklift that has the manufacturer's name all over it, or one with custom accessories done up in corporate colors with the company logo on the side?" He asks. "And by extension, which would the business owners rather see their operators on? We think the answer's obvious. And by giving operators a truck they enjoy driving, we think our customers just might see a reduction in wear and tear to the machines, as well as to their facility."

In addition to unique accessories and ergonomic features, which are being driven by the changing demographics of U.S. factories and warehouses, it will be interesting to see how operators' growing influence on equipment buying decisions will impact future vehicle designs. And just as MTV's TV show spawned a number of similar programs, who knows what your local lift truck dealer might be willing to do for you. Imagine what a couple nitro boosters and a ground-thumping sound system could do for productivity.

*On a more personal note, this is my last issue as Editorial Director of Material Handling Management. I want to express my appreciation to the magazine's editorial and business staff for their excellent work over the past several years, as well as to everyone in the material handling industry who I've had the pleasure of getting to know at various conferences and industry meetings. I wish Clyde Witt all the best as he takes over editorial leadership of the magazine.*

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