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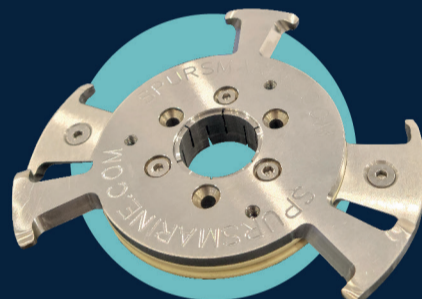


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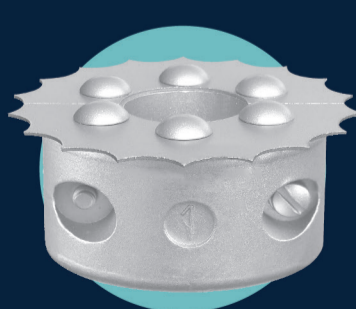
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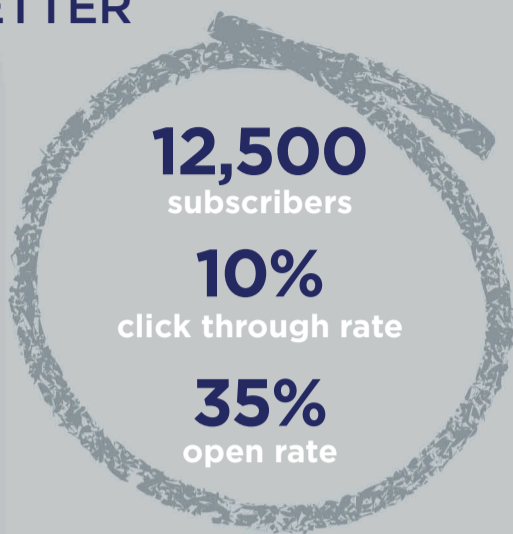


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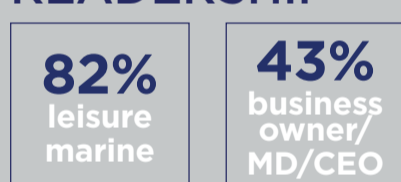
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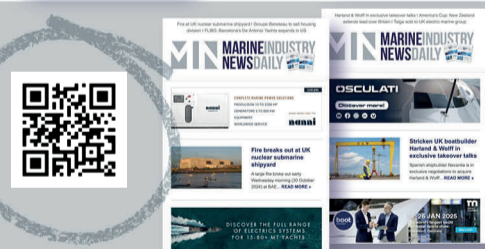
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They may be small but there are seedlings of positive growth after a long and challenging time for the industry. Following on from busy autumn shows, there is room for cautious optimism. As the industry convenes at METSTRADE, innovation and new products will take centre stage.

On page 29, the exciting startups showcasing at this year's Start-Up Pavilion at METSTRADE discuss breaking into the marine market, and their peaks and pitfalls. This issue's market report on page 4 puts Germany and Spain in the spotlight - find out which segments are faring best and whether depressed sectors will turn the corner. Artificial intelligence is making the headlines across the world, but the NMMA explains how marine marketers can harness it for good on page 13. Also in this issue, Aqua superPower talks industry obstacles on page 23, *MIN* reports on Rightboat (page 9), Yanmar reflects on launching its first electric propulsion product (page 27), and Selden talks product development (page 17). Plus, *Energy Observer* reveals plans for 2025 and beyond on page 37.

The *MIN* team looks forward to seeing you at METSTRADE - visit us at stand **01.582**.

Chantal



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MARKET REPORT



Boat sales down but service and marina segment is brighter

GERMANY | Falk Morgenstern

In the first half of the year, almost 30 per cent more companies in Germany filed for bankruptcy than in the same period last year – the highest level since 2016. The service industry, in particular, is causing concern in all areas. One small ray of hope: the consumer mood of German households finally seems to be slowly recovering after a long low, although this effect does not seem to have reached the marine industry yet.

Sail and motor boat – all sectors in the German market were depleted in 2023. The latest BVWW figures show that 1,455 boats (excluding superyachts) were imported into Germany last year – down 32.1 per cent on 2022's figures (2,144 units sold). The sail boat market plunged by 67.7 per cent to just 352 units, while motor boats rose by 4.5 per cent to 1,103 units.

Covid catches up: business is slow

Regardless of whether we are assessing sailing or motor boats,

demand has fallen drastically in all segments and business is slow. In some cases, boats are being sold below cost prices, which the companies say is simply a way of securing their liquidity. This situation is a result of catching up following the covid pandemic.

During the pandemic, many newcomers and novice boaters discovered watersports for themselves. Among other things, this drove up prices at a time when production lines were partially at a standstill.

Another reason for some of the hefty price increases for new boats during the pandemic was the scarcity of resources. This was driven by hampered transportation and logistics issues in the container shipping industry leading to a lack of engines and accessories. In some cases the scarcity saw the price of yachts rise by more than 50 percent. But the market is now catching up and acceptance among German customers is only limited. If, according to the price

list, a 37ft sailing yacht from 2020 had a base price ex-shipyard of around €130,000 and now the base price for the same boat is €185,000 (+42 per cent), this is not entirely understandable from the customer's point of view.

The fact that the number of registered boats in Germany increased in the first half of 2024 is due to the fact that new owners have now received their yachts, some of which they ordered almost two years ago.

Many pandemic newcomers are currently selling their used boats again at comparatively high prices, and often even make several tens of thousands of euros in profit after three years of use. The currently high supply of modern used yachts in Germany is therefore another driver for the tight new boat market, and here, too, demand is very low.

The overall situation is currently putting a lot of pressure on companies' profit standings.

The main driver here is the tough competitive conditions and the interest rate level – though hopes of further reductions in interest rates could aid a turn of fortune.

High-end insulated, mid and small range still suffer

As seen in several other European markets, the higher-end of the marine industry is more insulated from these factors. With yachts priced around €500,000 or more, this market segment is little or not at all affected by the negative trend. At the higher end of the market, demand has remained almost the same and there are no significant differences between sailing or motor yachts.

Catamarans, which are also generally in the higher price band, are still in high demand.

One current winner is the fishing industry, which can expect double-digit growth rates in some cases. However, it is not fishing boats that are in demand here, but rather fishing equipment and the



corresponding fishing tourism. The current loser is the boat producer with products priced between €50,000 and €300,000. The charter industry is also struggling, with businesses trying to compensate for the lack of demand with very high discounts in some cases.

Service companies and marinas seem to be getting through the current situation best, as they are still fairly busy. The biggest problem in these market sectors, however, is the availability of skilled workers. The lack of skilled workers has led to numerous

company closures in recent months, despite full order books.

The diving sector seems to have stabilised since the middle of the year, while the charter companies unfortunately have nothing positive to report yet.

Boat show trends

Trade fairs are still very important for the industry and customers. There is a clear trend here whereby manufacturers and customers are relying more on in-water boat shows. Although the costs of attending and exhibition at boat shows are enormous for shipyards

and manufacturers, the events still play a very important role in the marketing process. Fall boat shows have seen a good attendance, which is the proof that boating is still an attractive proposition.

Nevertheless, many marine manufacturers rely, sometimes very successfully, on their own events such as 'open days' or 'in-house trade fairs'.

Rays of hope

Since August, a stabilisation and improvement in the recreational marine industry in Germany has been observed.

This has led to a slight increase in demand for smaller motor or sailing yachts. Suppliers (engines, masts, equipment, etc.) have also noted a slight increase in demand for their products.

The decisive factor for this is the improved general mood in Germany and the improved interest rate level. With the prospect of further interest rates a possibility, it is hoped this brighter consumer mood could continue.

Falk Morgenstern is the Global Marine Business Advisors' (GMBA) representative for Germany.



Caution continues in uncertain times but refit and repair is buoyant

SPAIN | Jordi Carrasco

The national nautical market has been stabilising since 2023, following the growth experienced during the covid pandemic and the following year, 2022.

Currently the data for recreational boat registrations in Spain is around 2019 figures, and with more pronounced descents in certain length segments; particularly affecting smaller boats up to 6 metres and the markets for jet skis and folding inflatable boats. Consumer confidence is yet to fully return with new boat markets, construction and chartering still feeling the pinch.

In the case of the charter segment, competition from other charter destinations along with increased recreational options and general economic uncertainty has negatively impacted the Spanish sector.

Marinas, refit and repair grows

Marinas, refit and repair sectors, maintenance companies and marine equipment suppliers are faring much better. Thanks to its strategic geographical location and the high quality services available, Spain is a key destination for boat repair and maintenance and this sector is performing positively. Consolidated Spanish

shipyards enjoy international recognition, and we are witnessing the emergence of new projects that contribute to diversifying and strengthening our offering. This positions Spain as a benchmark in the Mediterranean for the construction, maintenance and refit of vessels.

While Spain has a solid network of nautical sports facilities we face the challenge of increasing their capacity by redesigning docks, modernising infrastructures and optimising the management of moorings. Spain has had years of uncertainty for many reasons. Everything is

happening faster and more globally, and companies are learning to grow within this uncertainty. They are doing so with balanced balance sheets and reasonable debt ratios. Plus, companies are offering innovative design and technology, complementary services, and they are adopting sustainable practices and reinforcing strategies to highlight the quality and benefits of their business.

Sail still depleted

Since 2023 and so far this year, sail boat registrations have fallen below motor boat registrations, by an average of -12 per cent. However, as a trend, the hobby of



Palma Boat Show



sailing in Spain, especially in the north of Spain, continues to grow in popularity.

Certain international boat shows such as Cannes Yachting Festival and Boot Düsseldorf continue to be a benchmark for the presentation of new products for brands and a showcase for enthusiasts. In the case of more local shows, they are facing enormous competition as a sales platform, with more personalised events that brands organise for their clients and potential clients. Digitisation is also influencing the importance of boat shows. New digital tools can help forge a closer relationship between clients and brands, with much lower costs than those involved in participating in a boat show.

A mixed picture

There are several key trends in the current Spanish nautical market. A trend towards larger boats and customisation is apparent; customers are increasingly looking for boats that can be adapted to their specific needs and tastes, with high quality finishes and increased comfort. ANEN reports that sales of new and used boats were down by 20 per cent in the first six months of 2024 to 3,047 units. But sales of large boats over 16m were up by 21 per cent. Sales of boats under 6m, including jet skis, saw a 23.7 per cent year-on-year drop to just over 2,000 units sold.

