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REFLECTING ON LEADERSHIP, CHANGE AND A STRONG FUTURE FOR IMPA

Susan Wraae Koefoed, Chair and CEO of IMPA

'LOOK AT THE WHOLE, VALUE-CREATING PICTURE'

Erik Foort, Manager Procurement at Anthony Veder

Will Rush: a man on a mission that almost didn't happen
AI can transform a ship supplier's operations – but there must always be a human strategy behind any technology and AI, says Will Rush, CEO and Co-Founder of Breakwater OS.

+ PLUS WE SPEAK TO:
Fiona Kerr -
Head of Procurement at North Star
Build a rapport with crew and suppliers: it's a gamechanger

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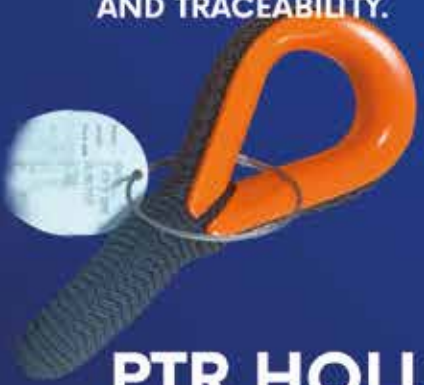
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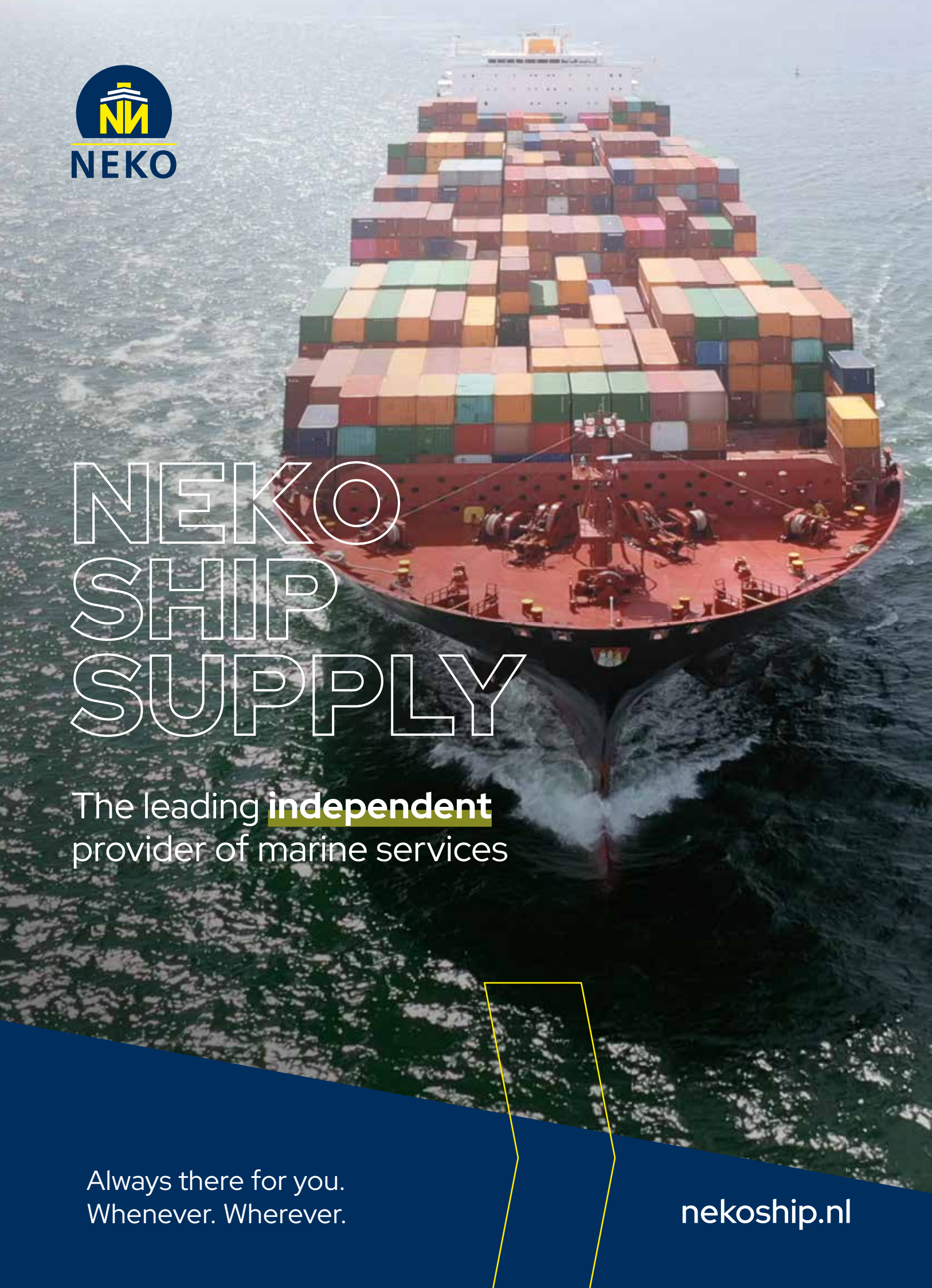
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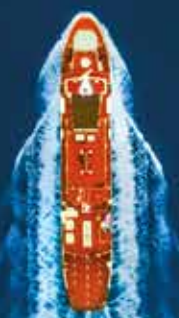
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EVENTS & MARKETING

