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# MARINE INDUSTRY NEWS

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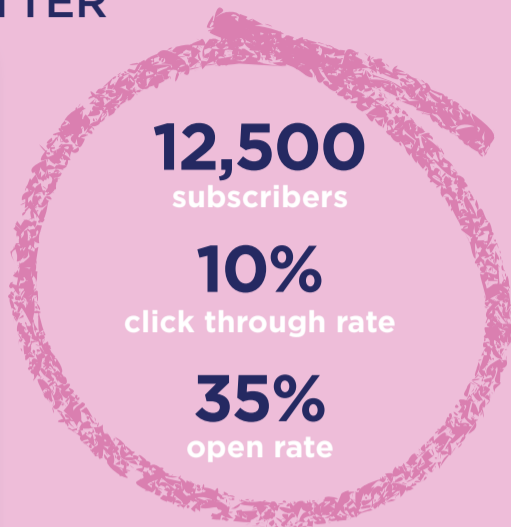
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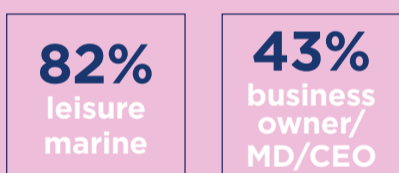
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In this issue of *Marine Industry News* magazine we take a look at how leisure marine companies are serving those newer to the boating sector. From functional safety products, which cater to new niches emerging from the rise in on-water activities (page 17), to the growth and rapid expansion of updated marinas from Suntex in the US (page 7).

The Greenline management team discusses how more environmentally conscious - and often younger - clients are increasingly engaged with hybrid and electric boating on page 10. The Slovenian boatbuilder also reflects on the decision to focus on larger craft and what can be gleaned from the EV market.

New chairperson of Global Marine Business Association, Veda Pretorius, asks how the marine industry can successfully compete with other sectors in attracting the next generation of workers on page 14. We also have interviews with New Zealand's Prospeed and electric pioneer ePropulsion about changes in their markets and how to pivot internally.

With more products entering the market, this boat show season promises to be another exciting chapter for the marine sector.

*Chantal*

# TOP OF THE CROP

**In 2021, Topper International faced a challenge when the deck mould used in the manufacture of its flagship Topper dinghy was found to have cracked, bringing production to a halt**



Until the point the Topper deck mould cracked, production had been continuous for nearly 40 years. Topper dinghies numbered almost 50,000 and were raced across five continents, with all boats having been manufactured from what were, certainly for a time, the world's largest injection moulds.

These tools and the process had revolutionised boat production when it was first set up in 1976 – their original lifespan was predicted to be around 10,000 Toppers.

**A boating revolution**

Taking just eight minutes to produce a hull and a deck using twinned kirksite moulds, the 3.4 metre long, 1600 tonne machines produced matched parts, accurate to within 0.020in, using a series of hot and cold 'runners' to aid material flow and with injection speed carefully monitored to ensure uniformity.

Hull and deck were self-coloured, UV stable and required no finishing or painting, eliminating delays associated with conventional boat manufacture. Using an electrical fusion technique (later patented) to seal the hull and deck together, the full assembly and fit out process took less than three hours. For the

first time, boats could be sold from stock – ideal for export.

The process allowed boats to be made from polypropylene, meaning they were lighter and significantly more robust than the original glass fibre model (known as the OD11, which had been developed from an original wooden prototype, in 1969).

Maurice Robin, a pioneer in new technology for use in the automotive industry, had proposed the concept to Topper designer Ian Proctor at the 1973 London International Boat Show. His company, Rolinx (a subsidiary of ICI), was a leader in the injection moulding industry.

Proctor – a keen innovator as well as Yachtsman of the Year and a Royal Designer for Industry – immediately saw the potential. Funding was sought from the National Enterprise Board, ICI and Guinness, with the machine costing £1.5m in today's terms. Manufacture took place at Dunhill Boats, with the Topper credited at the time as the largest injection moulded product in the world.

Not only did the boat win multiple

design awards, including the 1977 Design Council Design Award, but it led to a worldwide proliferation of the class that was unprecedented in the dinghy market.

Production remained at Dunhill Boats until the mid-1980s when it was taken over by Topper International Ltd and manufacture switched to Germany. The class received 'international' status from World Sailing in 1994 and is also an RYA Junior Pathway class. It has been the proving ground for many Olympic sailors.

In 2012 the Topper was further celebrated when it was displayed in the V&A museum in London and also in the Science Museum, in a dual celebration of British design and innovation.

**Discovering a new, modern manufacture solution**

Today, with huge investment from Topper International and working in close consultation with Ian Proctor Designs (the licensor) and Roger Proctor, the popular recreational and racing class has been granted a bright future.

With the cost of repair to the original moulds estimated at



Words: Georgie Corlett-Pitt

**In 2012, the Topper was displayed in the V&A museum in London and the Science Museum, in a celebration of British design and innovation**

£1.5-2m, and with pressure to increase production volume from the moulding factory, Topper International looked to alternative manufacturers; however, the size of the mould limited options.

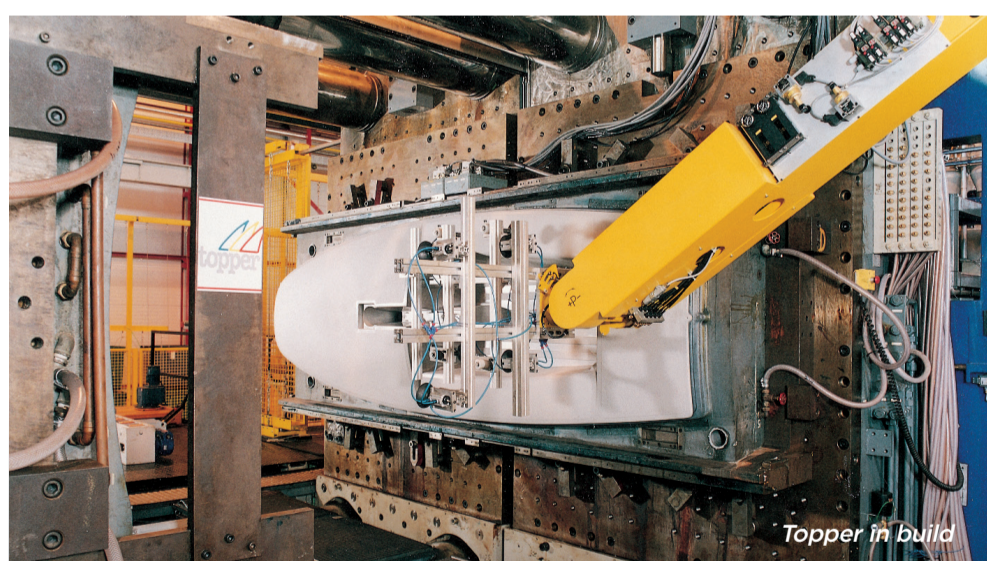
Further alternatives included replacing part of the cracked mould, manufacturing in glass fibre or three-part moulding in polypropylene, but these were dismissed for practical and sustainability reasons. Instead, a more modern method of rota moulded polyethylene was chosen, drawing on Topper International's 25 years of expertise in manufacturing their Topaz range of dinghies and catamarans and bringing the boat in line with most contemporary dinghy designs.

Manufactured in one mould, with hull and deck produced as one sealed unit, the rota moulded Topper is made using a three-layer



Ensuring the original design remained unaltered to preserve the boat's one-design status was crucial

Topper sailing class



Topper in build



John Dunhill (left) and Maurice Robbins (middle)

TRILAM sandwich in a process unique to Topper International.

The multiaxial moulding process is computer controlled to ensure consistent distribution of sugar-fine powder to form the layers; foaming agent is added to the central layer which creates a dense 'honeycomb' core to ensure rigidity of the hull. A specialist cooling jig regulates shrinkage and ensures uniformity of weight.

Ensuring the original design and performance remained unaltered to preserve the boat's one-design status was crucial; Topper says that extensive on-water testing, at

both inland and at coastal venues, proves this has been achieved.

As part of this, the Topper's original soft leach sail and anodised two-part rig have been retained. Brass fittings incorporated into the hull moulding have increased strength, while minor adjustments to the self-bailer positioning and cockpit ergonomics have increased sailor comfort; hatches have been included to aid the production process and can be converted for storage of small items.

On-demand production and fit out of the new boat now takes place

wholly within the UK, streamlining logistics. Although the overall production process is longer, increased efficiencies mean that the builder says the cost of the new process has not been passed onto the consumer.

**Futureproofing a classic**

The new rota moulded Topper was launched at the RYA Dinghy and Watersports Show in March 2023 with a distinctive grey colourway giving a futureproof aesthetic.

The update has been approved by World Sailing and class associations worldwide, and demand for the new boat has

come from clubs, export dealers and individuals.

In July 2023, the Topper World Championships was held at the Royal Cork Yacht Club, Ireland. Of the 261 boats competing approximately 80 were the new Topper rota moulded model.

Roger Proctor says his father would have approved of the move to a modern production method, and he applauds "the investment made by Topper International to secure the future of the much-loved class for both racing and recreational sailors for generations to come." ■

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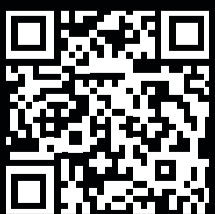
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# DOCK REPORT



Suntex Marina, Miami Beach



## Suntex Marina's CEO Bryan Redmond discusses the company's growth and acquisitions

Suntex Marinas has ramped up its acquisition strategy over recent years. In the past 24 months, the US marina firm has acquired 27 owned marinas and added 16 additional managed marinas.

With an equal mix of coastal saltwater locations and inland freshwater marinas, Suntex now has 74 owned and managed marinas across 15 states in the US, including Bahia Mar Yachting Center in Fort Lauderdale and Miami Beach Marina. The company expects to have 98 marinas under operation by the end of 2023.