Interest in sustainability is gradually growing, with consumers looking for energy efficiency, the

“A trend towards larger boats and customisation is apparent; customers are increasingly looking for boats that can be adapted to their needs with high quality finishes and comfort.”

**Jordi Carrasco,
director general, ANEN**

use of environmentally friendly materials and information on alternative propulsion systems.

Despite the recent slowdown in the boat hire sector, many people continue to see chartering as an excellent way to enjoy the sea, and the segment is expected to grow in the future.

In terms of logistics, the marine market is wary of the problems that can arise with maritime transport and shipping. Freight Delays had a significant impact in recent years, complicating and making logistics more expensive, resulting in repercussions both in the construction of boats, distribution, and in the final price of the product.

We foresee that in 2025, the market figures will be maintained in similar terms to those of this year.

Canary Island uplift

Melanie Symes, Global Marine Business Advisors’ representative for Spain, says that regarding the Canary Islands, arrival numbers show no sign of dropping.

She muses that in the past, the Canaries – one of Spain’s most popular tourist destinations – have been traditionally better known as a stop-off on the way to the Caribbean. But in addition to a packed autumn season, marinas are reporting that boats are continuing to extend their stays on the islands in recent years, reducing annual seasonality.

The marina infrastructure in the Canary Islands is also noteworthy with development potential. Symes says: “Some of the first marinas to be established in Gran Canaria and Lanzarote are already contending with concession renewals, but an updated *Ley de Puertos* and strong support from the local authorities is helping to ease this process. This is permitting a long-awaited investment in refurbishments, which will help optimise berthing availability, modernise facilities and improve services.”

Symes continues: “Furthermore, Lanzarote, a consolidated yacht racing destination and preparation point for many transatlantic rallies and races, is continuing to generate excitement as an Olympic training destination, due to optimal sailing conditions and flight accessibility.”

José Juan Calero, managing director of Calero Marinas, the largest private marina group in the islands, is on the cusp of starting to welcome visitors to the company’s fourth marina project, Marina Jandía,

in the south of Fuerteventura. Calero comments: “The region’s political and meteorological stability, excellent sailing conditions and facilities for international boaters award us some fantastic advantages. The Canary Islands have a tremendous potential in terms of infrastructure development for local and visiting boaters and we are working hard to enhance the appeal of the Canary Islands as a premier boating destination.”

Overcoming challenges

The nautical sector in Spain has enormous potential for growth and development. The sector has attracted new consumers in recent years and it is hoped their desire to enjoy life afloat will continue.

In times of economic or market uncertainty, industry associations are more important than ever. ANEN is working with government administrations to help remove obstacles and promote growth. Collaboration and mutual support within the sector remains strong.

ANEN will continue to work closely with all sub-sectors to navigate these times and promote sustainable and prosperous development of the sector. ■

Jordi Carrasco is director general of ANEN – National Association of Nautical Companies.



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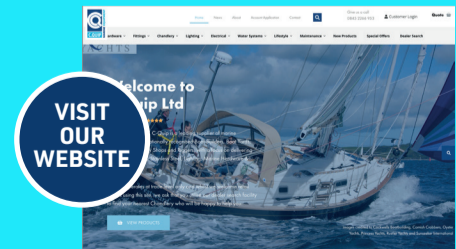


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Rightboat CEO, Ian Atkins, explains why not being radical is exciting in its own way

It's not the average dream, to be second place, but it's one which Ian Atkins, CEO Rightboat, is fulfilling. Well-known across the industry for being a key founder member involved in Boats Group, Atkins is now realising his dream of the silver medal.

"I was always looking out for the big competitor," Atkins says of his time at YachtWorld, (which subsequently became part of Boats Group and was sold to Private Equity in 2021). He got involved with YachtWorld in the late 1990s, before leaving, retiring and then latterly joining Rightboat. "I was always dreaming 'wouldn't it be nice to be a safe number two?' and to just provide a good alternative to the market leader."

Online sales

Recently released stats from the company point to a wave of brokers switching their online advertising to the platform in 2024, and thus placing Rightboat in the place Atkins wanted since its 'official' relaunch in 2023.

According to Rightboat, the company's global online audience has increased five-fold in 12 months, and continues to increase

at a steady pace while its trade customer base has grown by over 1,000 per cent – from 30 to 375 – across 14 countries in the same period.

It markets itself on its cost-effective advertising solutions and says it has highly targeted strategies to deliver leads. It works with brokers and dealers looking to sell new and used boats spanning power and sailing, with catamarans, sailing cruisers, yachts, and inflatable boats all in the mix.

"I can't say it's been easy so far," Atkins says of the last 12 months, "but as things settle down, we don't have to be radical or extreme."

Not being extreme is strategic and part of the beauty of being number two. Rightboat just needs to be the business partner that provides small and medium size businesses with a solution they can afford.

"Most importantly," says Atkins, "we're the partner that answers the phone in the tech support room when there's a problem and a customer can't fix it. A lot of our customers use our software to manage their boat inventory online. They're accessing our

database effectively so they rely on us to help them immediately if they press the wrong buttons."

Challenging the market leader with no technical debt

Atkins posits that the leads Rightboat generates for its customers are just 10 per cent of the leads-cost the market leader delivers. He notes that's partly because he's dealing with small and medium sized boats, which are obviously more popular than the superyacht market, but he's also delighted with his tech, and points out that the company isn't carrying any technical debt.

"We don't have stuff that was built 15 years ago that needs maintaining. That enables us to move more quickly with a modern solution."

Without tech-debt, Rightboat has been able to readily adapt to AI functionality, for example, automatic downloading of boat listings.

Taking advantage of AI

"We've just built out our tech stack and can take advantage of tech which was just not available before," he adds. Atkins muses that other companies may not

be so agile trying to incorporate AI into existing systems. AI is expected to play a significant part in future developments at Rightboat. Specifically providing more market intelligence to the customers rather than sending them just leads. "We'll be giving them price comparison - nothing radical if you're at *Auto Trader* or *Right Move* - but pretty radical for the boat business," says Atkins.

But even before that happens, data distribution has become a hot topic. When he joined Rightboat in 2022 (the company was founded in 2006 - Atkins describes its early years as "a minnow trying to keep up with a whale"), the basics were there - database, content management and so on.

"We added more devices to make it easier to advertise online and to help brokers distribute their data around the internet," Atkins says. This means the data systems allow brokers and dealers to move their listings so they can advertise on other portals as well as Rightboat.

"We want to be their connection to the internet. All the datasets are different and if you want to distribute your data, the process for distribution needs to be quite



“As the market leader has increased prices at different times of year, and in different areas, there have been small waves of people who can’t afford that solution any longer.”

Ian Atkins, CEO, Rightboat



Ian Atkins, CEO, Rightboat

flexible. No two systems have the same data structure and although there are protocols that exist, they’re old fashioned. One area where we are really successful is that we can say ‘we will do everything technically and distribute the data wherever you want it to go.’”

Financing expansion of online boat marketplace

That strategy has been in place for circa 12 months. The company was ‘officially’ launched at SIBS 2023 after raising money from private investors to finance the expansion from primarily UK-based to international.

“The justification for supporting us – in every case – was that we’d done it before,” explains Atkins who brought sales and tech people onboard (almost all ex-Boats Group team members). “We’ve been

able to move fast because of the relationships we’ve had with people before, and we’re light on our feet. There’s less than 20 people in total.”

Now the company has about 375 customers split 50/50 between the US and Europe. Rightboat claims its price point is approx 10 per cent of that charged by the market leader (depending on product). Most of the current customers are family owned businesses.

“There are very few major corporate players so the typical broker and dealer is a small or medium sized enterprise with a limited budget and 80 per cent of their marketing spend goes online. If the cost of advertising goes up significantly it causes them a headache. People were looking for an alternative.”

Boats Group is a strong value proposition to big brokers but

as Atkins points out, more than 60 per cent of the yacht broker and dealer community is small to medium sized businesses and they have different economics to the big corporations.

“As the market leader has increased prices at different times of year, and in different areas, there have been small waves of people who can’t afford that solution any longer. If advertising online works, there is no need to think about changing it. If that becomes expensive, you know it’s hard to find an alternative to that supply. We find brokers and dealers like having us around as at the very least it gives them a negotiating position and a choice to jump across to us fairly seamlessly.

“The waves come every three months and now we’re also into

“We don’t have stuff that was built 15 years ago that needs maintaining. That enables us to move more quickly with a modern solution.”

Ian Atkins, CEO, Rightboat

organic customer growth. When we first launched a year ago, we had 100 brokers in two months that got onboard. Because of [our presence at] boat shows we were able to speak to them face to face and reassure them of who we are. Now it’s a steady hum, rather than wave after wave.

“We’re providing a simple service to people who need it. That’s exciting in its own way.” ■



