This is NOT Scaffolding: A Platform for the 21st Century

We all appreciate that one of the most expensive overheads in a business walks on two legs and arrives every day at 9 am and leaves at 5 pm. So, when a product comes along that suggests it can reduce labour costs and provide a more flexible and safe way of working; it might just be worth investigating.

Scaffolding is not normally a subject one would get excited about; however, analysis of the data suggests this 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. Unusually, the differences are both technical and commercial, hence the excitement.

Firstly, it is highly unlikely you'll see this product on a building site, so dismiss from your mind, the concept of traditional scaffolding, with its heavy tubes and planks of timber. Think more of an industrial version of Meccano or an Erector set that can be assembled, without the need for any tools and is used by companies to gain safe working at height access when performing both routine and unscheduled maintenance and production tasks.

Above Escalator Maintenance

Building Around Machinery

Enough about the product; let us look at the cost benefits, that LOBO claim, could 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 upfront that the system is not the answer to every access requirement but for any internal, facilities, plant or machinery applications it is a strong contender.

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Conformities
EU: BS EN1004:2004 BS 1139 parts 3 & 4,
USA: Complies to OSHA CFR 29 1926 450-454 & sub part L & codified under 29 CFR 1910.27(a).
Canada: CSA Z797-09 and 269.2 (M87 and -16)
Australia: AS/NZS 1576.1:2010 and AS/NZS 1576.3:2015 Tower

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.

LOBO sights Tesla, Amazon, NASA, Boeing, Airbus, EDF Energy, Miller Brewing, Anheuser Busch and Sainsbury's 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, must employ external scaffolding contractors. They must comply with the working at height regulations, sometimes for reasonably simple maintenance tasks.

This can be expensive, as it is time-consuming (in labour costs) to erect and the scaffolding must stay 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 immediately, when not in use.

The additional benefit of having your 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 obvious cost-saving implications.
The case studies I looked at revealed a payback time of between one and nine months, with capital spend of between 10% and 40% of the existing scaffolding budget. This cost only applies in the first year as, once you have invested, it is "free" to use whenever and wherever from then onwards.

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LOBO®
advanced platform system

REAL-LIFE COST SAVINGS

National Double-Glazing Company (12 depots)

Annual spend on scaffolding services	£624,000
Total purchase price of a LOBO 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*

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ISO 9001 CERTIFIED

LOBO®
advanced platform system

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*

Oil Refinery

Annual spend on scaffolding services (1 site)	£3,600,000
Total purchase price of a system – over 5 years	£ 318,000
The annual ongoing cost of the system – over 5 years	£ 5,000
Total 5 Year Cost Saving	*£3,528,000*

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There are ongoing, annual operational costs. Training is recommended and replacements, spares and additional components have to be factored in, but looking at the big picture these figures make impressive reading – cost savings alone could decide the issue: LOBO claim they might be 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, safety is not compromised and your reliance on scaffolding contractors can be reduced.

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