Co-founder and chief executive officer at Suntex, Bryan Redmond, says the marina industry is still very fragmented, with marinas in the US often needing vital funds and investment to reinvigorate the business.

"Marinas are typically owned and operated by an individual family

or a municipality," he says. "Most marinas were originally built in the 60s and 70s, are outdated, and need capital infusion. Many of these owners realise they don't have the capital resources to reinvest in the marinas to bring them up to consumer expectations today, and that it is time to sell and extract the value before their income streams fully deteriorate. We understand that marina sellers want to sell to someone they can trust to protect their legacy. They have spent years building their marinas.

"With every acquisition our job is to build on that legacy, to take care of their people, their teams, their customers, and their reputation in the community. Our track record of doing what we say and letting them talk to other sellers that have sold to us is the most important factor to our success."

In addition, Redmond says the

municipalities often like the idea of partnering with Suntex, typically through a long-term lease structure of 50 to 99 years. "We commit to reinvesting in the marina to bring it to today's standards," he adds.

Discussing the company's fast-paced acquisition strategy, Redmond says: "Suntex growth is driven by same-store revenue growth, marina repositioning and improvements, introduction of



Suntex Marina, York River Yacht Haven

**“Most marinas were originally built in the 60s and 70s, are outdated, and need capital infusion.”**

Bryan Redmond, CEO, Suntex

new products to marinas, and by acquisition. We have a scalable and institutionalised operating platform, run by a seasoned management and operating team with extensive experience in marina operations and investments, and a successful track record of integrating and repositioning our acquisitions.”

**Mergers and markets**

In February 2022, Suntex Marina acquired Westrec Marinas, in a transaction rumoured to be valued at \$400 million, according to the *Wall St Journal*. The combined position is now valued at \$2.5 billion, forming the second largest marina group in the US, behind Safe Harbor.

Speaking of the merger, Redmond says: “We believe the real benefit of consolidation will be felt by the boating customer. If we look at the hotel industry as an example, 50 years ago the hospitality experience at hotels was inconsistent at best as local and regional providers

dominated the management space. It wasn’t until large hospitality entities consolidated process, technology, and experience that true hotel brands came into existence on a wider scale.

“Consumers then could ‘count on’ a particular experience based on brand, and hotel companies worked hard at making sure their brand meant something. We intend to do the same thing with the Suntex brand. While our physical amenities may be different marina to marina, the feeling of community you experience at a Suntex Marina will always remain the same.”

Redmond says the company is focusing on building the premier network of marinas across the US and currently has no plans for growth outside of the US. In terms of continuing opportunities, Redmond says: “Historically, marinas have been operated as a self-storage facility for boats. We believe the biggest opportunity for Suntex is to disrupt the industry and grow the base of boaters and career opportunities in the marina industry.”

According to Suntex, to grow the base of boaters, each Suntex

marina is designed to be more than just a place to berth a boat.

“We operate as a community where boat owners and enthusiasts can relax and hang out with friends and family,” Redmond says. “In addition, Suntex is the only marina company that owns boat rental and boat club businesses at scale, catering not only to boat owners but also creating different levels of water access to grow new boat owners. Combining the rental and club businesses with our slips and storage, we can fulfil what we call the ‘circle of boating’.

“We make it easy for anyone to get on the water to experience boating through a boat rental, provide a boat club option to those who want to experience a boating lifestyle but aren’t ready to own a vessel, and offer boat slips and storage for those who own a boat. Through these integrated businesses, we can fully control the experience all around the circle, making it more natural to grow the boating community,” explains Redmond.

Suntex has partnered with Boatsetter to bring crewed boat rentals to its portfolio.

**“Suntex owns boat rental and boat club businesses at scale, catering not only to boat owners but also creating different levels of water access to grow new boat owners.”**

Bryan Redmond, CEO, Suntex

**Industry standards**

In recent years, Suntex has witnessed a greater demand for additional amenities, especially those that provide connections between the marina members, including Wi-Fi, social spaces, and community events. In addition, there has been a rise in technological advances both in the marina and onboard boats.

On the issue of electric boating, Redmond is watching for an uptick. “If you look at the electrification of the auto industry, it has been driven by the manufacturers and infrastructure has followed the pace of electric car sales. The reality is that electric cars sales didn’t gain traction until there was a product that matched or exceeded the performance of the internal combustion engine. We believe the



Suntex Marina, Cross Timbers



Suntex Marina, Jack



Suntex Marina, State Dock



Suntex Marina, Liberty Landing





Suntex Marina, Lake Lanier

**“If we look at the hotel industry as an example, 50 years ago the hospitality experience at hotels was inconsistent at best... It wasn't until large hospitality entities consolidated process, technology, and experience that true hotel brands came into existence on a wider scale.”**

Bryan Redmond, CEO, Suntex

same will happen in the boating industry. When that happens, we'll be ready with the infrastructure to support this new dynamic,” he says.

With regard to legislative support, recreation in general needs to be

on the same plane as other land management priorities.

“Marinas make large investments to bring recreation to local waters, giving access to and enhancing these public assets, and creating an economic impact to the local [regions]. Improvements in areas like providing for longer leases would incent greater investment, bringing more lifestyle and economic benefits to the surrounding communities.”

To help facilitate further career opportunities, Suntex has partnered with the Dedman College of Hospitality at Florida State University and the Association for Marina Industries in creating a college curriculum to establish a hospitality driven

management career path in the marina industry. “This, combined with our internships and manager-in-training programmes, allows students to immediately get access to all the different aspects of running a marina business,” Redmond says.

Moving forward, Redmond says the company would welcome more industry wide KPIs surrounding occupancy, slip rates, retention, etc. and increased knowledge sharing.

“Because of the fractured nature of the marina industry, there is no such thing as a ‘star report’ for marinas. Information remains highly guarded and localised, which hinders everyone’s ability to optimise their position within each market,” Redmond concludes. ■

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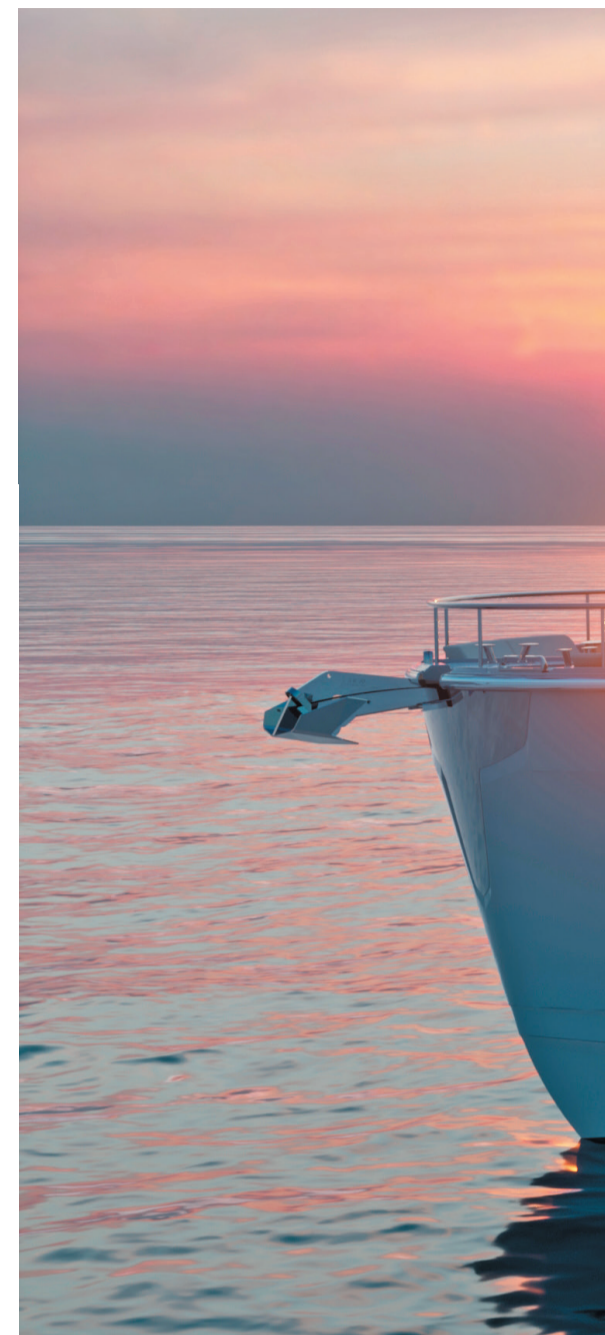
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Suntex Marina, Bahia Mar

# On the LINE

## Boatbuilder Greenline talks bigger boats and learning from the EV market



In 2008 Slovenian boatbuilder Greenline launched the Greenline 33, the first production hybrid boat. The 33ft family cruiser went on to win over 30 awards – including International Boat of the Year – and Greenline sold almost 500 units in more than 50 countries worldwide.

Since then, Greenline has launched a range of larger boats – the 58 Fly will make its world debut at Cannes Yachting Festival – and Greenline remains the only full range of yachts to be offered in hybrid and electric.

In many ways, 2023/4 signals a period of transition for the brand and the Greenline 33 has been discontinued to make way for more large and mid size models. Luca Raumland, chief sales and marketing officer, says: “Our plan to introduce more models in the mid to larger size range is in answer to customer demand. We acknowledge that many boaters are seeking increased space, higher comfort, and additional features. By expanding our offerings, we’re ensuring that these boaters can find what they need within our range.”

With the demand for larger yachts, the builder is expanding production capacity, looking for a facility with access to the water. The firm has been searching for a coastal location site and identified

potential sites in both Slovenia and Croatia. The project will start within the next 12 months.

### Joining the hybrid conversation

While the company does not divulge the current split between hybrid and ICE boats it delivers, the team says there has been a positive shift towards the green side and in 2021 the builder reported that ‘every second yacht leaving the shipyard is equipped with hybrid propulsion’.

Matjaz Grm, Greenline CEO, says: “It’s fair to say there’s a noticeable shift towards hybrid/ electric boating. As consumer awareness and confidence in green technology rises, we’ve seen a considerable change in the order book mix, with a growing number of customers opting for hybrid and electric models.”