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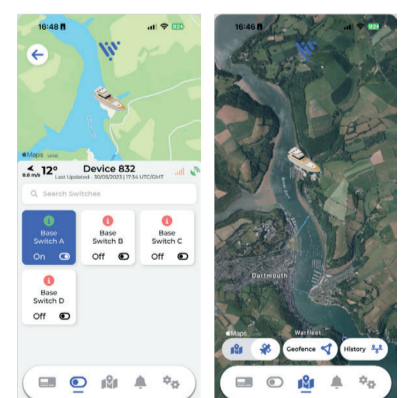
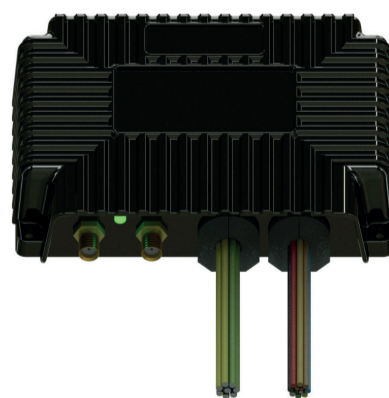
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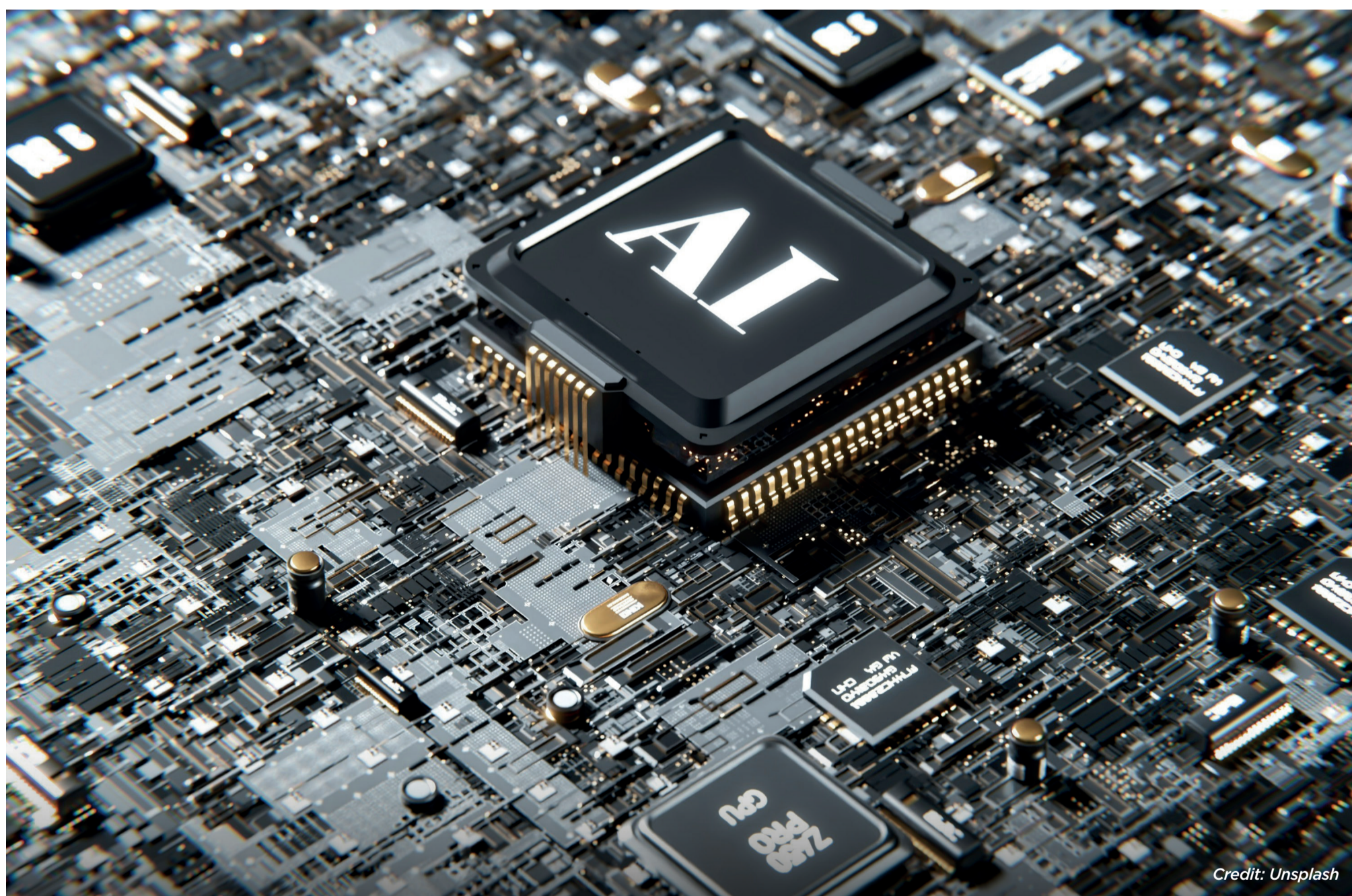


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AI and marine marketing

From SEO to customer engagement, how is AI changing marine marketing and what do companies need to do now to adapt?



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Artificial Intelligence (AI), namely generative AI, is redefining the landscape for marketers, communicators and media. Whether it's transforming traditional search engine optimisation (SEO) or it's creating new ways to understand and connect with customers, there are changes afoot that are impacting how customers consume information and how companies share information.

Ellen Bradley, chief brand officer of National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) in the US,

has been witnessing firsthand how new AI technology is changing the marine marketing landscape.

"In driving advocacy on behalf of our members and in helping connect the greater industry with boaters and future boaters through Discover Boating, NMMA is constantly exploring, testing and optimising how to most effectively share our industry's story.

When it comes to building relationships and connections with customers and future customers, Bradley says embracing AI is no

longer an option but a necessity for businesses seeking to thrive in a competitive landscape.

And it's not just marketers who should be thinking about it but entire organisations, across the C-suite.

"It's common to hear leaders in technology and business citing the statement by Dr. Andrew Ng, a professor at Stanford University who also founded the Google Deep Brain Learning Project, back in 2017, when he compared AI not to a new technology platform per se, but to electricity and the

tremendous change it brought to society," says Bradley.

"Today, AI-powered tools and the promise of what's to come with AI, is transforming how we communicate, connect, work, and play. In business, and particularly marketing, it has enabled companies to tailor their strategies to individual consumers on a massive scale, opening doors to engage customers in more meaningful ways than ever before.

"In marketing, one of the areas we're seeing dramatic shifts is in

SEO — something that's core to how a business is discovered within search engines like Google and Bing. Traditionally, SEO focused on keyword optimisation and backlink building."

Today, Bradley says AI is changing the SEO landscape, putting more emphasis on user experience and intent. Search engines like Google have been utilising AI algorithms for years to rank and display web pages based on their relevance and quality. These AI-powered algorithms are now more adept at understanding and interpreting search queries — getting to know the user searching for the content or information, leading to a more semantic and contextual approach to search.

As a result, a significant transformation brought by AI is what feels like a return to a prioritised focus on content relevance and quality.

"With AI, the importance of keyword-centric optimisation has diminished," explains Bradley. "This shift has made SEO more about delivering value through content and engaging users. For anyone who's a creative, communicator or storyteller, this is likely music to your ears and is a reminder of the important role that remains for human-powered creativity and storytelling."

At the same time, Bradley says marketers now have generative AI tools at their disposal to help create content and do so in a way that helps them personalise it so they're providing customers with greater value. "These tools can help marketers produce high-quality, relevant content more efficiently, enhancing SEO

performance. Again, human creativity remains crucial in this process," she adds.

"AI-driven tools have also further enhanced technical SEO processes. Machine learning algorithms can perform website audits, organise content and optimise performance at an unprecedented pace. They can analyse vast amounts of data, identify opportunities for improvement, and predict trends, enabling marketers to make data-driven decisions that enhance their SEO and content strategies, so content is more impactful to more people.

"One of the most significant advantages AI offers is its ability to analyse large amounts of data not only quickly, but accurately. In marketing, where customer data is abundant but often underutilised given the immense amount of time it can take to analyse, AI can be a game-changer.

"By employing machine learning algorithms, businesses can segment their customers based on preferences, behaviours and patterns. This targeted approach allows for hyper-personalised marketing campaigns that resonate with each individual customer, ultimately driving higher conversion rates and customer loyalty. And while these tools may not be commonplace for many small businesses just yet, they will be. Learning and understanding how they work now will help companies ensure they're not left behind."

AI can also leverage data from various sources, such as social media networks, search engines, and user browsing behaviour on a

website, to provide personalised product recommendations.

"By analysing a customer's purchase history, browsing activities on your site, and preferences, AI algorithms can predict their future needs and suggest relevant products or services. This level of personalisation can improve your customers' experience and therefore sales/engagement, in addition to increasing opportunities for cross-selling and upselling by making it easier to share relevant information and products with your customers," says Bradley.

Whether it's SEO, content creation, personalisation, customer engagement, data management and insights, or other areas of business, the speed at which AI technologies are advancing is remarkable.

Bradley notes that culture within companies remains critical — "Those companies that embrace their teams' exploration and provide an environment filled with psychological safety where it's okay to ask questions, share ideas and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences, will be the ones that naturally adapt.

"While AI is bringing a lot of exciting new ways of doing business, it's also bringing a great amount of uncertainty and for some, fear. Because of how fast moving it is, and because there remains a lot yet to understand, before companies dive into AI it's important to approach it with thought and intent, particularly when it comes to the myriad ethical questions that AI creates.

"[AI-driven tools] can analyse vast amounts of data, identify opportunities for improvement, and predict trends, enabling marketers to make data-driven decisions that enhance their SEO and content strategies."

Ellen Bradley, chief brand officer, National Marine Manufacturers Association

"Whether its data integrity, transparency on sourcing content, navigating the bias and discrimination that can come from AI, deep fakes and other misinformation, or the privacy and security risks of AI, before adapting it across a business, it's critical to ensure there are clear guardrails and ethical guidelines in place to protect employees, customers and business."

Like many businesses and trade associations, we know that everything we do, and the impact we can have, is rooted in our relationships — the ones we have, the ones we're building, and the ones that happen because of the great work we do on behalf of our existing customers and partners.

"It's this focus on relationships that has us looking at the impact AI is having, and may have, on how we continue to both cultivate and nurture relationships in a meaningful way. We know a lot of companies are grappling with the same and as an industry trade association, sharing what we're learning is an important part of our AI journey."

