

Not second best

Cedric Rigal argues the case for considering second-hand equipment over brand new installations every time

Less than 30 years ago most manufacturing companies would have purchased used machinery and put it through their own extensive workshops prior to installation in their factories. Today, people often put in new machinery without even considering second-hand. This is not always a wise move for a number of reasons.

- When put through a workshop a second-hand machine comes out at about half to a third of the cost of a new machine. Machines have often been made to last many years and even though a client has used them for a year or two, they still have much more than half their working life left in them.

- If you are developing new products and buy equipment for a project which may only last six months or so, you can be sure you'll write-off at

Second-hand machinery is a viable, cost-effective alternative to brand new equipment

least half or two thirds of the value of that machine against that project. However, if you were to start with a similar second-hand machine coming in at one third the price, you might be able to use it for these six months or so and lose only a small percentage of it, plus you are starting from one third of the figure.

- Another advantage is that a second-hand machine is usually available within just a couple of weeks from when it is decided to take it forward. A new machine can be on many months delivery, thus your project cannot get under way for a few months and you lose the advantage of being first on the market.

A lot of people might say that in taking a second-hand machine you may not get completely what you want. Good second-hand machinery merchants with workshop facilities usually have the ability to convert this machine to become 100% what you are looking for, so you can get a machine tailor-made in the same way as a new one.

If your trials are only for a short period, some merchants may be prepared to hire it to you. This, of course, means that there is no downside. With second-hand machinery, if you chose a machine and it proves not to be exactly what you wanted then you can easily change it for another machine without too much financial loss.

Financial managers may well be pleased for you to use second-hand machines when capital budgets start running over, as a second-hand machine can offer a major saving and keep you within the projected limits, thus achieving what you set out to do.

Today, works engineers find that accountants who want to tie up as little as possible on equipment sitting on shelves have often depleted their stores to the absolute bare minimum. If you then get two consecutive breakdowns you may find the one and only item being kept for a spare has been used on the first occasion

and the only place you'll get one immediately off the shelf is from a second-hand machinery merchant. So it's always worth keeping tabs on what is available.

This has recently become much easier. Websites such as www.rigal-bennett.com have large websites with detailed descriptions and photographs of current stock that are kept up to date on almost a daily basis. This can save companies travelling around to find what they need and makes up for the fact that the second-hand machinery merchant does not have a manufacturer's catalogue of every machine he has in stock.

When a potential purchaser comes to a second-hand merchant, he will offer you all of the machines in the range of what you are looking for, not being coloured by the machine he manufactures and rubbishing the competition. As far as he is concerned, today he has these machines, tomorrow he may have a completely different range so will recommend, without bias, which machine will do the sort of job required. This is particularly helpful for people who are not quite certain what type of machine they actually require.

Works Engineers will also find that used machinery merchants are a mine of information. Because they are dealing with dozens of different machines all the time, they have to know where to find information about them. If a company is having trouble locating a machine it wants, a used machinery merchant may well guide them in the right direction, thus enabling them to keep their machine running and your production going.

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