Grm continues: “People are becoming more conscious of their impact on the environment and seek solutions that align with their values. This increasing awareness creates favourable conditions for growth and adoption of sustainable boating practices.”

Raumland says raised awareness of the environmental impact of leisure marine is opening up the conversation. “We are witnessing a rising trend in the nautical industry with the emergence of numerous startups introducing electric day

runners, wakeboard boats, and similar offerings,” says Raumland.

“The entry of more brands into the realm of alternative propulsion serves as a positive development for us,” Raumland continues. “Previously, we faced the challenge of promoting our beliefs and ideas on our own, but now we have allies. The shift towards alternative propulsion is gaining momentum and we are excited about the possibilities for faster progress in alternative propulsion systems. Interestingly, the recent introduction of a new hybrid system by Beneteau Group and Volvo has garnered attention, although it has stated that it won’t be available in the market until 2025.”

### Electric car afterglow

Vladimir Zinchenko, Greenline owner and advisory board member, notes that the influence of the electric vehicle market is also important in building customer adoption: “As hybrid propulsion becomes more of a norm in the automotive industry, we see that more customers are choosing hybrid for their leisure boats too. Trust in this propulsion system is growing.

The team at Greenline believes the marine industry has much to learn from the automotive industry’s vast investment in electrification. Innovations in battery efficiency

**“The entry of more brands into the realm of alternative propulsion serves as a positive development for us. Previously, we faced the challenge of promoting our beliefs and ideas on our own, but now we have allies.”**

Luca Raumland, chief sales & marketing officer, Greenline

and technology could also have a significant impact on the marine sector and a positive trickle-down. Zinchenko adds: “It’s essential to learn from the automotive industry’s experiences in consumer education, dealer training, and infrastructure development. The adoption of electric and hybrid propulsion systems in boating is gaining momentum, but the current rate of infrastructural development in marinas and service centres needs to keep up. Investments in high-speed charging infrastructure are crucial to meet this increasing demand and provide efficient and convenient solutions for our customers.”

### Lithium-ion debate

While the hybrid and zero emission movement is gaining momentum, some in the industry have raised issues with the processes involved in battery production, namely whether they’re as harmful to the



The adoption of electric and hybrid propulsion systems in boating is gaining momentum, but the current rate of infrastructural development in marinas and service centres needs to keep up.

Vladimir Zinchenko, Greenline owner

Greenline 58 Fly



Greenline factory in Slovenia



Greenline boat in build

environment as the fossil fuels they seek to replace. Raumland counters that consumers need to think of the long-term benefits.

“While it’s true that lithium-ion battery production has an environmental footprint, it’s important to consider the entire life cycle of the product,” says Raumland. “For example, an electric car with limited usage may take several years to offset the initial CO2 impact from battery production. On the other hand, a yacht that frequently relies on diesel generators and engines can significantly reduce its CO2 emissions within the first year by incorporating batteries for domestic appliances and partial propulsion.”

**“While it’s true that lithium-ion battery production has an environmental footprint, it’s important to consider the entire life cycle of the product...”**

Luca Raumland, chief sales & marketing officer, Greenline

Greenline says the environmental impact of batteries versus fossil fuels depends on the specific use case. Additionally, Raumland points to advancements being made in battery technology and production efficiency, which are “expected to decrease emissions associated with lithium-ion battery production over time.”

**Supply, costs and labour**

There is currently a significant premium for customers to pay for a hybrid boat and motivating consumers to buy into the agenda is a challenge for all brands. Like the EV market, Greenline is taking a ‘way of life’ approach.

“Our primary selling point is not just the hybrid technology but the overall value proposition we offer,” says Raumland. “Greenline Yachts are designed for comfort, beauty, and spaciousness. While the hybrid aspect may come at a premium, we believe the longer-term benefits such as reduced fuel costs, lower maintenance, and the environmental impact make it a worthy investment. The appeal of our yachts extends beyond just the

technology; it’s about a complete, more sustainable, and comfortable boating experience.”

Zinchenko adds: “It is clear that the desire for hybrid/electric boating is on the rise globally. Many of our customers are increasingly conscious about the environment and are seeking more sustainable alternatives.”

Reflecting the wider marine industry, supply chain issues for Greenline have subsided in 2023. Grm explains that the supply chain situation has largely stabilised, with most components readily available. However, there are still occasional challenges with specific parts that rely on the supply of semiconductor chips.



Greenline 39



Greenline 58 Fly



From l-r: Luca Raumland, Matjaz Grm, Vladimir Zinchenko

“While these instances can pose minor hurdles, they do not significantly impact overall production. The primary challenge in manufacturing lies in managing labour costs and addressing human resource issues,” says Grm.

“Rising inflation and increasing salaries have led to a notable increase in labour expenses,” he says. “Moreover, sourcing an adequate labour force has become a more substantial obstacle. The focus now is on finding skilled workers and managing the associated costs, which continue to be significant concerns in the manufacturing process.”

**New challenges**

Zinchenko highlights the development of Greenline’s 6G hybrid system as its most significant technological leap forward in recent years. “We’re incredibly excited about our

forthcoming models. The 6G hybrid advanced system offers boaters more possibilities than any other system currently available in the market for boats of this kind.”

While interest is positive, range anxiety still plays a part in the consumer transition to eco boating. “While our products are at the forefront of the hybrid/electric propulsion movement,” says Grm. “The range expectation for purely electric power can sometimes be perceived as a limitation. However, we see this as a challenge rather than a constraint. With the rapid advancements in battery technology and solar panel efficiency, we believe that the future is bright for enhanced range in electric and hybrid boats.”

As with the majority of manufacturers, more attention is also turning to reducing the environmental impact on the

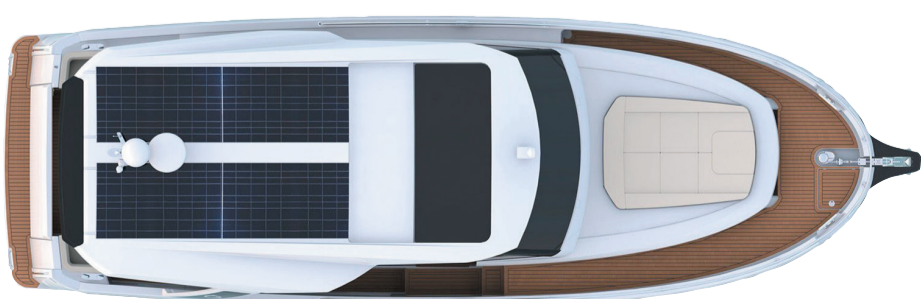
manufacturing side of the business, as much as the end products. Raumland explains: “Of course, our yachts are still made of plastic and production in a sustainable way is hard to achieve in such a small company. We recycle foam core and foam structure and make it into insulation for construction. While creating our furniture we recycle the sawdust into heating pallets and give them to the local kindergarten. We are also doing tests with bio-resin and flex fibres to hopefully roll out in 2024.”

Greenline no longer prints brochures and has opted to digitalise a lot of owner documents. The boatbuilder is also in the process of calculating its carbon footprint and plans to set new goals of how to minimise this further.

When Greenline entered the boatbuilding sector, it was

one of the few boatbuilders at the time spearheading hybrid technology. Well over a decade later, Zinchenko reflects on the market evolution and the work left to do: “If there’s one thing we’d like to change in the marine industry, it’s the rate of adoption of sustainable technologies,” he says. “The boating industry has a responsibility towards environmental conservation. Thus, we advocate for quicker adoption of sustainable practices that reduce environmental impact.

“This change should also include an accelerated incorporation of innovations from the automotive sector, particularly those relating to electric and hybrid technology. By fostering a closer collaboration with the automotive industry, the boating sector could benefit from rapid advances and contribute more effectively to a sustainable future.” ■





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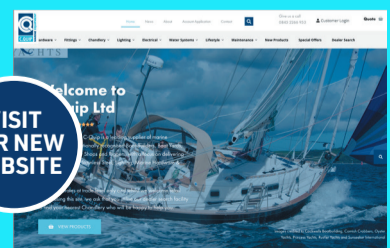
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# Targeting Gen Z



Veda Pretorius, new chair of the GMBA, explores how we can make the recreational marine industry an attractive career choice

The recreational marine industry has seen fairly consistent growth over the past four years, but this has also put pressure on an industry already struggling to meet the demand for skilled labour. At Global Marine Business Association (GMBA), we have received feedback from customers worldwide, spanning countries including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Europe, and the USA facing this skilled labour shortage. It is the most pressing issue facing our industry, and is impacting all sectors from superyachts and the marina industry to small craft construction. It is therefore paramount the industry addresses the market challenge and appeals to young people.

It's a common refrain to hear previous generations say, "When I was young..." and talk about the hardships they faced. And to some extent, they're right. Each generation faces its own significant challenges. For earlier generations in our industry, it can be difficult to keep up with the rapid pace of change and the adoption of new technologies but to attract and retain talent in the marine sector, we must understand and respect the culture and expectations of Gen Z.

Gen Z is known for being tech-savvy and desiring seamless digital experiences. To appeal to them, the marine industry must leverage digital recruitment platforms and social media and showcase the

innovative and technologically advanced aspects of the marine industry. We should also highlight how technology is transforming the sector. By demonstrating the advancements in shipbuilding, logistics, sustainability and electrification, we can showcase the true dynamism of the marine sector.

Another important aspect for Gen Z is finding purpose-driven work that aligns with their values and contributes to a larger cause. Companies need to address their ethics, sustainability measures and demonstrate where they are part of the environmental and wider conversation. Companies can highlight their impact on environmental sustainability, conservation efforts, and global trade. By showcasing initiatives like green shipping practices, renewable energy integration, and efforts to reduce carbon emissions, we can demonstrate the industry's commitment to making a positive difference.

As continuous learning and growth are key for Gen Z candidates, promoting the opportunities for skills development, professional certifications, and career advancement within the marine sector will help garner attention.