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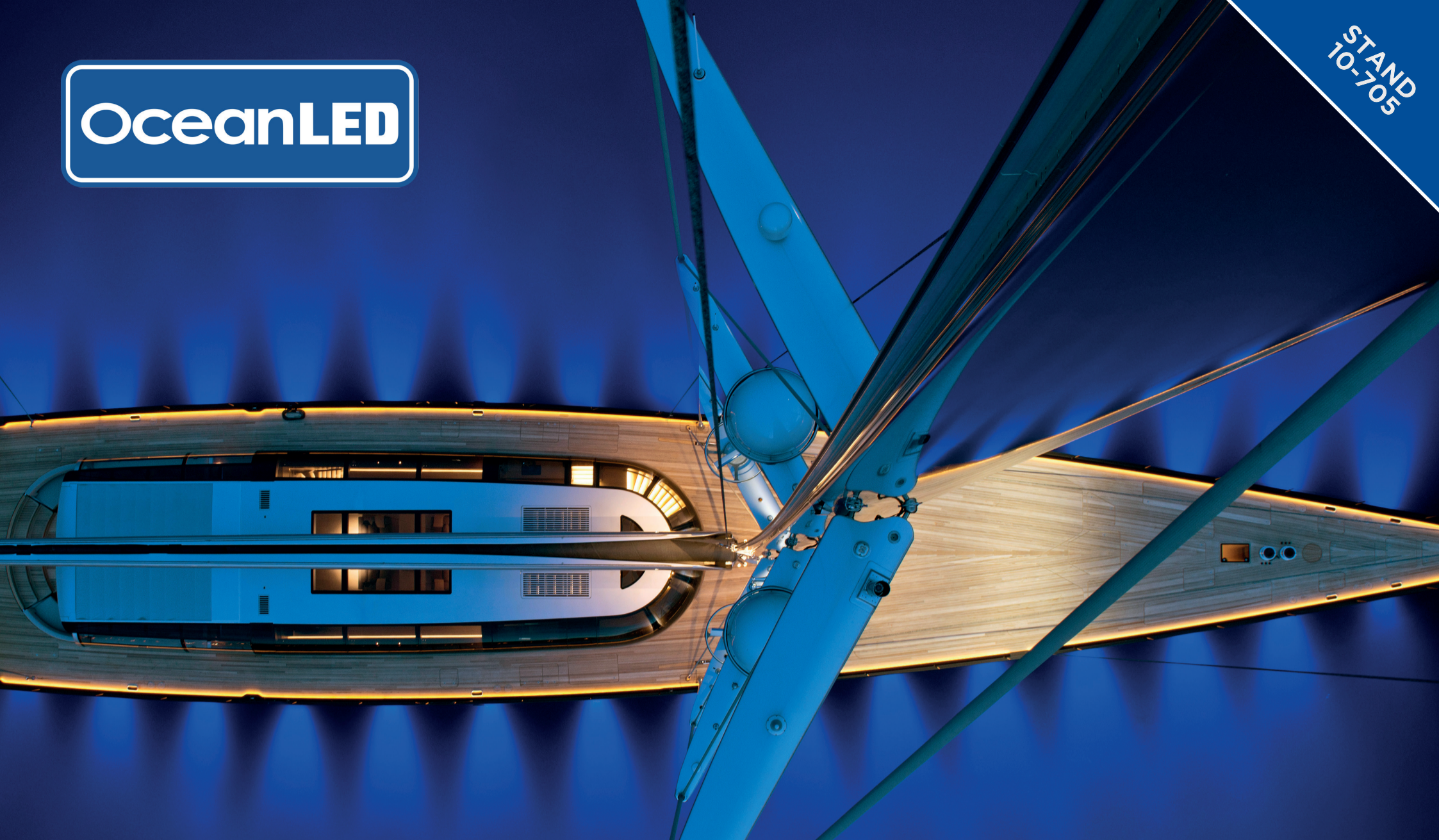


"In marketing, where customer data is abundant but often underutilised given the immense amount of time it can take to analyse, AI can be a game-changer."

Ellen Bradley, chief brand officer, National Marine Manufacturers Association



Ellen Bradley, chief brand officer, National Marine Manufacturers Association



The Hidden HERO Of Underwater Lighting

Have you ever noticed how a straw in a glass of water appears bent at the surface? It's light refraction, defined by something called Snell's law, and the same effect occurs with underwater lighting. The only way to mitigate this law of physics, is by using specifically designed underwater optics, like the ones found in the OceanLED product range.

First of all, it's important to understand a little bit of science...

The Law...

Snell's Law describes how light bends, or refracts, when it passes from one medium to another, such as air into water. This refraction occurs because light travels at different speeds in different media.

We won't dive into the science too much, but Snell's Law is calculable and can even be mathematically represented. Water has a higher refractive index than air, which means light slows down and bends towards the 'normal' when it enters water. The 'normal' being the direction the light face is pointing, and why underwater lights without optics suffer with such excessive amounts of light loss and inefficiency.

How Light Moves Through Water

When light enters water, it experiences a change in speed due to the higher density of water compared to air. This change in speed causes the light to bend. For example, if you shine a torch into a swimming pool at an angle, the light beam will bend downward. This bending effect is what makes objects underwater appear closer and larger than they are.

The Phenomenon

An interesting aspect of underwater lighting is the

reduction of the beam angle when light enters water. A light with a 180-degree (wide) beam in the air will have its beam angle reduced to about 97.2 degrees in water. This occurs because of the higher refractive index of water compared to air and why underwater optics are a no brainer. If the width of your potential light spread is already limited by physics, why wouldn't you focus those lost lumens and increase the efficiency and overall performance of your lights?

What does it all mean?

OPTICS MATTER IN UNDERWATER LIGHTING...

Improved Light Distribution: Optics help in distributing light evenly, reducing hotspots and shadows which is essential for creating visually appealing underwater lighting effects.

Enhanced Intensity and Focus: Optics concentrate light into more focused beams, supercharging your light output. It's like adding a big turbo to your car.

Energy Efficiency: By directing light precisely where it's needed, optics can enhance the efficiency of lighting systems, reducing energy consumption.

Versatility in Design: Angleable optic designs allow for versatile lighting solutions, allowing designers to create the best effects, no matter the shape of your boats hull.

Greater Simplicity: No one wants complicated

installations. Advanced optics allow you to achieve more, with less. Greater performance with fewer lights, which in the long run means reduced maintenance and costs.

Extended Product Lifespan: Advanced optics allow underwater lights with fewer fixture lumens, to achieve the same lighting effect as lights with far greater fixture lumens, which also require more power. By driving less power through the LEDs, the life expectancy of each light is greatly extended.

Environmental and Sustainability Benefits: The use of underwater optics has allowed OceanLED to become the first and only light manufacturer to have its products certified by the Water Revolution Foundation as sustainable solutions.

The Conclusion...

Embracing the laws of physics and the role of light optics is essential for achieving the best lighting effects in underwater environments. By leveraging advanced optical technologies, OceanLED has enhanced achievable lighting effects for every vessel.



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Joined up thinking

Selden's quest to make sail plans easier to handle started with a simple and practical concept. Matt Sheahan looks at how it quickly developed into a fully integrated solution

There is clearly nothing new in pushing a button to control a sail. No matter what the size of boat, from 20-footer to supermaxi, powered systems are commonplace across the sport. But what is less common, especially aboard typical family cruisers, is an integrated system for sail handling and control. And as more technology has become available and the knowledge filtered through from the big boat scene, rig and deck gear supplier Selden could see that the time was right for change. The company also believes that there are some practical, down to earth reasons too.

"In general boats are getting bigger, sailors are getting older and companies like ourselves need to be able to provide systems that make larger boats easier to sail with fewer people, it's as simple as that," says Selden's managing director Steve Norbury. "Traditionally, we

have supplied electrically powered, headsail furlers and motors for in-mast furling that run on 12 or 24V systems which are wired into the boat's system and operate as completely independent units. The motors have always been quite big because they've been 12 volt motors and the cabling has always been large to avoid current drop.

"But there are more electrical systems on boats nowadays that are standalone systems. So, it struck us that having units that can't talk to each other doesn't really make much sense."

Integration innovation

The overall plan was to create an integrated system where key elements could communicate with each other and where new components could be added at a later date, be it during the build or through the life of the boat. The team started by creating their

Synchronised Mainsail Furling (SMF), at the heart of which is Selden's E40i winch.

"The idea was that it would be fitted on the coach roof so it's got no gearbox cut out underneath it and it has no handle. All that comes out are two wires. This means that you can fit it to a deck without making any cut outs, which makes it particularly suitable as a replacement winch or as a retrofit, as well as making it easier to incorporate in a new design," he continues. "In its most basic form it's an electric halyard winch. But from there, we then developed a system where it could talk to the motor in an electric furling mast, which is what SMF is all about.

"With your outhaul around the E40i winch, when you press the button to unfurl the mainsail, the electric winch pulls in your outhaul and they synchronise together by controlling

their speeds. When you take your finger off the button, the system automatically sets your outhaul tension for you."

Behind the scenes Selbus, the bus system, allows the connectivity and communication but it is also the backbone for what has become a more sophisticated and capable system. One of the key elements is stepping the voltage up from 12/24V to 42V, which allows the use of small motors and smaller gauge cables. Each motor has an MCU (motor control unit) which sends data around the bus to allow the other components to communicate.

"From here we have added our Furlex systems which also run off the same bus. But as well as headsail furling, we have been able to add our GX and CX furlers for asymmetric and code zero sails, all without having to make any major changes on board or install large



“We have an advantage here in that any of our new electric winches can operate as an SMF winch and run off Selbus.”

Steve Norbury,
managing director, Selden

E40i winch

diameter cabling and big motors.”

The development hasn't stopped here; hybrid powered systems was the next item on Selden's development list and a natural progression from the new control network.

The combination of a one button operation for SMF and a manually operated outhaul, the next stage was to include a hydraulic ram in the boom for the outhaul. Once again, using an MCU and connecting it to Selbus means that the mainsail furler can talk directly to the outhaul ram and ensure that the pair work in sync as well as ensuring that the correct outhaul tension is maintained throughout the operation. The result is a one button operation for furling in and one for out.

But to make the process easier, Selden has integrated this operation with the boat's backstay.

“Furling sails operate best when the mast is straight,” he explains. “So, in an ideal world, when you are at the dock you've released your backstay tension when you unfurl and you keep that backstay tension off until you start sailing. Once you're underway you tighten the backstay.

“Each time you furl or unfurl, you should ease your backstay tension for the process before pulling it back on, but in reality that's often hard to do when sailing. But, with a hydraulic backstay that's connected to Selbus the system will do this automatically.

“So, when you push the unfurl button, it lets your backstay off and when you stop unfurling, it pulls your backstay back on. Then when you furl the entire mainsail away into the cavity, the system knows this and will then ease your backstay.”

But, as Norbury goes on to outline the next phases of development, many of which are still under wraps, there is another piece to add to their puzzle that has been made possible by the development of their E40i winch.

“What we realised was that the E40i winch is great on the coachroof but it isn't suitable as a primary winch. And yet what's clear in the 40ft to 60ft market is how many designs now have all their controls led back to two big winches in the cockpit rather than on the coachroof.

“We have an advantage here in that any of our new electric winches can operate as an SMF winch and run off Selbus. This means that any of the furling operations for any of the sails can be carried out from behind the wheel.”

To go from the development of a simple yet innovative electric winch to such a versatile system that can be created step by step is an impressive achievement. And while Selden is tight lipped about what the future holds, once you've grasped the concept of the bus and how much information could be coursing through its cables, it starts to become clear that this is just the beginning. ■



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Lumitec Continues to Lead Innovation in Marine Lighting with Poco 4

Lumitec, the premier LED marine lighting manufacturer in the United States, has built a strong reputation for its innovative approach to product development. Since its founding in 2007, the company has become known for reliability and quality, becoming an international supplier to some of the world's leading boat builders. Despite its global reach, Lumitec remains committed to its core mission: advancing the marine lighting industry through groundbreaking innovation.

