DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Wheel loaders from KCMA have a long list of standard features and options. Here's how Kondakor Incorporated got the right model for their diverse applications by making the right decisions throughout the selection and buying process.

To say Kondakor Incorporated needed a wheel loader is too restrictive. Yes, the contractor needed a wheel loader, but they needed a wheel loader that would do more than V-pattern loading all day long. Much more.

To say Kondakor is an excavation contractor is also too restrictive. Yes, they do excavation, but they also do project management and site prep and retail site development and demolition. Need a residential subdivision? Kondakor offers everything from land clearing to stormwater systems to basements and footers. The wheel loader Kondakor was seeking would have to be as widely competent as the company itself. They found that ideal machine at Link-Belt Mid-Atlantic in the form of a KCM 80Z7.

Powered by a Cummins QSB6.7 engine rated at 193 horsepower, the Tier 4 Final-compliant 80Z7 is all the average wheel loader

customer could ever need. But Kondakor isn't average and the 80Z7 in stock trim was just a starting point. Company president Elek Kondakor worked with sales representative Chris Beal at Link-Belt Mid-Atlantic to spec the machine exactly as needed to meet the diverse applications where it would see duty.

The Kondakor fleet included another KCM loader, a 6727, but also loaders from Case and John Deere. What was the allure of KCM now? The Hitachi connection. "We used to run all Hitachi machines," says Elek. "They're very nice machines overall and for excavators, they're top-of-the-line. We still have one Hitachi; it starts and works every day."

Ch...ch...changes

One big change was the swapping out of stock loader arms for long-reach arms. Serial number 0001 shows this to be the first 80Z7 with long-reach arms. While stock arms are great for typical loading tasks, the long arms work better when loading demolition debris into the 14-foot trailers Kondakor uses for that purpose.

Because the long-reach arms moved the machine's center of gravity forward, a counterweight was added. The stock 4.2-cubic yard bucket has a pin so a 3.75-cubic yard bucket with quick-attach was fitted to the machine to take advantage of the heavy-duty, quick-connect system option spec'ed with the loader. Kondakor wanted to make sure it would be easy to switch between the bucket and the forks and Rockland log grapple that were purchased with the loader.

By Richard Ries

Relying on his experience and on conversations with Elek Kondakor, Chris Beal spec'ed out the machine with other features he knew would work well. Examples include specific tires and standard tilt-and-telescope steering wheel instead of joystick steering. Because the long-reach arms were in inventory, delivery time was only three weeks.

Kondakor did a few modifications after using the machine a bit. For example, some wiring at the front was relocated to be less vulnerable to damage in forestry and land-clearing operations. Why not just spec the machine with the optional KCM forestry package that includes wiring protection? That package has guards for the windows and those guards would impair visibility in other applications.

When a plan comes together

Spec'ing is one thing, but it is nothing without

ground truthing and that comes from the job site. It is on the site that the wisdom or the folly of a plan becomes apparent. One good example is Kondakor's use of the 80Z7 for clearing and processing brush and trees. "We use this machine to bring brush to an excavator which then feeds it into a chipper," says Elek. "The loader also pushes down the chip pile. We also use it to clear a site. It's faster than having to fight brush with an excavator or a dozer. And with the loader and the Rockland grapple we pick up brush and bring it to our load-out area. Pushing the brush with a dozer carries a lot of dirt, so using the loader and grapple is a much cleaner process."

Heat is a big issue in site-clearing applications, especially with Tier 4 Final machines because they tend to run hotter than their predecessors. Elek says while the company's dozers and excavators often overheat when doing site clearing, the 80Z7 never does. Elek credits the machine's robust cooling system and standard reversing fan.



Tier 4 Final machines equipped with diesel particulate filters have their own heat issues. A DPF must be cleaned periodically, a process known as regeneration. This involves temperatures of up to 600 degrees Fahrenheit. "In tight environments we had problems with other machines backing up against trees, especially pine trees, and catching them on fire," says Elek. The 80Z7 has no DPF. Its aftertreatment system uses a diesel oxidative catalyst (DOC) and selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to meet Tier 4 Final standards, neither of which produces the heat of a DPF during regeneration.

Kondakor uses the 80Z7 for load-out of palletized material, dumping dirt in front of a dozer when grading building pads to reduce wind rows, placing pipe where an excavator will lift it into place, laying down log mats, creating biomass from trees for Dominion Power, plus the usual loading of dump trucks and tractor trailers. Because of the machine's versatility, "if it's just sitting on one job we move it to the next; it gets used everywhere."



-Elek Kondakor

Advanced understanding

Like all Tier 4 Final wheel loaders from KCM, the 80Z7 is full of advanced design and technology. The name for the full range of advanced technology is IntelliTech. One example is SimulLoad, which coordinates actuation of lift and tilt while digging. Another is FlexShift, which varies transmission shift points to match conditions. Other features include efficient acceleration to modulate acceleration and eliminate fuel wasted from overacceleration, shockless declutch for smooth declutch function, and work modes to emphasize power or fuel efficiency.

Some IntelliTech features have user-settable function; others are fully automatic and work behind the scenes. Operators need to be trained to get the most out of these features and to understand their purposes. For example, IntelliDig balances rimpull with breakout force to optimize digging performance automatically. Elek says operators needed to be educated about the operation and benefits of IntelliDig. "This machine does not spin the tires in a pile," he says. "On other machines, whenever you go into a pile the tires are spinning, always spinning. It's not really a good thing, but from an operator's standpoint it looks like power." Once operators understood and accepted the function of IntelliDig, the misgivings went away. "We have a lot less tire wear and we absolutely do not have an issue filling the buckets. So the 80Z7 is doing the work, but we're not wasting tires."

Telemagic

KCM Global e-Service telematics are standard. Author and futurist Arthur C. Clark famously said that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," and Global e-Service does indeed seem like magic at times. Practical application of that magic takes some skill, however.

Kondakor monitors idle time, fuel use and other standard data sets as do most contractors with telematics-equipped machines. Data collection, reporting and display can be customized to meet the customer's needs. Elek says they have specific data they use to control O&O costs and some of those uses are quite innovative. "Replacing an air-conditioning system is expensive, and running the loader with the door open puts extra burden on the AC. If telematics tell us an operator is running the machine with the door open, we pull the AC fuse. With the excellent visibility of the 80Z7, there's no reason to run with the door open so we've found a way to break that bad habit."

Link-Belt Mid-Atlantic does all of Kondakor's service and uses information from telematics to plan PM and repair. "It's great," says Elek. "They call us up and tell us what needs to be done and ask, 'When's a convenient time for us to come out?" Beal says knowing what needs to be done and when it needs to be done enables their service technicians to show up with the right parts, supplies and tools to get the work completed quickly and efficiently the first time.

Getting the right loader for peak performance in all of Kondakor's many applications would seem to have required magic, too, but it was just diligent adherence to age-old recommendations. Know your business, work closely with a dealer you trust, and maintain that relationship after the machine is delivered so that you can refine features and services to get the most out of your new loader.