Sharing success stories of young professionals who have rapidly advanced their careers through mentorship programmes can help inspire and motivate others. Companies including Sunseeker



Credit: Unsplash

UK and Riviera have excelled in their approach to attracting young talent. Sunseeker's apprenticeship programme and Riviera's collaboration with schools to generate interest in the industry before graduation serve as excellent models. Similarly, in South Africa, where boatbuilding training facilities are limited, companies including Robertson and Caine, Southern Wind Shipyards and Two Oceans Marine have all implemented in-house training programmes.

The marine sector needs to innovate, not just in design and sustainability, but also in human resources. One potential idea for the marine manufacturing sector is the creation of a global 'boatbuilding passport'. Since the boating industry is international, under this concept young people could have the opportunity to work in different countries, advancing their careers while experiencing different cultures.



From l-r: GMBA's Mary Anne Edwards, Veda Pretorius

The structured programme could help address the boatbuilding skills shortage globally and be driven by marine industry associations and influential firms with the ability to lobby governments effectively.

Flexibility and work-life balance are also highly valued by Gen Z. While the marine industry, especially just-in-time manufacturing, can be demanding and time-sensitive, we can highlight aspects like remote work options, flexible scheduling, and employee wellness programmes. Spending time on a yacht you worked on, even if it is only for sea trials, is also hugely satisfying and also helps make all the long hours worthwhile.

By implementing new strategies and considering innovative approaches, we can make the recreational marine industry an appealing career choice for Gen Z and address the labour shortage, ensuring a bright future for the industry across the board. ■



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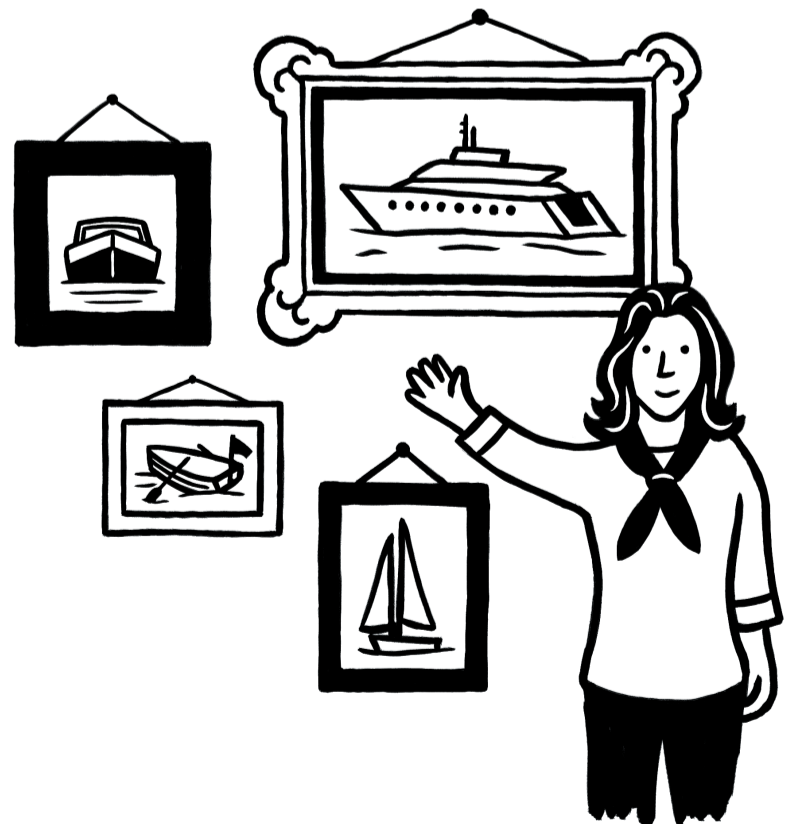


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Martin Keruzore/Volvo Ocean Race

# PORTIN A STORM

**From the Volvo Ocean Race to SailGP, why keeping production in-house and a “no add-on” ethos has been the key for 50-plus years of Spinlock safety equipment**

In a rapidly evolving safety product market in the marine industry, companies such as Spinlock are at the forefront of innovation and customer-centric design. The UK-headquartered marine safety company has two sites in Cowes, Isle of Wight, where all production is done in-house and the firm boasts an impressive roll call of partnerships spanning its 50-plus year tenure, including work with Clipper Round the World Race and America’s Cup team INEOS Britannia.

James Hall, marketing and sales manager at Spinlock, explains more about the company methodology: “We have a firm commitment to internal manufacturing and – as you’d expect – a strong emphasis on quality and testing. Spinlock prides itself on avoiding ‘add-ons’ and continually strives to design

quality integrated solutions in collaboration with other industry players.

By maintaining control over the entire manufacturing process from design to delivery, Spinlock ensures seamless inclusion and enhances overall safety in the marine environment. “While progress has been made in quality and testing across the marine safety industry, some companies still rely on third-party factories for production,” Hall explains. “Manufacturing everything in-house provides Spinlock with complete control over every aspect of the products, securing consistent quality and adherence to strict procurement demands.”

While the majority of the team is based in Cowes, UK, Spinlock also has a small team based in

the US. The company distributes internationally and by partnering with reputable component suppliers, Spinlock can maintain an impressive three-day lead time for every product order, regardless of its size.

Hall says this level of control, coupled with comprehensive tracking and assembly processes, allows the company to market and sell its products with confidence, “knowing they are ready for action”.

#### **New customer bases**

Regarding legislation in the marine safety market, Hall suggests that the current level of control over design, production and testing is appropriate. “User education, coupled with choices and best practices, can eliminate the need for further legislation or control. An example of this is the use of

bike helmets, where most people choose to wear them voluntarily without it being mandatory.”

The Spinlock team has noted a shift in consumer behaviour in recent years, with users preferring to choose their own safety equipment rather than relying solely on what is provided onboard. Post-covid, the company also witnessed an increase in new customers entering the leisure marine market, engaging in activities such as sailing, motorboating, kayaking, and stand up paddleboarding (SUP).

Hall says this expanding customer base presents exciting prospects for the marine safety product industry and the launch of the Spinlock’s Alto flotation device was in answer to the increased demand from this part of the sector.

The Alto is an inflatable flotation device worn around the waist, designed with watersports users in mind. When designing it, Spinlock recognised a gap in the market for a simple flotation device that would appeal to watersports users because it was compact and easy to use, particularly benefiting participants in activities like SUP and fishing.

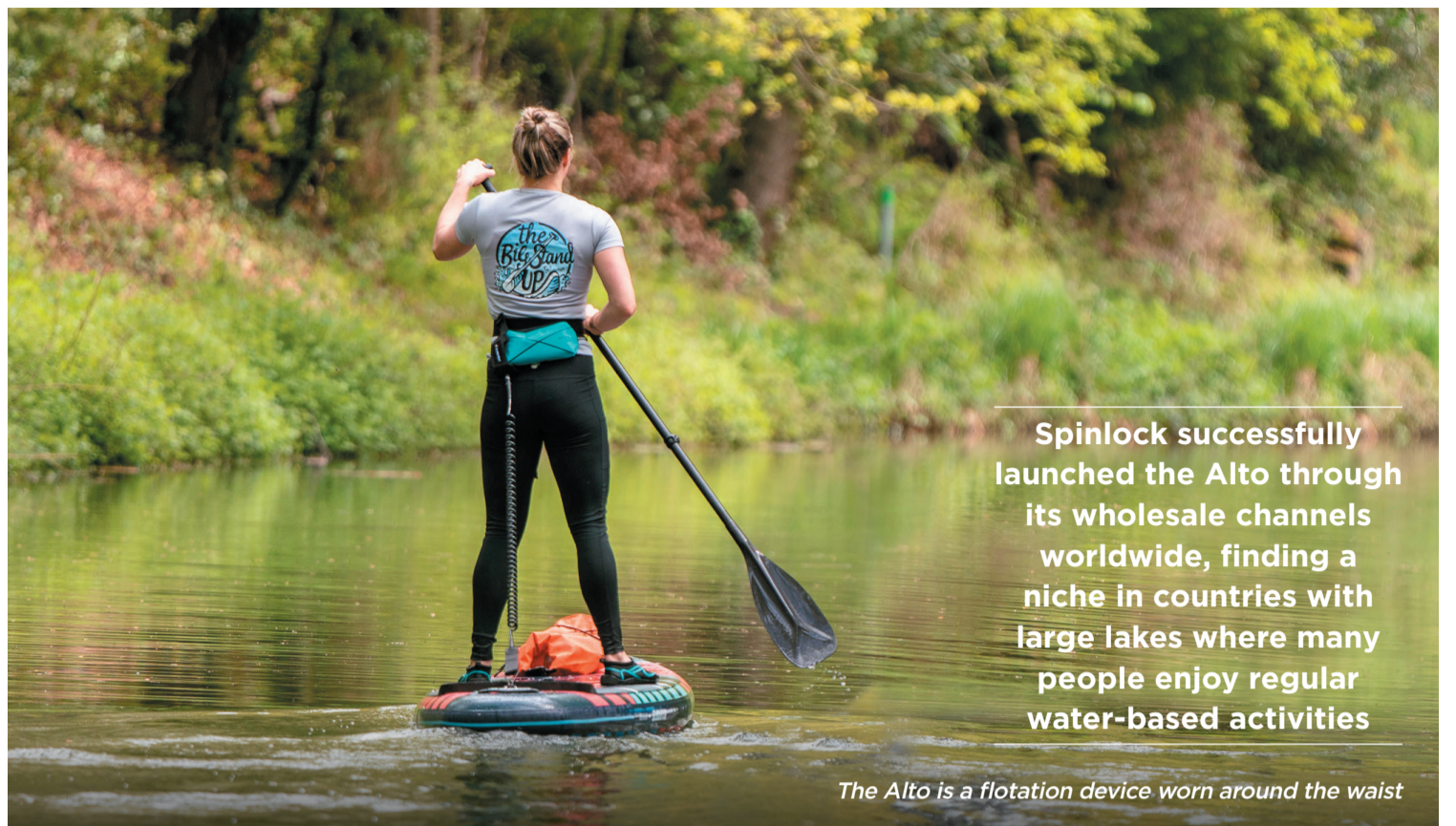
“The device needed to be inconspicuous, avoiding any indication that the wearer was inexperienced or not part of the scene,” says Hall. At the time, a large international retailer expressed interest and the ensuing collaboration became Spinlock’s launch partner for the Alto, paving the way for volume production. Simultaneously, Spinlock successfully launched the Alto through its wholesale channels worldwide, finding a niche in countries with large lakes where many people enjoy regular water-based activities.