In 2018, Lumitec launched its Poco Digital Lighting Control System, a game-changing product built on the company's award-winning PLI (Power Line Instruction) technology. The concept behind PLI is simple but revolutionary—commands are sent to lighting fixtures over the existing power wires. This innovation eliminated the need for extensive rewiring, making installation easier while adding sophisticated control over onboard lighting systems.

The Poco system provides seamless control of Lumitec's PLI-enabled lights through any compatible multi-function display (MFD) or connected smart device. Its advanced features, ease of use, and unbeatable value quickly made it a favorite among boat owners and manufacturers alike.

Today, Lumitec has taken its innovation to the next level with the release of Poco 4. This latest version builds on previous successes while introducing new features that further enhance onboard lighting control. Among these upgrades are Intelligent Sound-to-Light, NMEA 2000 compatibility, and CAN bus integration.

Poco 4's Intelligent Sound-to-Light feature sets it apart from competitor's products that offer a more generic approach to their sound presets. With Poco 4, users can fully customize their lighting experience, programming

different light families and channels to respond to music in unique ways. For instance, under-gunwale lights can be set to "dance" to the rhythm of a song, while overhead down lights on the same channel remain static. At the same time, underwater lights on a separate channel can pulse in sync with the bass, creating a dynamic and immersive light show—all using a standard 2-wire DC electrical system. Existing Lumitec PLI-enabled lights are fully compatible with the new Poco 4 system.

In addition to Intelligent Sound-to-Light, Poco 4 introduces NMEA 2000 compatibility, enabling network activation of lighting commands. It also offers CAN bus integration, allowing boat manufacturers to incorporate lighting control into their custom user interfaces for seamless operation across all onboard systems.

With Poco 4, Lumitec is not just providing lighting control but enabling a new level of ambiance customization. The ability to tailor lighting to personal preferences and musical cues opens up a world of creative possibilities—all at the touch of a button.

“

With Poco 4, we're not just controlling lights; we're creating a new level of ambiance customization, allowing users to fully personalize their onboard lighting experience—all at the touch of a button.

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Poco 4 is compatible with all major MFD brands and the app is available for Apple and Android devices.

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Time to recharge

Aqua superPower's COO, Karen Gill, asks how the industry can help accelerate the growth of electric propulsion in the marine industry



Test rides on the all-electric Vita SEAL supercharged by the Aqua 75 at Marina Vela Barcelona.

Electric propulsion in the marine sector has evolved from a visionary concept into a practical and sustainable solution, with an increasing number of vessels transitioning to cleaner energy. Global and local environmental regulations are driving change in the marine sector, and there is significant momentum in the adoption of electrification across both the leisure and commercial sectors.

Despite progress in marine electrification several challenges remain, particularly around infrastructure, standardisation, and financial incentives.

Expansion of charging networks
As electric boats gain

popularity in both commercial and recreational sectors, the development of reliable charging infrastructure is essential. Several factors are driving the growth of marine charging networks:

Grid connections: One major hurdle is the availability and strength of grid connections. Popular boating areas like lakes, coastal towns, and historical sites often have outdated electrical infrastructure, limiting the deployment of high-power charging stations.

Standardisation and interoperability: Different connectors and communication protocols create uncertainty for businesses and hinder growth.

Standardising these elements facilitates the integration of new electric vessels and charging infrastructure. Aqua superPower works closely with boat brands (OEMs) and powertrain manufacturers. These collaborations standardise technology protocols, ensuring the user has a hassle-free experience, gets a fast charge, and protects their batteries.

Data-driven deployment: As more electric boats are deployed, data from vessel operations – such as usage patterns, charging frequency, and range – can inform where and how charging stations should be built. This ensures infrastructure is deployed in areas where it's most needed.

Integration with broader energy networks: Electrified marine fleets offer opportunities for integrating with larger energy grids. Technologies like V2G can help balance grid demand, but this requires alignment between the maritime and energy sectors on technical standards and policies.

How to accelerate growth
To accelerate the transition to electric boats and charging infrastructure, several key actions are required:

Standardisation: Much like the automotive industry's unified electric vehicle charging standards, the marine sector needs common standards for connectors and communication

protocols. Working with OEMs and drivetrain manufacturers to ensure compatibility will ease adoption and reduce costs.

Bureaucratic hurdles often delay green infrastructure projects, including marine charging networks.

Simplified planning and approvals: Bureaucratic hurdles often delay green infrastructure projects, including marine charging networks. Streamlining the approval process and prioritising carbon reduction projects would support quicker growth.

Incentives for commercial users: Offering financial incentives to commercial operators like taxi boats, work boats, and aquaculture vessels would encourage the adoption of electric solutions. Pilot projects demonstrating real-world use cases will build confidence in the viability of electric vessels. We are currently actively involved in multiple government-subsidised projects in both the UK and the US that will serve as valuable use-cases and help drive adoption of marine electrification.

Limiting access to waterways for diesel and petrol-powered boats could also accelerate electrification.

Restrictions on fossil fuel-powered boats: Limiting access to waterways for diesel and petrol-powered boats could also accelerate electrification. For instance, Venice could restrict certain canals to electric boats, while countries like Germany have already implemented electric-only lakes.

Financial incentives and investment: Governments must introduce financial mechanisms – such as tax breaks, subsidies, or zero-interest loans – to bridge the cost gap between electric and traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vessels. In the UK, lowering taxes on electricity could also encourage a faster switch to electric boating.

Currently, Aqua’s superPower’s network expansion is focused on key boating markets such as the US, the south of France, the Italian riviera, the UK, and the Nordics. The company’s expansion is driven by both favourable market conditions and financial incentives available to fund electric boats and charging infrastructure. For instance, in the UK, we are actively involved in several

subsidised marine electrification projects through the Department of Transport’s Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition and the UK SHORE Zero Emission Vessels and Infrastructure (ZEVI) competition.

The scope of these projects spans a wide range of initiatives, from establishing charging infrastructure for passenger and freight ferries on the River Thames to providing recreational charging along the UK’s south coast. Additionally, Aqua superPower is supporting the transition to electric work boats and advancing vessel-to-grid (V2G) technology.

Governments must introduce financial mechanisms – such as tax breaks, subsidies, or zero-interest loans – to bridge the cost gap between electric and traditional internal combustion engine vessels.

Overcoming industry challenges Despite the progress in the marine electrification field, action is required in relation to skilled labour, consumer education and powertrain technology.

Skills shortage: A lack of skilled workers with expertise in high-voltage systems and marine installations poses a challenge. Investment in specialised training programmes will be crucial to closing this gap.

Battery safety concerns: There remains a perception issue around the safety of marine battery systems. Regulatory bodies, along with industry players, must engage in myth-busting campaigns and educate the market on the rigorous safety standards that electric boats meet today.

Differentiating powertrain technologies: Many people assume all electric boats are the same, but there is a significant difference between low-voltage (48V) powertrains and high-voltage systems (300-800V). High-voltage systems enable fast charging and support larger, high-performance vessels. Educating both customers and industry professionals on these distinctions will help ensure that the right technologies are adopted for the right use cases.

While marine electrification is progressing fast, addressing these challenges through coordinated industry and government efforts will ensure the sector continues to grow sustainably and efficiently. ■



Karen Gill, COO, Aqua superPower



Vita SEAL supercharging on Aqua 75 via AquaLink



Aqua 75 marine fast charger with CCS connector



The first Aqua superPower marine fast charge station in San Francisco Bay at Westpoint Harbor

All images courtesy of Aqua superPower

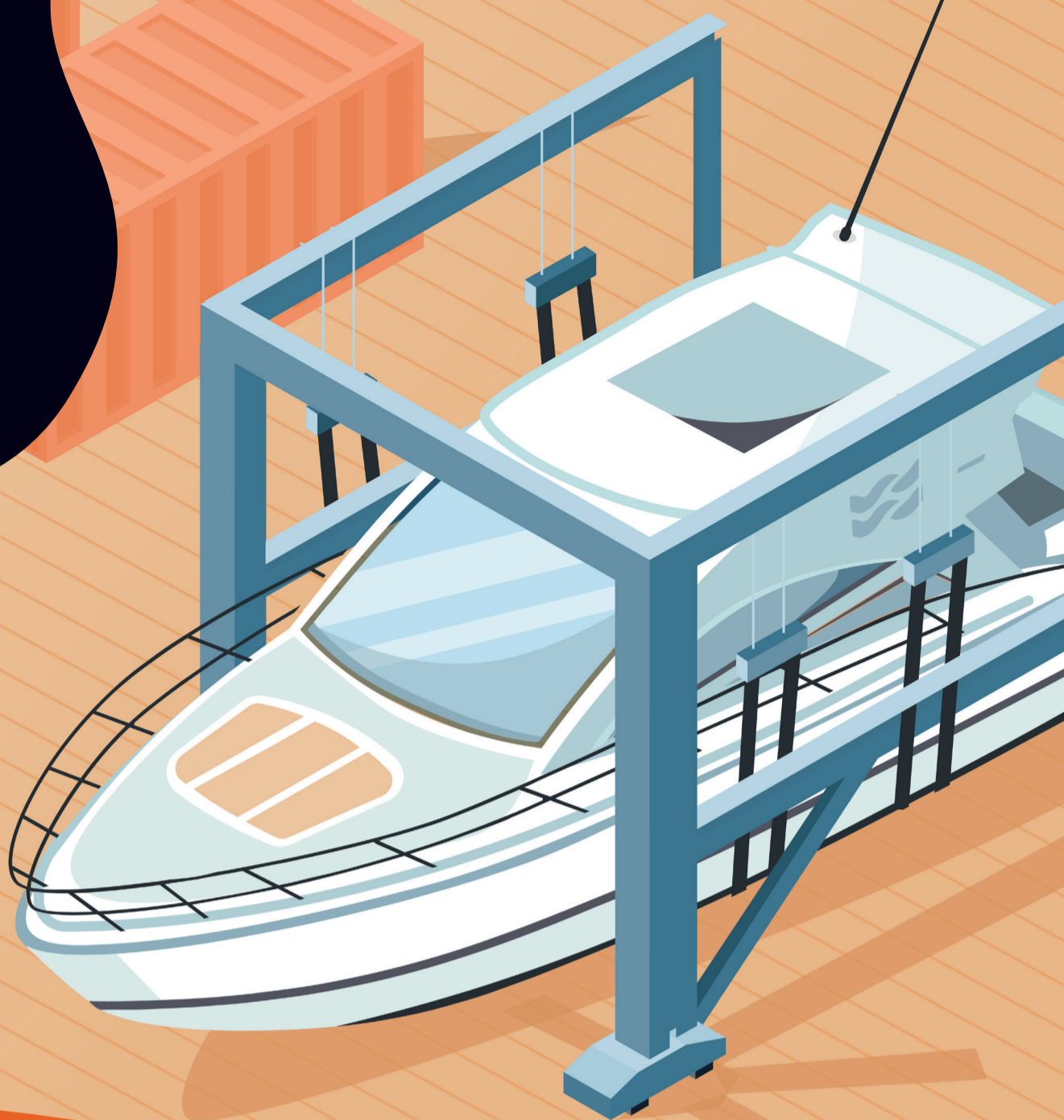
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How is Yanmar approaching electric propulsion?

