

SHIP

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Matteo Di Maio, Director of Technical Services, V.Group

However, the industry in general has very complicated procedures and that sometimes can be the expectation of the vetting inspector. When he sees simplicity, will it be perceived as simplistic? It's up to us to get the understanding and engagement of the industry as well.”

In the scramble to add value and deliver ever more innovative services, are the traditional services provided by the shipmanager now simply taken for granted? Yes, according to Peter Bond, Managing Director of Interorient Shipmanagement. “Today's ship owner is looking to his manager to be a consultant, a mentor, an adviser – it is no longer just to provide technical and crew management, give a report every three to six months on the ship's condition and that's it. Those things are taken as understood,” he said.

“There is so much more to it now; we work with the ship owner to analyse the market for him if he is looking to expand his fleet or increase the size of his vessels, for example.

Interorient Shipmanagement has managed a wide variety of vessels and related services for over 35 years and fully understands the modern ship owner's needs; and is also able to offer commercial management through its participation in pools. The owner can also use the services of a wealth of in-house financial and market expertise including specialist

departments offering in-house research and analysis.

“So we can help ship owners to make informed decisions (and I think that is also taken for granted – we are going to just give those additional services).”

A notable factor in this is the increase in the number of ship owners who are actually financial institutions. “There are certainly differences in approach compared to traditional ship owners,” said Mr Bond. “The 'new' ship owners tend to be more conscious of their fuel efficiency, monitoring costs.

“The traditional ship owner knows what to expect from his ship manager – this new breed of ship owner is definitely coming to us with additional expanded reporting requirements.”

An example would be the client which puts its own software onboard to collect performance data – “even though we are collecting that and we have the internal process for analysing fuel efficiency and performance”.

“They may be using two or three different ship managers and they want to have their own unique system, rather than each manager reporting differently.”

At the end of the day, the client is the client, he points out. “They may be making requests or demands for services we haven't provided in the past, but of course if we want that business we have to find a way to meet their requirements.

“We have to provide guidance and advice on issues coming along in the future – more so today than ever in the past, because the regulatory systems are increasing in their speed. Go and buy a ship today and if you are not aware of the fuel regulations that are coming in next year, or ballast water regulations, then you could be hit with a huge bill you weren't expecting.”

The difference here is that the traditional ship owner would be part of a local ship owners' association and also getting class bulletins, so would be aware of the issues, he said. “They have more knowledge of the industry developments, but the new organisations coming into the industry, who are not traditional maritime people but financial people, definitely need us to give them some good advice.”

Transparency is another issue – the new owners are demanding even more



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of it. They want online access to accounts and fuel data and a greater say in what Interorient Shipmanagement does as a manager, he added. “They will often have

their own technical advisers – they will have their own technical expert to visit their ships. Mr. Bond also added that nowadays the ship manager often exceeds customers’ expectations.

An important response to all of this has been Interorient Shipmanagement’s data collection and analysis. The system has been refined and improved to the point that erroneous data can be eliminated in order to deliver a very clear performance trend line, said Mr Bond. “So we can be proactive in hull and propeller cleaning or inspection, because we can see when performance isn’t what it should be. We have a dedicated fuel efficiency team.”

There is, he said, a danger that we are all being drowned in data. “It is a case of filtering out what is useful. If you manage data correctly, there are significant benefits because you can see trends very quickly. It isn’t like end of year, look at the data and say – now do something. It is much closer to real time. Today everything is about

performance, whether you are a football manager or a ship manager. Everyone is under pressure from all sides. The pressure on everybody for performance is relentless.”

Condition-based monitoring is increasingly the trend, as ship owners and managers seek to prevent failures, reduce maintenance costs and increase maintenance intervals.

And as that trend develops, new ways of CBM are likely to involve more shore-based monitoring and the creation of centres of excellence, believes Matteo Di Maio, Director of Technical Services at V.Group.

Based in Monaco and responsible for delivering V.Group’s SeaTec Technical and SeaTec Condition Monitoring services to V.Ships and third party clients, he likens well-planned CBM to taking regular blood tests.

“Ships used to work on a planned maintenance basis, which is basically a passive approach – with maintenance

scheduled after 10,000 hours, for example. By CBM you check the equipment in order eventually to postpone maintenance of the equipment and save money. For example, a parameter to be kept under control is the condition of the lubricating oil to see, amongst other things, whether there are particles of metal or water content, and hence have an important indicator of the health status of the machinery. We offer lubricating oil and fuel analysis, and scrape-down analysis for two-stroke engines – all pretty sophisticated ways of checking the condition of the engine.

“Another service we offer is thermal and vibration surveys to identify where there are hotspots and excessive vibrations that need to be rectified to prevent accidents or failures. Our customers also often ask for thermal and vibration monitoring prior to drydocking in order to optimise the repair specification and save money.”

In liquid analysis, VGroup supplies chief engineers with pre-labelled and pre-paid sample bottles – these are sent to its network of laboratories through a partnership with couriers, and this allows a response and feedback for the chief engineer usually within a few hours.

“Oil and fuel analysis has always been there, but it is now so much easier to send back information, which can be uploaded to a portal,” said Mr Di Maio. “Our latest two developments in CMB have been an App for smart phones – extremely useful, because most people in the industry are always on the go – and the scrape-down analysis for two-stroke engines.”

The significant and ongoing improvements in ship-to-shore communications will also lead to more office-based condition monitoring, he predicted. “New vessels can have very efficient monitoring systems. Thanks to the fast-improving satellite communications, ship-to-shore connectivity will become as easy as

mobile communication. You could almost replicate what you see in the engine on the desktop in the office. The idea is to have experts ashore who could analyse data and trends coming from the vessel and support the crew in their decision-making relating to energy efficiency, fuel consumption and compliance.

“It makes sense to have centres of excellence, where people can have a specific expertise which can be utilised by ships in operation. It doesn’t necessarily mean you have to have all of them in one place; sometimes you could have them all around the world, set up to serve ships in each region. The ultimate target would be to make sure they own specific expertise and provide strong advice and guidance to the Seatec customers.” ●

1/ David Furnival, COO, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement

2/ Peter Bond, Managing Director, Interorient Shipmanagement