Now, a few years later, Spinlock is introducing its USA Coastguard (USCG) model to meet growing demand in the US. “The journey of creating the Alto involved identifying the market demand, partnering with a retail giant, and filling the gap with a design that met specific user needs while remaining certified to relevant standards,” says Hall.

**Power of partnerships**  
Spinlock engages in a range of partnerships at any given time, which deliver benefits across multiple aspects of its business. These partnerships vary from large commitments to events and teams, such as Clipper Round the World Race, INEOS Britannia, and SailGP, to individual influencer-led support with teams and individuals, with some partnerships having lasted for over 20 years.

“Partnerships provide the organisation with valuable feedback on new products, introductions to the wider market, development of existing products, content for marketing and promotion plus, of course, introductions to new people and relationships,” says Hall. “The most exciting feedback from partnerships has often sparked significant changes in product development at Spinlock. There have been hair-raising moments when the team looked likely to stall, but we have always pulled together and overcome challenges, sometimes leading to innovative breakthroughs in design and functionality.”

One such innovative design breakthrough came during the company’s work with the 2017 Volvo Ocean Race. “We were approached by the Volvo Ocean Race to develop a new lifejacket



**Spinlock successfully launched the Alto through its wholesale channels worldwide, finding a niche in countries with large lakes where many people enjoy regular water-based activities**

*The Alto is a flotation device worn around the waist*

**Partnerships vary from large commitments to events and teams, such as Clipper Round the World Race, INEOS Britannia, and SailGP, to individual influencer-led support**

for all teams to wear in the 2017/18 Volvo Ocean Race,” Hall explains. “A team of sailors were gathered by Volvo to steer development of the design based on experience and desires for a better product. As is often the case, early direction followed a long list of wants and wishes, which in the end was challenged and broken down with the emphasis finally on a product that was great to wear, simple to adjust, easy to put on and felt like it enhanced performance.

“One new feature was a quick release system for wearers of the lifejacket. In the event of a man overboard when the user is connected to the yacht with a safety line and being dragged along, the wearer can choose to release the harness and themselves. Past approaches to this solution had unsuccessfully looked at release of the safety line itself. Spinlock took a different route and developed a release system built into the lifejacket itself, enabling the user to release the connection in an emergency.”

**Facing the future**  
Spinlock is one of the few marine companies to earn B-Corp status. Covering product footprints, workers’ rights, employee wellbeing, community benefits and governance structures, the B Corp certification recognises Spinlock’s comprehensive dedication to sustainability and social responsibility.



*The Alto waist flotation device grew from new demand following a surge in water-based recreational activities*

The company currently has a global reach spanning 65 countries; however, Hall acknowledges that there are untapped opportunities, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. To expand further, Spinlock plans to invest more resources in growing these regions, leveraging its expertise and reputation to establish a stronger presence.

New applications are also arising: “There is potential for Spinlock to develop innovative solutions for commercial marine, especially in areas such as wind and renewables,” says Hall. “These sectors, being relatively new to the marine industry, are more receptive to change and eager to adopt new practices through product innovation.”

Spinlock’s ideology and business practices shed light on the marine safety product market and highlight the importance of credibility.

By maintaining control over manufacturing processes that prioritise quality while adapting to changing consumer preferences, the company has ridden out market volatility and remains at the forefront of the sector. ■

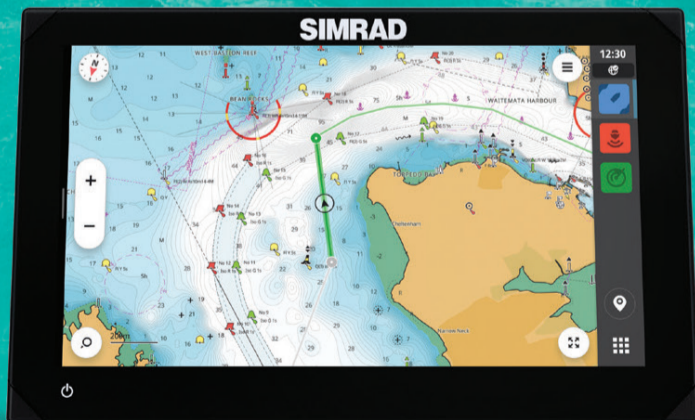


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## Technical Marine Supplies - Specialist Marine Trade Distributors

Based in Plymouth, Devon TMS offers a wide range of technical marine equipment that we supply to the marine trade across the UK and Europe. We currently represent in excess of 50 manufacturers, with a product range consisting of stainless hardware to hydrogenerators, it really is a broad expanse of product.

We have a dedicated technical department on hand to provide expert knowledge and support for every available product. Technical Marine Supplies also have a field sales team, our Business Development Managers cover the length and breadth of the country visiting customers to offer help and advice when selecting products, specifying hardware and lighting as well as energy solutions, whilst the internal team are at the end of the phone to help with any enquiry.

TMS exhibit a wealth of product from well-known brands including Hamma, Karver, Cyclops Marine, Silva, Mantagua, Silentwind and Selden. The Southampton International Boat Show also allows us to shine a light on new innovative brands such as Bonomi, Simarine, Uniteck, EGIS and Omnisense Systems and the cutting edge products they produce.

A feature of the 2023 stand is the live lightning-strike map which will form part of an interactive introduction to the Sertec Marine CMCE Lightning Prevention Device. This intelligent system is crucial to protecting you and your vessel from potential lightning strikes and TMS are pleased to be the European Distributor for marine protection devices.

2023 also sees the launch of our trade chats in the last hour of the show, where the marine trade will be invited to the stand for a drink and a walk through the exhibited product range, alongside supporting manufacturers.

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## SELDEN



### Seldén - CXe45

The Seldén CXe45 is a recent addition into the SEL-Bus Range of 42v products; the CXe45. The CXe45 is an electric Code 0 furler allowing sailors to quickly furl away their sail at the push of a button from the comfort and safety of their cockpit. The CXe45 can be a standalone upgrade to a vessel, or a very simple and easy addition if the vessel already has other Seldén SEL-Bus equipment, such as Furlex Electric, Electric In-Mast Furling, or the E40i Winch onboard. All of the Seldén SEL-Bus electric systems are also now comparably more affordable compared to electric systems of old thanks to the shared Power Supply Unit, and advances in power management and electrical technology. The complete SEL-Bus system now allows you to furl away your Code 0, Headsail, and Mainsail, with the E40i winch offering an electric coach-roof winch with zero impact to headroom.

### Omnisense Systems - Thermal Imaging Cameras

TMS are the exclusive UK distributor for Omnisense Systems, their thermal imaging and low light cameras are proving a great hit with our OEM and commercial customers; so we will be displaying both the Mini and the Micro models.

The Ulysses delivers more than high-resolution and crisp images in day, night, smoke, fog or glare but increases the essential element of crew awareness. The range is designed and built to be adaptable to end-user needs with proprietary components that can be configured to suit client needs.



### EGIS Mobile Electric - XD Flex Series 2 - Programmable Relays

The 2022 IBEX Innovation Award winning XD Series High Amp Remote Relays are available in Single XD, Dual XD and Triple XD configurations. When combining a Triple XD with one or more Dual XD, the installer is able to configure all necessary battery disconnect switching, automatic charge management, and emergency parallel in a simple manner with standard busbars and minimal space, time, and cost. Perfect for a typical dual-battery boat, the XD Series Triple Flex Relay combines three independently controllable, high amperage relays to reduce installation space, weight, time, and total cost by up to 70%. Each relay's automatic or remote response profile is programmed via integrated dip switches under a sealed cover allowing each relay to act as either a simple remote relay/battery switch or an automatic charging relay.



[www.technicalmarinesupplies.co.uk](http://www.technicalmarinesupplies.co.uk)



### Sertec Marine / Karver / Mantagua

Every time we go sailing, we look to enjoy our time on the water, and do so safely. Many risks can be easily mitigated or planned for – but the event of a lightning strike has typically been much more difficult.

Sertec have produced a dedicated marine system to not only protect against lightning strikes, but also provide real-time monitoring of the effectiveness of the system, making it the only intelligent lightning protection system in the world.

With years of experience of distributing products aimed the sailing market, TMS are pleased to present the latest products from two French manufacturers that have been exclusively with TMS since the start.

The 4 speed winches from **Karver** offer exceptional performance, with the KSW having a high tailing speed for racing and the KPW for significant load amplification, ideal for your halyards and sheets or when an electric upgrade is not an option. The KCW (Karver Compact Winch) will be on display alongside their market leading sail handling hardware.

The latest adjustable recessed LED spreader lights from **Mantagua** will also be available to view, as will their IP rated LED searchlight and wheelmarked navigation lights from their NAVIPRO range.



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AND FINALLY a reminder that we exclusively distribute **SILVA** Compasses so whether you need bulkhead mounted, front-reading boat compasses, flush compasses or pedestal compasses for sailing or motor yachting, Silva has a compass to suit your needs.

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# MARINA SAFETY

## Is enough being done to make marinas safer? MIN looks at new developments and the safety protocols in use

Paul Williams, inventor and founder of the Man Overboard Marina Alarm System, says he was inspired to create his system after a lady in the marina where he berthed fell into the water in 2018 (she was trying to board her boat).

“It took 15 minutes for anyone to hear her cries for help,” says Williams, “and when she was rescued from the water, she was hypothermic and had lacerations to her legs from the muscle growth under the waterline.” He says the incident made him realise that the issue was not so much getting the person out of the water, but allowing them to raise an alarm.