In September 2024, Yanmar Marine International (YMI) launched the E-Saildrive, its first electric propulsion product designed to provide an easy transition to emission-free sailing. This is a significant yet not wholly surprising move by the engine and equipment manufacturer, particularly as sustainability is increasingly important across the entire marine industry.

Stijn Takes, product manager of YMI's global marine sales department, explains that the company launched the E-Saildrive series as part of its Yanmar Green Challenge 2050, which underscores its goal of achieving zero environmental impact by 2050. The challenge aims to reduce the environmental impact across the entire production chain – from suppliers to customers.

“This new range of electric saildrives aligns with Yanmar’s vision of promoting sustainable solutions in the marine industry. The launch is a step toward providing boat owners with easy-to-install, emission-free propulsion options, helping the industry transition toward cleaner energy.”

The E-Saildrive range utilises a plug and play platform and is available in three models – the SDe7, the SDe10 and the SDe15, delivering up to 15kW of power for sailboats under 40ft (depending on application and displacement). The

range is designed as a drop-in replacement for Yanmar’s YM engine series.

During the launch, Floris Lettinga, director of sales and marketing at Yanmar Marine International, said: “Our electric propulsion system is different to others on the market. Our technicians have created a clever, integrated system on a plug and play platform which helps boaters to easily switch to electric propulsion.”

Takes says interest in the new range has been positive: “The fast number of reactions from the market has far exceeded our expectations. We have been positively surprised by the number of visitors on our booth at the Cannes Yachting Festival that came to visit and to see the SDe series in person. Ever since, we have been receiving many follow up questions across all segments of the industry.”

Development of the E-Saildrives started just a few years ago and Yanmar plans to continue expanding its electric and sustainable propulsion solutions. “Our projects can take several years. The launch in 2024 marks a significant



milestone for Yanmar as part of its ongoing efforts toward sustainability,” adds Takes.

Takes notes that the plug-and-play feature was crucial in making the transition to electric power easy for both boatbuilders and owners. “By ensuring the E-Saildrive could fit existing engine mounts with no hull modifications, we minimised installation complexity,” he says.

Developing an integrated system with components such as the motor, controller, and cooling system required in-house design efforts to ensure optimal longevity, while maintaining simplicity.

Collaborations with partner boatbuilders are also of key importance, particularly in this period of transition for the industry where all companies are considering their eco optics and sustainability.

“The partnerships are essential for developing new products and driving innovation. A prime example of this collaboration is Yanmar’s work with Saffier Yachts, where the first-ever boat fitted with

“By ensuring the E-Saildrive could fit existing engine mounts with no hull modifications, we minimised installation complexity.”
Stijn Takes, product manager, YMI global marine sales

Yanmar’s SDe10 electric saildrive, the Saffier 33, was created.

“The collaboration with Saffier Yachts allowed Yanmar to integrate the SDe10 saildrive into a cutting-edge vessel without requiring significant modifications. Yanmar’s focus on maintaining long-term partnerships ensures that new innovations, like the E-Saildrive, meet the needs of boatbuilders and customers alike, driving both quality and technological advancement.”

In steps to make the manufacturer’s lineup more eco friendly, the full range of YMI diesel engines has been approved for the use of HVO100 fuel. “Today we are proud of our newly launched SDe Electric Saildrive series and our HVO100 compliance. But in line with our Green Challenge 2050 we will drive further innovations in this area. The marine industry can expect Yanmar to introduce more electric and hybrid solutions, reflecting its commitment to reducing greenhouse gases and achieving sustainability throughout the entire production chain.” ■



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MIN talks to some of the startups selected for this year's Start-Up Pavilion at METSTRAD

This year 15 companies are showcasing in the Start-Up Pavilion at METSTRAD. The Start-Up Pavilion – organised by Yachting Ventures – offers a platform for emerging companies to showcase ideas and new products.

X-fender

X-fender claims to be the world's first flatpack boat fender. The Finnish startup is now commercialising its space-saving airless boat fender and is entertaining global interest. The concept was born when one of the co-founders was on holiday and began wondering what a fender would look like if it could be folded away for storing.

"This question lingered," says Kalle Kare, founder & CEO, "and so began the whole design process that led to the X-Fender product we have today. Boat fenders have not changed in several decades yet there are many problems associated with them and we wanted to address these problems." According to the startup, the X-Fender offers several benefits for boat owners thanks to its foldable, airless design. Kare continues: "Customer

feedback has been overwhelmingly positive so we really feel that we have something that boaters have been waiting for." The design of X-fenders means they are lower profile to store and when in use, owners can open them up to broaden the protective area.

Kare is always open to collaboration and says on entering the marine field: "We feel that we have a solid business plan but it would be nice to know if there is something that we have missed.

"Our biggest opportunity is the fact that everybody needs fenders and nobody seems to like the current ones. Our biggest challenge is to get boaters to recognise why X-fender would be a better product than the old fenders. The market is a bit conservative so our biggest challenge might be encouraging people to challenge their old perspectives."

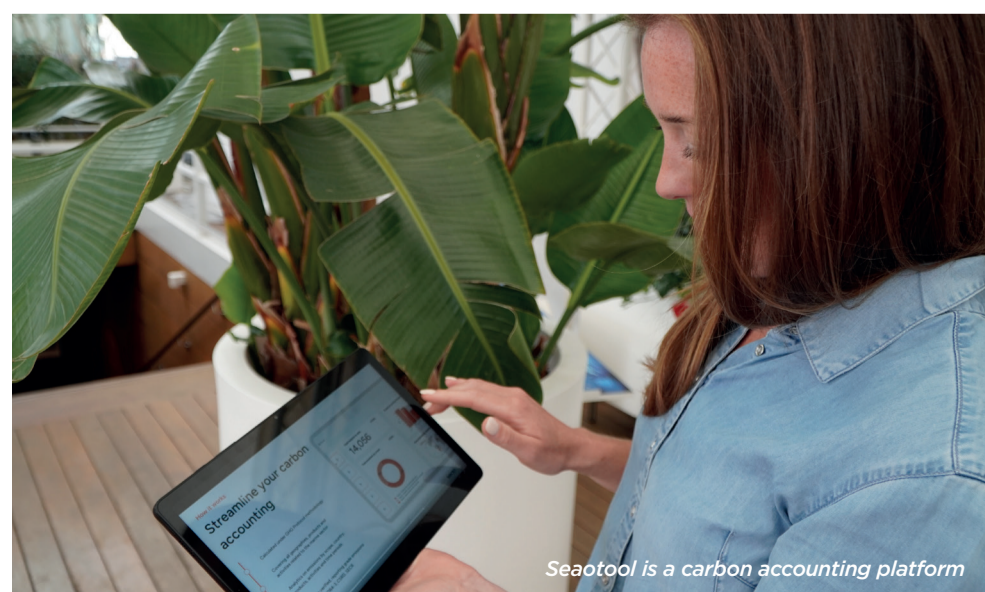
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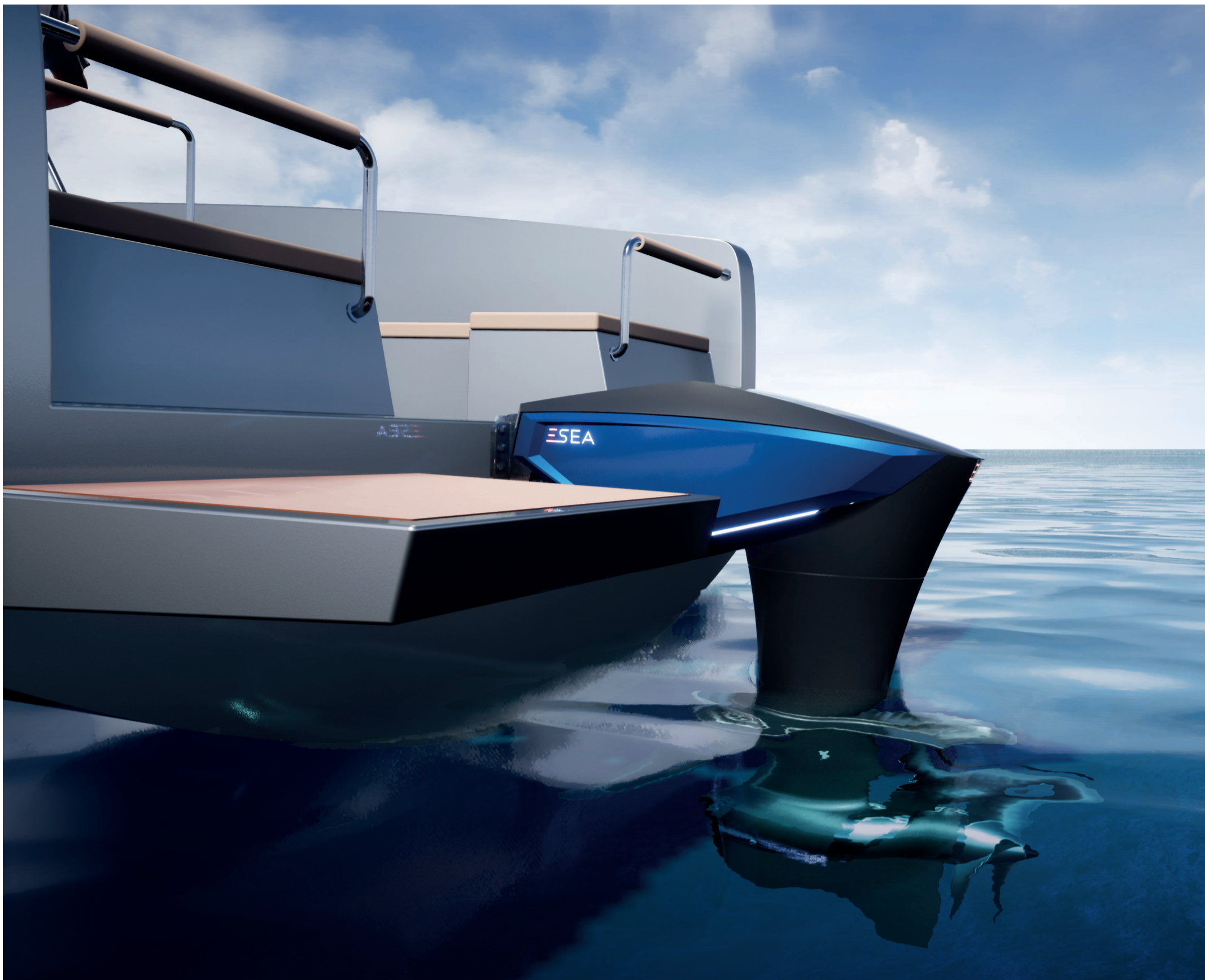
Seatool is a carbon accounting platform purpose-built for the marine industry. The company



X-fender



Seatool is a carbon accounting platform



developed its platform to respond to the growing need for ESG and emissions reporting in the industry.

