Material Handling: Forklift or Conveyor

> The right handling method depends on flow pattern, capacity, labor, and the cost of inflexibility.

A conveyor is a flow commitment. A forklift is flexible capacity. The operating pattern decides which tradeoff is worth paying for.

Define the decision before comparing options

Start with the operating constraint and the outcome that matters. Put volume, time, cost, and service assumptions in one place so the comparison answers a real decision rather than a vague preference.

Worked example from the live calculator

At 480 moves per day, five minutes per move, one 8-hour shift, and a 75% utilization target, the forklift calculator returns 40 required operator hours and a seven-truck fleet. The utilization assumption, not the arithmetic, is the decision lever.

Use the linked engines as a decision chain

These engines address different parts of the same choice: forklift-fleet-sizing, conveyor-capacity-planner, manual-vs-conveyor-decision. Run them in sequence, carrying the measured constraint and stated assumptions forward instead of re-entering convenient defaults.

Turn the result into an operating action

Use the recommended option as a trigger for a manager review. Confirm the input data, identify the condition that would flip the result, assign an owner, and revisit the choice when demand, cost, or capacity changes.

Key takeaway. A trustworthy operating decision is a chain of measured constraints and explicit tradeoffs, not a single isolated calculation.

Assumptions

- Use current local costs, capacities, and operating constraints before acting on a planning result.

Sources

- Platform calculation models and stated operating assumptions

Frequently asked questions

Does this replace local operating judgment?

No. It organizes the tradeoffs and shows which input can change the recommendation.

What inputs deserve the closest review?

The inputs with the largest cost, service, or capacity effect in your actual operation.

How often should this be revisited?

Whenever demand, labor cost, lead time, utilization, or the operating constraint changes materially.

Operations Decisions is a set of transparent decision engines for physical operations, not a guarantee of any outcome. This guide is educational.