Williams set about creating what he terms

the ‘first system of its kind in the world’ designed specifically to give a victim in the water at a marina’s edge a chance to raise an alarm.

### New prototype hits Australia

In Williams’ system, a marine safety rope runs under the whaling of each arm, finger and floating walkway of a marina. When somebody has fallen into the water and grabbed onto the rope, a switch is triggered sending a signal to the base station releasing text messages out to pre-programmed numbers, ensuring that help is on the way. The nearest dock alarm activates a siren and a bright led strobe of light. It’s also fitted with a Duress button, in case of on dock emergencies.

In this system, all switches and dock alarms are battery operated and closely monitored notifying the base station of battery levels, temperatures and any faults.

After creating a prototype with tech company, Dek Technologies, the system went for trials at Royal

Melbourne Yacht Squadron (RMYS) and was put to good use when a 74-year-old man backed his mobility scooter into the water. The elderly gentleman successfully activated the rope alarm, and was pulled out in nine minutes.

“I was sitting in my office and my phone pinged advising me of an alert,” says Damien Ryan, from RMYS. “I guessed someone had pulled the cord. Firstly, I looked at the marina cameras to see if anything was obvious. My assistant went out on the golf cart – because it sets off a localised alarm it did alert a couple of other people out there on the marina. They found the gentleman, he was unable to extricate himself, so if it wasn’t for the other guys, the result would have been very different.

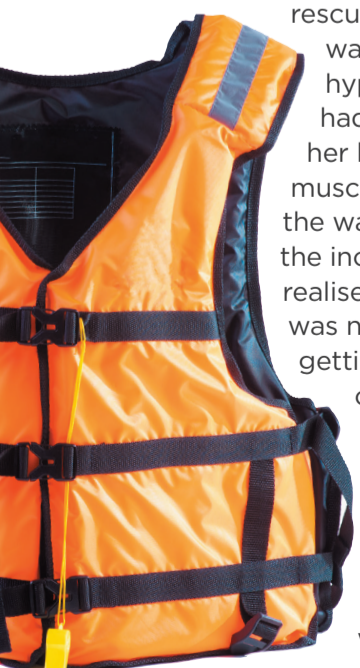
“The system worked perfectly, exactly as it was designed. No one was in the immediate vicinity, no one heard the splash. If it wasn’t for the system, no one would have known what was going on.”

Williams says the business is currently focused on Australia (where there were 23 drowning deaths at marinas between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2022\*\*) and New Zealand, but there are plans to licence the patented system in Europe and the USA. A system has just completed a successful 12-month trial at Westhaven’s Z Pier.

### US marina safety study

In his 2018 published study, *Marina Drownings, Life Rings & Safety Ladders*, which examined regulations regarding life rings, safety ladders and unintentional drownings, Carl Wolf described guidelines, regulations and standards on the use and placement of safety ladders and life rings in the US, as ‘limited and ambiguous’.

A marina and boatyard expert with Robson Forensic who had spent his career as an operator and consultant in the USA, Wolf’s online research identified 107 marina drownings during 2008 to 2017, of which 85 per cent were



A 2018 study described guidelines, regulations and standards on the use and placement of life rings and safety ladders in the US as 'limited and ambiguous'



MDL's Ocean Village Marina



MDL Marinas use lone worker devices incorporating 'man down' functions



Checking lines, boatfolk Marina, Portland



boatfolk Marina, Portishead

male. Victims had fallen into the water in various ways including while walking on the docks, embarking or disembarking from boats, working on boats, while docking, while being chased by police, and other incidents.

Wolf recommended creating safe centres with safety ladders, life rings and a floating line, and that a national panel was established to address the issue in the marina industry. He acknowledged that it's hard for marinas to enforce the use of PFDs among marina customers,

but operators have a responsibility to educate their boaters and keep an eye out for unattended children as much as possible.

**UK embraces safety boxes**

Concerns around marina safety were mirrored across the world, but the UK's Premier Marinas says it was making changes to practice as early as 2009.

"The biggest change we have seen is creating a dedicated role for EHS (environment, health & safety) at Premier," says Peter

Wortley, Premier's EHS manager. "This began in 2009 and we have been building on our practice and procedures concerning environmental health and safety management ever since." He says the procedures have really stepped up again in the last three years with the marina chain installing new safety boxes on the pontoons.

The boxes house a life ring, a throw rope and a foil blanket. Premier is also in the process of installing long-reach poles across all its sites and it says safety ladders are positioned at strategic points on the pontoons – painted bright yellow for instant recognition. Plus, the marina operator has installed defibrillators at all of its marinas and Wortley says the company ensures it has people on site who know how to use them.

Likewise, Joe Walton, MDL's head of health, safety and environment, says MDL has operated effective safety systems for many years, and these are continually reviewed and improved. But, he points out: "It appears that people think accidents will not happen in the marina, but this is simply not the case, and although MDL advises best practice and has safety precautions in place with assistance available on site 24/7,

**"It appears that people think accidents will not happen in the marina, but this is simply not the case."**

Joe Walton, head of health, safety and environment, MDL Marinas

it's important that boat owners do everything they can on a personal level to ensure their safety too.

"Ideally, every person around water, whether working or for pleasure, would follow the same precautions as MDL and our teams. Unfortunately, all too often the only times people consider donning a lifejacket is when they prepare to sail out of the marina," says Walton.

"Whereas we cannot enforce our berth holders to wear lifejackets, we do promote it and we certainly 'walk the talk' as all Premier Marinas employees must wear lifejackets when working on the pontoons," agrees Wortley.

"We do promote best practice and host annual safety events at our marinas involving experts who can share advice and equipment checks. Our regular newsletters often share safety advice such as... the RNLI's [advice] about cold water shock.



boatfolk Marina, Haslar. boatfolk has recently reviewed its staff practices



More marinas are installing easy-to-access rescue poles and equipment



Pontoon safety box at Premier

Should the worst happen, we hope our marina users can draw on this knowledge.”

Walton says there is a combination of safety equipment in place across the MDL sites and that’s coupled with “good working practices and regular training. For example, our teams have received specialist water safety training from the RNLI, and have lone working devices, lifejackets and water recovery equipment along with self-recovery equipment i.e. pontoon safety equipment, ladders and life rings.”

To enhance the protection of MDL’s teams, Walton says they’ve implemented “ever improving technologically advanced equipment, for example lone worker devices incorporating ‘man down’ functions, GPS positioning, and safety and inspection systems offering live inspection and defect data, automatic notifications etc.”

**Changing practices in safety**

boatfolk says it changed its practices at its marinas after a member of staff fell into the water while conducting fender and line checks in strong winds.

“They were by themselves at the time, but luckily they were spotted and retrieved from the water,” says Tom Ralph, assistant marina manager and health and safety champion at Portland Marina. “After reviewing this incident we introduced a policy whereby during any checks taking

place with winds above 25 knots a minimum of two staff members must be present.”

Ralph says all staff are water safety trained which includes “the use of throw lines, life rings and Jacobs Cradles as well as the different conditions which will affect the use of these methods. We also have clearly identifiable reaching and throwing aids throughout the marina to ensure anyone in the marina can easily find this equipment when it is needed.”

Over the past couple of years he says SOS branding has been added to pontoon piles near the SOS bollards (those contain a life ring, first aid kits and fire extinguisher) to make the location of these more visible for users.

“We have started a phased replacement of safety ladders to introduce those with an extended pole which make them easier to identify from the water or for those directing someone to a ladder,” he says.

Like MDL and Premier, boatfolk staff will always be seen in their lifejackets. “At Portland Marina (and across boatfolk as a whole) we have a lifejacket policy, which ensures that all marina staff wear a lifejacket while on or near the water. We find it important that our team are leading by example when it comes to safety on the pontoons,” says Ralph. “When it comes to areas we can’t control we try to make recommendations, setting the right example (e.g. wearing lifejackets) and educating our berth holders about why we make these recommendations.”

boatfolk also runs awareness days focusing on water safety. These include workshops and processes as well as giving berth holders the opportunity to use throw lines life-rings and Jacobs Cradles.

**Accidental drowning in marinas**

Merrimac Insurance says that the chance of accidental drowning looms over marina operations. Docks hazards, slippery footing, and careless behaviour contribute to drownings each year. It cites slip, trip, and fall hazards, overboard hazards, swimming in marina waters, and lack of safety equipment (including life-rings, egress ladders, and signage/lighting on docks) as danger points.

It goes on to say that failure by marinas to implement safety practices to prevent drownings can result in tragedy and significant claims burdens on marina insurance policies.

**Electric shock drowning**

Another risk factor in marina operations is electric shock drowning (ESD). According to the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association, ESD is the result of the passage of a typically low-level AC current through the body with sufficient force to cause skeletal muscular paralysis, rendering the victim unable to help himself/herself, while immersed in water, eventually resulting in the victim drowning.

The US-based organisation says the majority of ESD deaths have occurred in public and private marinas and docks. The typical victim, it says (although the figure it offers in its relevant statistics is ‘many’\*) is a child swimming in or around a marina or dock where electricity is present. The electricity that enters the water and causes ESD originates from the wiring of the dock or marina, or from boats that are connected to the marina’s or dock’s power supply. If an electric fault occurs on a boat while it is connected to a marina’s or dock’s shore power and the boat or marina is not properly wired to meet current standards, the water surrounding the boat will become electrified.

**“After reviewing the incident we introduced a policy whereby during any checks taking place with winds above 25 knots a minimum of two staff members must be present.”**

Tom Ralph, assistant marina manager, Portland Marina

Often, the electric fault occurring aboard the boat is intermittent. For example, the fault may only occur when a light switch is turned on, or when a hot water heater, battery charger, A/C unit or other electrical device cycles on. Water can appear and feel ‘safe’ and in a split second become deadly, says the association.