Zennor Pascoe, CEO, says: “We knew, from previous experience, that when you are running carbon footprints for complex organisations with specific and complex operational profiles, the process of running carbon footprints and accessing data for sustainability related decisions and investments is made much easier if you use a sector specific tool. There wasn’t a really comprehensive carbon accounting platform designed specifically for the leisure and commercial marine sectors... so we built one.”

Pascoe says the startup has two types of competitor; corporate carbon accounting platforms and shipping carbon accounting platforms.

“While both are very good, we are the only solution that provides a bespoke carbon accounting tool

for the small commercial and leisure marine sector for both corporate and vessel emissions accounting across all three scopes, and produces data that is compliant to reporting under frameworks such as Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting (SECR) etc.,” he adds.

Seaotool has noted more readiness to adopt this technology in the EU, as the CSRD emissions requires reporting of data that the Seaotool is built to deliver.

“One big lesson has been understanding how to approach and talk about sustainability and emissions reporting to the industry. While the industry knows that sustainability is a priority, due to unclear regulations and requirements for the leisure and small commercial marine sector, everybody is waiting for clear guidelines on best practice before real action on emissions reduction will take place,” says Pascoe.

“There are huge opportunities for us as companies the world over have to start reporting emissions for compliance or voluntary purposes. Every time we run a carbon footprint, we deliver knowledge to a client about their emissions that they didn’t know. And we enable them to make better decisions to reduce it. The biggest challenge is the lack of clarity from the IMO on the wider marine sector in terms of best practise for emissions reporting for vessels.”

www.seaquestr.io

Monimoto

Monimoto is a GPS tracker and a smartphone app, which has been highly successful in the motorcycle aftermarket segment.

The company is now entering the marine market with Monimoto 9 – a battery-powered, GPS-based tracker designed to help prevent theft, provide instant boat movement alerts and enable fast recovery.

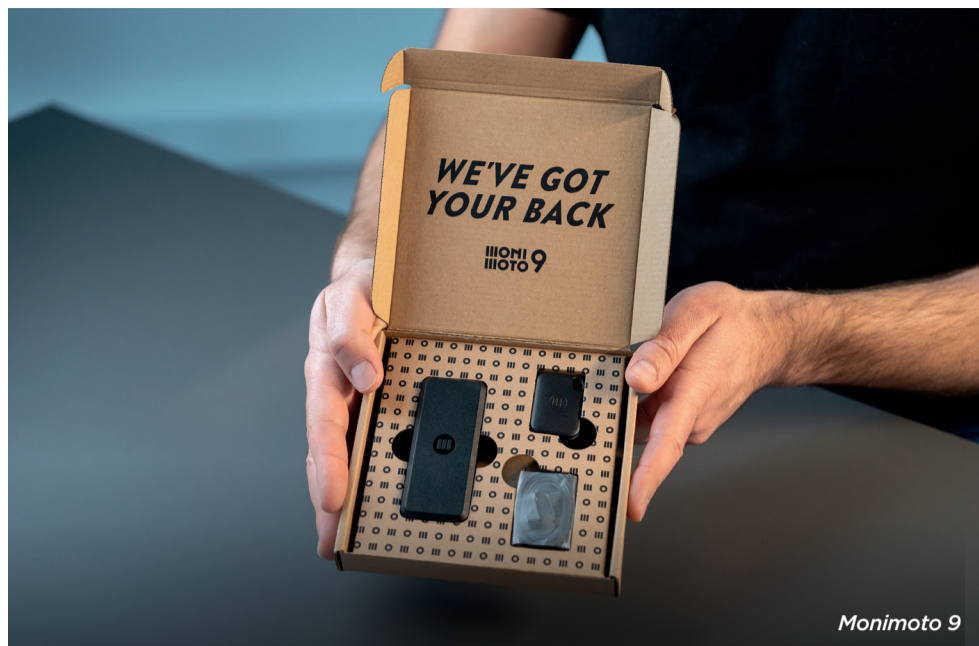
Andrius Bruno Rimkunas, co-founder, says the team identified a lack of simple, reliable, and affordable anti-theft solutions specifically designed for outboard engines, boats, and other valuable marine assets.

Monimoto 9 requires no professional installation and is battery-powered. It offers real-time tracking, instant alerts, and long battery life. “The biggest lesson has been understanding the importance of user simplicity,” says Rimkunas. “Consumers want a product that doesn’t require extensive installation or maintenance. We’ve also learned that offering high-quality support and educating customers on the benefits of anti-theft devices greatly increases user satisfaction and product success.”

“Having learned valuable lessons in the motorcycle niche, we believe Monimoto will become unbeatable in helping boat owners protect their property. We see future iterations offering even



ESEA Propulsion



Monimoto 9



Suspension System Technologies

more robust features. The biggest opportunity lies in expanding into more specialised marine niches, such as protecting outboard engines and personal watercraft, where theft rates are rising.”

While Monimoto can be utilised in any boating area, the GPS tracker could be particularly useful for boat owners using remote harbours and marinas with limited security infrastructure. Rimkunas adds: “We are in discussions with several marine dealerships and distribution networks to expand Monimoto 9’s presence in this sector.”

www.monimoto.com

Suspension Systems

Suspension Systems specialises in lower profile suspension technology that counters seat vibration. Peter Johnson, CEO, says: “Boat seat suspensions take up precious space due to having to sit on a pedestal or needing 20-30cm of space under the seat to provide shock and

vibration protection. Our boat seat suspension is 11cm high – 1/3 to 1/2 the thickness of our competitors and fits where most conventional suspensions cannot.

“To absorb shocks, traditional boat seat suspensions have to be stiff and unforgiving. As a result, the fatiguing, high-frequency vibration from normal wave chatter just passes through the suspension to the seat occupant. Rather than being stiff and unforgiving, our suspension provides a soft ride when going over wave chatter and opens and stiffens when going over large waves, providing proactive shock protection. None of our competitors provide proactive shock protection.”

In terms of penetrating the boat seat market, the next step for the startup is finding the right business partners. “We want to license our revolutionary, patented, high-performing, low-profile suspension design, rather than build and directly sell seats, so we need to find willing and

“We want to license our revolutionary, patented, low-profile suspension design, rather than build and directly sell seats, so we need to find interested manufacturing and distribution partners.”

Peter Johnson, CEO, Suspension System Technologies

interested manufacturing and distribution partners.

“The opportunities for our product are daunting and large as shock and vibration mitigation is not unique to boats. Our technology has been tested in land vehicles and, compared to conventional seat suspensions, reduces the vibration by up to 50 per cent. The biggest challenge, is to generate the capital to be able to develop, expand and explore in parallel all the addressable markets.”

www.suspension-systems.com

ESEA Propulsion

Founded in Menorca, Spain, ESEA Propulsion is building the next generation of electric outboards.

Carlos Puerta, CEO and co-founder says: “We saw that there were not many improvements in terms of mechanical design in the industry of electric outboards. In addition, conventional outboards generally have big volume, which results in less space in the back of the board. One of the advantages that electrification brings you is the chance to rethink the whole design and play with the elements in order to get an alternative distribution system.”

Puerta says the team has developed a system that offers customers low line design with less volume. “The solution gives not only higher ergonomics for the crew but also an extra available capacity for boatbuilders to redefine the space in the deck.”

According to ESEA, most products offering the same performance



range are outboards based on refits, consisting of installing electric instead of combustion engines but keeping the same mechanical architecture.

Reflecting on the company journey so far, Puerta believes there are three main factors that make it easier to achieve success. "First, good project design and planning is very important. The uniqueness of the idea is good but it is more important to design a very concise business plan explaining how you answer a market need and how you will execute that. Second, you must plan all resources – squeezing them carefully to give as much results to potential investors. Third, and the most important for me, it is to surround yourself with a team that will push the project beyond the objectives."

The startup is currently working with a research and development test centre. Before coming to

market, the team will run trials and then on-water tests will follow.

While electrification has a certain place in the future of the leisure marine market, external and socioeconomic factors make the outlook a little tricky to predict. "One of the main questions in the marine industry is how will the market react to electrification in the mid-term. We are all trying to figure out an answer to that but nobody really knows how it will grow fast in the next few years. We see some numbers and projections for the future but nowadays there are many external factors that affect this transformation," says Puerta.

"Each country will react to this trend in a different and uncertain way so adapting strategies for different paced markets will be a huge challenge for companies like ours."

www.esiapropulsion.com

Seals

Seals products, developed with nanotechnology, create a barrier against weathering on treated surfaces, from gelcoat and PVC to glass, fabric and steel.

Francesco Losavio, Seals sales manager, explains: "Hulls, sails, portholes, motors, and dinghies all need special protection that the traditional coating technology cannot adequately offer. Seals, with its nanotechnology, provides an innovative solution that protects boats from environmental elements, ensuring durability and reducing the need for frequent

maintenance, thus significantly lowering maintenance costs." Losavio believes products currently on the market do not effectively prohibit or inhibit boat degradation following exposure to harsh environments. "Seals is fine-tuned to protect against the harsh elements of the marine environment that include salt, corrosion, and UV exposure. We are the only ones on the market using nano diamond technology, which is able to provide superior protection with a very limited quantity of product. Existing alternatives are merely adaptations of generic coatings used, for example, on cars or bicycles and applied to surfaces that are just not the same."

