

How simulated forklift training is making a major social impact in Oklahoma City

THE CHALLENGE

Oklahoma City is a blue-collar town with national retailers like Hobby Lobby, Amazon distributors, and electric car companies. This creates a huge demand for warehousing jobs. Highly trained forklift operators are always top the list regarding skills these companies need.

As in most U.S. cities, the demand for trained forklift operators outstrips the supply. At any point in time, hundreds of positions are open. However, the trainers are often concerned by insurance risks and dangers that go with training inexperienced forklift operators, which leads to less supply of skilled forklift operators.

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma reached out to Forklift-Simulators when they were on the lookout for solutions to this issue.

ABOUT GOODWILL

Goodwill Industries International is a non-profit organization funded by a network of independent thrift stores, with a mission to remove barriers to employment for disadvantaged job seekers across the world.

The organization helps those who are homeless, on low/no income, have a criminal record or have recently been released from prison, by providing free career counseling, skills training, and résumé prep services. Every day, more than 300 people find a job with Goodwill's help.

THE SOLUTION

To address the skills shortage and create a path to employment for those who most need one, Goodwill acquired two Sit Down Counterbalance Simulators and two Stand Up Counterbalance Simulators from Forklift Simulator.

On simulators, Goodwill can train multiple participants at once in a controlled environment, with bespoke courses and zero safety risk. Training courses typically last 4 days with 2 to 3 hours of training per day, spread across several modules with lots of time for breaks.

For the trainees, the experience of training on a sim is like nothing they've done before. "Lots of people feel more comfortable than learning on a real forklift," Brian says. One of the primary reasons is that a simulator does not have any biases nor discriminate between people based on their past.

Goodwill is now in its third year of forklift training with the simulators - and has upskilled **more than 400 people**. Around half of those people were facing significant barriers to employment.

"It's much faster than training on real forklifts. You don't have to inspect or maintain the equipment, and one trainer can lead a whole group."

- Jacob Ruble, Training Specialist - Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma -

JACOB'S TESTIMONIAL

Lots of people feel more comfortable than learning on a real forklift. They tend to be apprehensive before they get on the simulator, but as soon as we give them a demo, we see their apprehension go down - they think 'This is really fun!' It's easier for them to concentrate because they feel more confident.

And it's much faster than training on real forklifts. You don't have to inspect or maintain the equipment, and one trainer can lead a whole group.



At Goodwill's training center

THE RESULTS

As Jacob puts it, a simulator opens the doors to more trainees than a live program ever could. Goodwill has also seen an increase in the number of women coming through the program - up **from 8 - 10% to 23% in 2024**.

And now, it's not only the most disadvantaged individuals Goodwill is training on the sim - it's warehouse distributors' own staff as well. "Some of them are actually starting to send their people over to us to get some of their initial training," Jacob says. "It's great development for them and a great tool to use."

CONCLUSIONS

Demand for forklift operators far outweighs any hesitation employers might have in hiring any particular individual. In fact, around **60 - 70%** of those on the Goodwill forklift training program go on to find gainful employment - **roughly 130 people per year**. This includes people who have been incarcerated and homeless. The program and the simulators have a real impact on people's lives.

That's a big social impact in a city where most training programs are for-profit, with unaffordable costs for many people.

Partnering with businesses benefits everyone: employers can access a large, highly-skilled pool of talent to support their growth and the local community has a clear path to professional development and a successful career. In Oklahoma City, then, lots of people now see a bright future ahead.



OPEN CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Participants found new employment through the program



UNBIASED EVALUATION

The simulator kept them engaged with an unbiased assessment



IMPACTFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Bringing potential employers and employees together for a positive impact