Merrimac Insurance says at the least marina owners must forbid swimming on marina properties and regularly inspect for hazards (like tripping hazards such as mooring lines, electrical cables, or loose dock planking). It says fuelling stations, boat lifts, sewage pumping facilities, shore power stations and dock lighting must all be checked as part of this work. ■

*\*In its FAQs, the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association says: In the vast majority of ESD, the victim’s autopsy shows no signs of electrical injury and investigators often never learn that electricity was the cause of the drowning. How many of these unexplainable drownings have likely been caused by electric shock drowning instead of cramping, excessive alcohol use, or some other factor? The answer – many.*

*\*\* Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, from the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database.*



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# At the source

**Water and waste water management goes under the spotlight with GMBA's Albert Willemsen**



As sustainability and accountability weighs heavier for manufacturers, the issue of waste water and water management is becoming more of a consideration. A landmark report published by the Global Commission on the economics of water on the eve of a UN water summit in March 2023, determined that demand is expected to outstrip the supply of fresh water by 40 per cent by the end of this decade. And increasingly, marine manufacturers will need to address the impact of practices and processes under their roof.

Water is used in nearly every stage of yacht manufacturing, refit and repair. Though the marine industry doesn't have consolidated usage figures yet, producing a car, for example, uses over 39,000 gallons of water.

Water used in material finishing, boiler feed, paint/coatings shops, cleaning hulls and cooling tower processes is often fresh water – something that needs addressing if the industry is to lessen its environmental impact.

**Water waste in yacht production**  
The first steps would be to reduce fresh water for the work processes

in the marine and marina industries by:

1. Reducing water use in the work processes
2. Find an alternative water supply
3. Recirculation of waste- and/or rain water

Using the automotive field again as a reference point, some leading car manufacturers have set water efficiency goals as low as 1 m<sup>3</sup> per unit. In order to reach these goals, firms have identified water use inefficiencies and systematically addressed them. Recommended actions can include installing flow restrictions on supply lines and implementing dry sweeping before hosing, to more aggressive (and more expensive) actions such as recovering water from a critical rinse stage and reusing it in a less critical rinse stage.

Other possibilities include moving towards closed-loop water systems, installing rain tanks, treating wastewater for reuse and even harvesting storm water.

While these are all laudable measures more can be done. Many large industrial water users are not aware that the water purification equipment they have – such

as those mentioned above and desalination equipment – may actually be the principal water use offender.

**Tackling desalination**

Marine companies should assess quantity water supply systems available for the work processes. Most of us are familiar with the downsides of the process of desalination; it's (fossil) energy-intensive, chemicals are added which end up in the saltwater return and it's complex to operate and maintain, making it all very expensive. However, systems using unique energy recovery technology are designed to use 70 per cent less energy than traditional small-scale desalination. The technology itself is not new – it's already mainstream on all large desalination facilities – but it can be implemented on a scale that's suitable for shipyards, resorts, communities, marinas, private properties and municipalities. Two well-known shipyards based in the Mediterranean are preparing and applying for permits to install the technology.

Secondly, the water treatment process needs addressing. By using an automated fresh flush cycle, the system preserves the membrane with some of the produced water. By operating on a lower recovery ratio there is no need to introduce anticalins. And in the process, the design of the system also reduces the salinity of the salt water flow to further minimise the environmental impact.

**Recirculation of waste water and rain water**

The principles of the waste water recycling process and the biological treatment principle at a marina can be as follows; catch waste water, treat in a sedimentation tank, followed by

**Many large industrial water users are not aware that the water purification equipment they have... may actually be the principal water use offender**

another tank, (90 per cent of pollution is cured) and then filter. This system was set out in 1992 in Netherlands and Germany in order to meet new national legislations.

**Action and framework**

Management teams of boatbuilders, marinas, suppliers, and refit yards are confronted with different work processes, standards, laws and guidelines. This jungle of data and regulation makes it very difficult to define and implement a system specifically for their business which includes water usage. While there is a globally acknowledged standard for sustainability reporting, (the Global Reporting Initiative 'GRI'), there is no corresponding framework available specifically for sustainability management within the marine leisure industry. This is needed ASAP.

The key message is that we need to reduce the fresh water usage and, at the same time, reduce the discharge of waste water. Waste water treatment linked to recycling water is one of the best options. Implementation on a larger scale is needed, but in order to do this effectively the marine industry needs to develop a new sustainability management system focused on work processes across our sector. ■

*Albert Willemsen is the GMBA's technical expert and representative in The Netherlands.*

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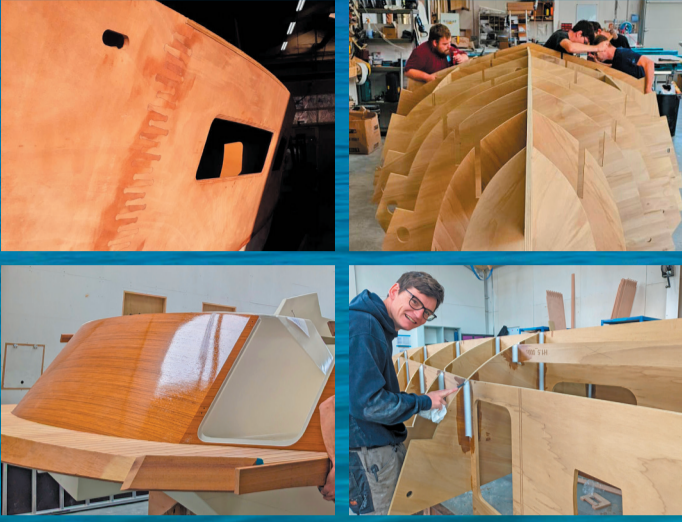


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# KIWI CONNECTIONS



Horizon Yachts has selected Propspeed as part of the commissioning for all of its new craft

## Propspeed's new CEO on adding more on-the-ground experience and thinking globally

Following Propspeed's investment in its global expansion over the last few years, the underwater foul-release coatings specialist has seen growth across several of its key channels and regions.

In 2023, Propspeed promoted international sales director Marcus Hamilton to chief executive officer (CEO), marking a new chapter for the business. Leading with "a balance of gut instinct and data analysis", Hamilton is continuing to help Propspeed broaden its reach.

The Auckland-headquartered company has been spearheading coatings innovation for over 24 years now. Its OEM partnerships include Fairline, MJM Yachts and Riviera Yachts, Palm Beach Motor Yachts and Horizon Yachts, which recently selected Propspeed as part of the commissioning of all new models.

In the recreational market, Hamilton says Propspeed has started to see increased adoption of its foul-release coatings by smaller

recreational vessels as well. "This indicates that everyday boaters are looking for solutions to reduce the operational cost of their time spent on the water and are more conscious of retaining the resale value of their boat," says Hamilton, who has previously held roles at Fusion Entertainment and Garmin.

Commercial vessels have used Propspeed products for the past ten-plus years but adoption in this segment is also increasing. Hamilton adds: "We have taken that seriously by introducing commercial sized kits, appointing Clint Jones as commercial & defence director, and implementing commercially focused strategies and resource."

Propspeed's core products provide a biocide-free, shiny, slippery silicone (which doesn't actually kill marine organisms) that can be applied to coat a boat's assets, like propellers and shafts. If organisms manage to attach to an asset coated with, for example, FoulFree, as soon as the boat starts moving, they are launched off.

### A people business

Hamilton says the biggest leap forward in Propspeed's tech over the past five years has been in its business infrastructure. Propspeed's strategy is to support the distributor network with additional sales teams (the company is circa 40-strong worldwide) who are

brought in to help in the field. Most recently two new regional sales staff have been appointed to serve customers in the mid-Atlantic and West Coast USA.

"Distributors are key to our go-to market strategy, and once the market is validated, putting sales



Marcus Hamilton, CEO, Propspeed

**“Our B2B customers are increasingly looking for manufacturers to not just supply products but to work with them to make those products a valuable part of their marine business.”**

Marcus Hamilton, CEO, Propspeed

teams on the ground to grow and support the business is critical,” says Hamilton.



“Our B2B marine business customers are increasingly looking for manufacturers to not just supply products, but to stand behind them and work with them to make those products a valuable part of their marine business. Customers are looking to businesses that they trust and have built confidence with. This is something that is earned over time, not on price, but on value, consistency and accountability.

“Our strategy has enabled us to build strong channels to markets in over 35 countries, set up distribution centres in the US and Europe, increase our technical support and sales capacity and drive strong brand evolution. And this was all before the recent rise of A.I. It’s the next five years that I believe will be the most transformational yet.”

Hamilton is a huge advocate for getting out from behind the desks and believes nothing beats face to face time with end users and clients.

“It is so important that we stay connected to the industry through trade shows and industry events,” he adds. “It’s the organic meetings, bar stool chats and new insights

gained from these commitments that help us stay informed. It also helps having a very well connected and experienced global sales and technical team.”

**Taking the reins**

While taking responsibility for the 24-year legacy brand may be a daunting prospect for some, Hamilton says his experience and belief in ‘kiwi ingenuity’ readied him for the role as CEO.

In his first job, as an apprentice working for the Auckland Council, Hamilton changed departments every three months over a three-year programme and “got a masterclass in management style and team (dys)function from the inside.” He then moved to New Zealand’s marine audio products and accessories business, Fusion Entertainment.

“My time at Fusion Entertainment and then Garmin was fundamental in shaping me for my role as CEO of Propspeed. Fusion Entertainment was a New Zealand-based business that was also taking on the world through what we like to call ‘kiwi ingenuity’. Marine and music was in the DNA of our owner, the team was full of passion, and the culture of ‘operate with urgency’ was instilled in the business by the CEO at the time.

“The transition into the Garmin eco system after acquisition helped me understand both sides of the spectrum when it came to business culture, processes and operations. The clarity of brand and business vision, a strong work ethic driven by passion, learning how to follow through and follow up with real value adds for customers and partners, over delivering on partner relationships and finally, physically being in the market shoulder-to-shoulder with customers – these values have permeated through to my role as CEO.”