The startup has worked with a number of companies and boat owners to treat vessels ranging from sailing boats to catamarans to luxury motor yachts. Seals is currently setting up a distribution network through service companies to expand its reach.

Losavio expects the products to be well received across all segments: "With Seals, charter companies will appreciate the significant reduction in the time and water required to prepare the boat for the next rental; the yacht owner will find that crew members will spend less time on daily maintenance; boat manufacturers will provide boats to clients that will maintain their value longer; boat owners will discover the ease of maintaining the boat on their own.

"Today's boat owners are adopting

"Hulls, sails, portholes, motors and dinghies all need protection that the traditional coating technology cannot adequately offer... Seals reduces the need for frequent maintenance."

Francesco Losavio, sales manager, Seals

a forward-thinking approach, increasingly focused on long-term product quality, cost reduction and sustainable practices. They value and prioritise innovation and eco friendliness. Seals aligns perfectly with these evolving priorities."

www.seals.boats/en/

The other startups in Yachting Venture's Start-Up Pavilion include AirMarker – the emergency visual beacon; AnywherEnergy Systems, a small scalable power generation system based on solid-oxide fuel cell and BlueGrid Insights – a tool to inform pathways towards vessel decarbonisation. Also on show will be BoatOn, an app and web-based maintenance management system; Helios Marine, manufacturer of modular and flexible IP67 marine battery systems using LFP cells; iWarranty, a new warranty management system; Supiore, a new solar panel bimini, SimplyDC, a range of modular DC power modular components, and Other Skies, offering three-dimensional creative outputs for designers. ■





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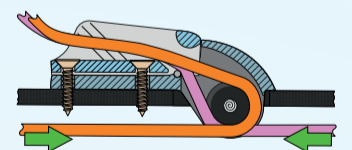
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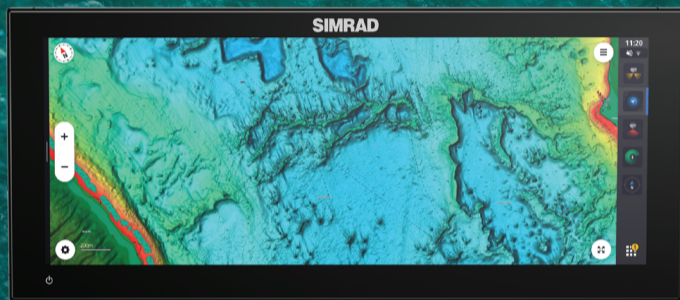
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Energy developer



What is next on the sustainability horizon for the *Energy Observer* project?

Energy Observer is the world's first autonomous vessel to navigate the oceans using a mix of renewable energies and hydrogen produced on board from sea water. The remodelled catamaran took a historic voyage around the globe for seven years testing renewable energies including hydrogen, wind and solar power. Its trials have already made impressions on the recreational marine market and the vessel completed its epic voyage last summer in St Malo.

Founder Victorien Erussard spoke to *MIN* about the groundbreaking vessel and the invaluable knowledge the project has gathered about marine sustainability during its 68,000 nautical mile voyage.

Solar power results

One of the laboratory vessel's key trials involved photovoltaic solutions. As *Energy Observer* traversed vastly different environmental conditions, solar power was put to the test in various harsh environments. "First, for solutions using photovoltaic panels stuck on the

bridge, a tropical region (which could be seen as a very productive area for photovoltaic systems) is actually not the most efficient area," Erussard explains.

"On one side, solar panels stuck on the bridge will not be cooled easily, therefore, on very warm days with no wind, these panels can get very warm (up to 80°C was measured on the surface of some *Energy Observer* photovoltaic panels in Seychelles). This comes with two downsides: it will make the plastic material age quicker and it will impact the productivity as the maximum power output of a solar panel decrease as the temperature rises. In tropical areas hanging panels should probably be preferred to limit this loss of efficiency. This is exemplified by the bifacial photovoltaic panels used by *Energy Observer*, which also allow for very good aesthetic and light penetration."

While tropical areas are warmer, days are shorter so outside of the tropics, energy conversion can be better over the course of a day even if the maximum solar

radiation is lower. As an example, the best day in terms of solar energy conversion for *Energy Observer* was around 145kWh, harvested close to San Francisco in May 2021.

Conformable panels were "very useful to increase the power capability of the installation" as they could be placed "in a wide range of areas and shapes of boats and they have shown very good results in less warm areas."

Erussard continues: "One other behaviour to be highlighted for marine applications is the impact of multiple orientations of photovoltaic panels. By having multiple orientations and by grouping panels in photovoltaic fields of panels with the same orientation, it helps to maintain an acceptable production."

Reflecting on the journey

After seven years, there have been numerous milestones with *Energy Observer*. "Depending on who you ask this question to, answers could be very different, but some unforgettable moments include

"*Energy Observer* is the world's first autonomous vessel to navigate the oceans using a mix of renewable energies and hydrogen produced on board from sea water."

Victorian Erussard, founder, *Energy Observer*

reaching Spitsbergen onboard a boat with very low environmental impact, while this location is one of the most impacted by climate change," says Erussard.

"Or the first transatlantic crossing, during the world lockdown in the first half of 2020." Erussard says it felt emblematic of the entire concept as the boat is self reliant and resilient. "With no need to dock for refuelling when reaching a destination *Energy Observer* could wait for the situation to end, (and the fridges were full enough)."

New projects are on the horizon for 2025 and beyond. *Energy Observer* - the company - is already



Energy Observer arriving in Paris in 2024. Credit: A Conty/Energy Observer

working on the concept of a new laboratory vessel (equivalent in size to the first) called *Energy Observer 3 / EO3*. It is hoped there will be a new expedition project with the *EO3* catamaran using an energy mix of high temperature fuel cells capable of using different types of fuel. *EO3* will experiment with synthetic fuels called e-fuels, and associated technologies and energy storage systems.

Energy Observer 2 and 3

Through its subsidiary EOConcept, which focuses on low-carbon maritime solutions, the team is also developing the *Energy Observer 2 / EO2* cargo ship. At 160 metres long, *EO2* will have a total dead weight of 12,000 tonnes, a carrying capacity of 1,100 containers TEU, 42 tonnes of liquid hydrogen on board and an intended range of 1,800 nautical miles.

The *EO2* cargo ship is being designed to run on liquid hydrogen and aims to be the best low-carbon vessel in a segment that equates to a third of today's global fleet. *Energy Observer 2 / EO2* was first unveiled as a concept in February 2022 at the One Ocean Summit in Brest and is due to hit the water in 2026. According to EOConcept, *EO2* is aligned with the revised strategy of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the European Union's 'Fit for 55' legislative package.

The team is planning a lengthy campaign of testing along the

New projects are on the horizon for 2025/2030. Energy Observer - the company - is already working on the concept of a new laboratory vessel (equivalent in size to the first) called Energy Observer 3.

European coast, before its future use within a French-flagged commercial operation in 2027. In October 2024, EO Concept and Energy Observer signed a memorandum of understanding formalising its joint commitment with Région Bretagne, BrestPort, Bretagne Développement Innovation and Chart Industries, Inc to the development of liquid hydrogen (LH2) logistics at the port of Brest. *EO2* is at the heart of this MoU since it concerns the construction and maintenance of a LH2 container ship, as well as the construction and operation of hydrogen liquefaction and refueling infrastructures at the quayside for ships.

Energy Observer has also revealed two complementary projects as part of its education arm: the *Energy Observer* Weekly digital platform and the Energy Observatory, an energy transition research and education centre based in Saint-Malo, which aims to be a 'cultural destination at the crossroads of science, technology and the arts'. ■



EO2 cargo ship concept



Energy Observer returns after seven years to St Malo. Credit Antoine Drancey/Energy Observer



Victorien-Erussard. Credit: A Conty/Energy Observer

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In an industry where durability, weight, and ease of handling are pivotal, Fendertex textile fenders are quickly establishing themselves as a game-changer for maritime professionals and yacht owners worldwide. Made from ultra-resistant, lightweight fabric, Fendertex fenders offer a modern solution to traditional bulky and heavy marine fenders, offering advanced protection and high performance for vessels of all sizes.



Innovative Design and Engineering

Fendertex fenders are constructed using a high-strength textile weave, typically made from technical polymers that provide both robustness and flexibility. This unique construction makes them 95% lighter than conventional PVC fenders without compromising on strength or protection. For sailors and crew members, this



means that Fendertex fenders are easier to deploy, handle, and store, making docking and manoeuvring more manageable and efficient.

The textile material is UV-resistant, abrasion-resistant, and highly adaptable to various marine environments, including saltwater. The fenders are also designed to maintain shape under compression, providing consistent protection even under pressure. This resilience makes Fendertex fenders suitable for both leisure and professional vessels, from smaller yachts to larger commercial vessels, as they adapt to varying hull shapes and docking requirements.



Customisable and Eco-Friendly

Fendertex fenders are available in multiple sizes, shapes, and colours, enabling vessel owners to match their fender setups with specific aesthetic preferences and functional requirements. This level of customisation sets Fendertex apart in a market that has traditionally offered limited options for custom fender configurations.



Environmental impact is another area where Fendertex excels. The materials used in Fendertex fenders are recyclable, offering



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a more sustainable solution than conventional PVC fenders, which are challenging to recycle and have a larger environmental footprint.



Improved Performance and Safety

For marine professionals, the performance and safety benefits of Fendertex fenders are substantial. The lightness of the fenders means less strain on deck crews and family during handling, and their flexible design reduces the risk of scratches or hull damage during docking and mooring. This is particularly advantageous in rough seas or tight docking conditions, where the risk of impact is higher. Fendertex fenders also feature easy inflation and deflation capabilities, which means they can be stowed flat when not in use, saving precious space on board. The ease of handling and compact storage offer practical advantages for commercial operators who often have limited storage space.

A Strong Future in Marine Protection

As the maritime industry continues to prioritise sustainable and efficient solutions,

Fendertex textile fenders are positioned to become a leading choice for vessels ranging from luxury yachts to commercial vessels. Their combination of resilience, weight-saving benefits, environmental responsibility, and



customisable design is setting a new standard in marine fender technology.

With the growing focus on environmental stewardship and operational efficiency, Fendertex's textile fenders present an ideal solution, providing top-tier protection and performance while supporting a cleaner and more sustainable marine industry.



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