Hamilton says a successful strategy relies on “vision, clarity, engagement, action, value creation

and reflection” and believes new product developers need to immerse themselves as much as possible in their field.

“I’d tell any emerging product developer to physically get into the market and see it with your own eyes. Know your customer – meet your customer and visit them regularly. It’s not enough to just make decisions on the ‘persona’ built from the market research you have conducted. Having human resources on the ground in market is key.”

**Pitfalls to avoid**

Hamilton warns against a one size fits all approach to different territories. “Don’t think of America or Europe as one market,” he says. “And don’t assume the way you currently position your product is correct for international markets. Start thinking globally as early on in your business life cycle as allows. In all areas of your business.”

Global expansion can be challenging and rewarding in equal measure but Hamilton says understanding local compliance and legislation by channel (not just what is in place today, but what may be coming into effect in the future) is key. “Engage government, trade and enterprise support where available. Engage local editors and journalists as they have the pulse of the market and a great network, and find a good mentor.

“There is no overnight success in marine coatings. It takes time to develop new segments within the maritime industry, and that requires vision, patience, good processes, commitment and a culture of curiosity and continuous improvement.”

**Products and productivity**

The team has noted increasing adoption of its products in Asia, and the company is looking to further support and serve the region in 2023 and 2024. Emerging trends in boat buying

and boat usage also present new opportunities. “For boat share/boat syndicate style ownership Propspeed is a no-brainer to ensure reduced operational cost of the fleet and retained resale value at the end of the vessel service life,” Hamilton explains. “We have started to see the ‘business minded’ owners of these franchises and operations adopt the Propspeed system, but there is certainly more impact to be had.”

**“It’s not enough to just make decisions on the ‘persona’ built from the market research you have conducted. Having human resources on the ground in market is key.”**

Marcus Hamilton, CEO, Propspeed

Currently the product range is designed to be applied to all underwater metals (Propspeed), underwater lights (Lightspeed) and transducers (FoulFree) but it is not designed to solve every boater’s problem.

“There are other substrates that exist below the waterline that we currently don’t have a product line for,” Hamilton adds. “Our product is also predominantly adopted in saltwater environments that experience fouling or by boaters looking to protect their underwater assets from corrosion. We see less adoption of our product in fresh water environments, though with increasing water temperatures and the rise of invasive species I see Propspeed becoming a part of the future solution for these boaters’ maintenance schedule.” ■





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# Full charge



ePropulsion CEO, Danny Tao, tells *MIN* why he brought battery development in-house and what's coming next

In 2023, marine electric propulsion systems and services company ePropulsion launched its own series of batteries. It was a quick development phase for the company, as Danny Tao (ePropulsion's CEO) explains, and after taking the design and production of battery products fully in-house in 2022, the company has already launched a new range of E-Series batteries (48V) and the G102-100 battery (96V).

#### In-house serves demand

"Customers are looking for an integrated electrification solution. With ePropulsion battery options provided, they are able to put less effort into choosing the appropriate batteries," says Tao. "By providing our own battery line, we can ensure the batteries meet our safety standards for use with our electric outboard motors; our own battery line is fully compatible with our motors. Our outboards and batteries are built on the same voltage architecture.

"We have received positive feedback from our users about our own battery line and our decision to create it is verified to be correct by the market."

Tao is looking forward to the marine

battery market continuing to grow as more people switch to electric boats. He believes the market will benefit from rising global trade operations, and the rise of hybrid and electric marine vessels. Another driver will be the increased investment in R&D by major players and OEMs to manufacture superior energy storage systems, to meet future operational requirements.

"Europe is projected to hold the highest market share due to the presence of several large marine battery manufacturers in the region," says Tao. "The presence of major shipyards and inland and sea-faring vessel operators, which are adopting hybrid and fully-electric propulsion systems to lower operational costs (and reduce environmental degradation), also helps. North America will witness remarkable growth in the market."

Tao cites drivers as increasing adoption of electric propulsion in the region, rising battery-powered marine vessels for commercial and government use, and high demand in leisure boats and recreational markets.

In response to these growing battery applications in the marine

sector ePropulsion is putting its focus on battery technology advancement (alongside its electric propulsion systems), and the commercial market.

"As boaters actively transfer to using electric propulsion outboards to retrofit their boats, boatbuilders have already quickly followed this trend and started to design and produce new electric boats. The commercial market is the new direction we are exploring and is becoming more and more important," says Tao.

The expansion of the company's OEM offerings – electric inboards, H-Series (60-250 kW) and I-Series (available in 10kW, 20kW, and 40 kW) – are designed to meet the growing demands of the commercial market.

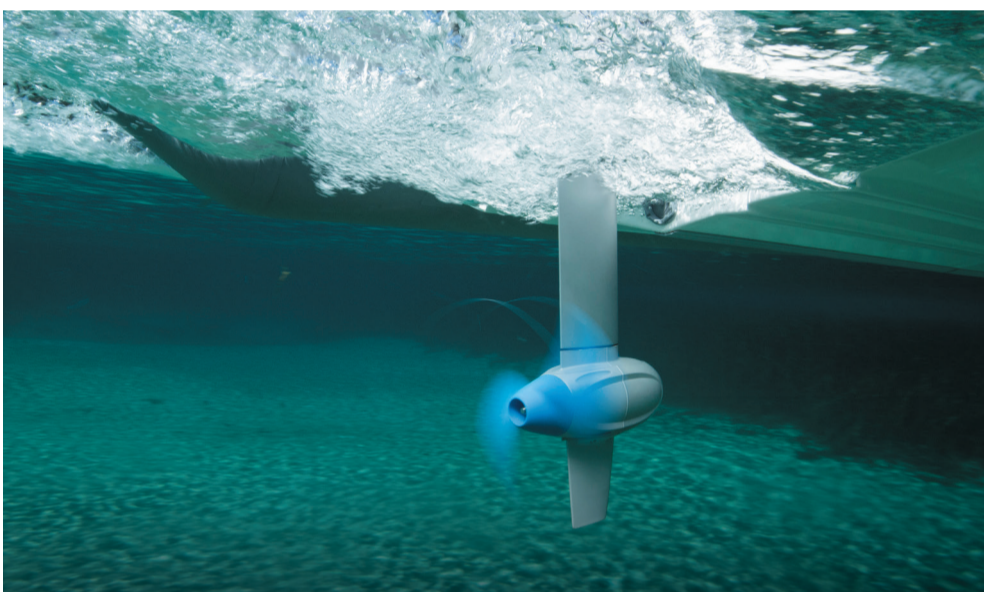
That said, consumers in the recreational market are after the same principles as commercial customers (but maybe with less power). They're looking for safe, reliable, and lightweight products that have

a high capacity, long lifespan, and a short charging time.

Tao says his customers "expect batteries to help facilitate the utilisation of other new energy. They look for batteries with intelligent functions such as real time monitoring systems."

Underpinning this, ePropulsion says its innovative hydrogeneration functions enable electric boats to charge their own batteries while sailing; and the newly launched Connectivity Service enables consumers to have remote access to battery status and data.





**“By providing our own battery line, we can ensure the batteries meet our safety standards for use with our electric outboard motors...”**  
 Danny Tao, CEO, ePropulsion

**The battery debate**  
 While there is a growing market and potential business opportunities, batteries don't come without their own baggage. As reported previously in *Marine Industry News*, some insurers will not provide cover to boaters who have retrofitted lithium-ion batteries to their boats.

Tao isn't overly concerned. He says “ePropulsion batteries are LiFePO4 batteries, the safest type of lithium battery because they are not prone to overheating and even if they're punctured, they won't catch on fire.” According to Tao, LiFePO4 batteries have superior thermal and chemical stability compared to lead-acid or other lithium-ion batteries, they also do not suffer from ‘thermal runaway’ like some lithium-ion cells.

“Because of this, LiFePO4 battery packs have a reputation for being extremely stable and inherently

safe. Lithium-iron phosphate is also tolerant to extremes of temperature, it is insoluble in water and is incombustible. Even if subjected to dangerous handling, such as collision or short-circuiting, LiFePO4 batteries won't rupture, explode or catch fire.” Tao says this is in part due to the built-in, self-developed battery management system (BMS). The battery status is monitored and protected against things such as, overcharging, over-discharging, over-current, over-temperature, etc.

**UK and Asia growth**  
 While the US and Europe have historically been ePropulsion's top markets, Tao is looking keenly at the potential for growth in southeast Asia. With increasing environmental awareness, the rising popularity of sea tourism and recreational boating being promoted by the region's governments, demand for electric motors and batteries is expected to increase in the coming years.

The UK market has been making great contributions to the company's sales growth. Since the acquisition of its UK distribution network, the ePropulsion UK team has taken on the role as group OEM division.

**“ePropulsion batteries are LiFePO4 batteries, the safest type of lithium battery because they are not prone to overheating and even if they're punctured, they won't catch on fire.”**  
 Danny Tao, CEO, ePropulsion

“The UK office not only helps us get closer to local end consumers, but also enables us to expand our OEM capacity. With technical support from the local team, we have been rolling out several commercial projects globally,” explains Tao. “Currently, collaboration with the UK office works well to carry on our OEM projects. In the future, we will consider replicating this practice when necessary to meet the demand of the local market.”

ePropulsion has much more than batteries and collaborations

with boatbuilders (such as Highfield, Crest, and Freedom Electric Marine) in its vision. Although it's been working on key projects to demonstrate the possibility of electrification in retrofitting and new boat manufacturing, Tao says smart boating and connectivity services will be a primary focus in the upcoming years.

“To propel the boating experience to become easier, we will devote more R&D and engineering to applications of the Internet of Boats (IoB), advanced driver assistance systems, fleet management systems, autonomous docking, and more,” he says. ■



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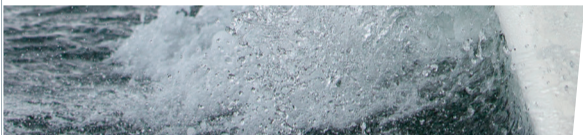
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