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Welcome



SUSAN WRAAE KOEFOED
IMPA Chair & CEO

Dear members and readers,
With just a matter of days to go before another annual IMPA London event, preparations are in full flow and final arrangements are being made for an event that I hope many of you will attend. This year we have our strongest line-up yet of speakers, panellists and contributors, and I am very confident this will be our most engaging and thought-provoking conference to date. I encourage as many of you as possible to attend the two days in London this year. For many, it is the principal event for bringing buyers and suppliers together, and our dedicated programme for the supply chain sector has never offered more challenges or opportunities. It is at IMPA London that we Network, Learn and Debate.

This will not be the last time I write to you as IMPA CEO in our magazine, but it will be the last London event I attend as Chair and head of the council. Although that carries some sadness, I am proud to have served the association for almost a decade in this role. There have been challenging times over this period, not least the pandemic, which threw up a significant curveball to our association's plans. A few years on, and with hard work and commitment from the council and administration team, we are now stronger and fitter than ever.

Over recent years, IMPA's membership has grown while our retention rate has increased. Across all five pillars, IMPA has seen growth and development, particularly in areas such as the sustainability agenda and the excellent work of the IMPA SAVE community. The MSG portfolio and data services have developed and grown, and the MSG remains as important as ever to the industry. I am very pleased that our education programme for junior-level staff and new entrants has generated so much interest, with that trend set to continue, and that across all our communications we offer valuable, insightful and relevant content for members to engage with.

> “It has been a pleasure to serve you as Chair, and I will always appreciate the support I have received from many of you during my term.

As with all things in business and life, change is necessary, and so we will very soon be calling on all members to register their interest in standing for a role on the board; there is a set process for doing this. After London, we will write to members with the details, and there will be an opportunity to talk to me, the current council, or the administration team at IMPA London in a few days.

Members will have seen that we have engaged in an overhaul of our constitution and governance procedures this year as we look to the future. This modernisation of old-fashioned constitutional documentation also supports the proposed change of name for the association to the International Maritime Procurement Association, reflecting a more strategic vision for the profession. I'm sure we will agree, when it is put to the vote, that this marks a milestone in our history, one which secures our relevance and direction for years to come.

It has been a pleasure to serve you as Chair, and I will always appreciate the support I have received from many of you during my term. I will remain in place until the AGM at the very end of the year, and I hope that in the time remaining I can see and speak to as many of you as possible.

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Reflecting on leadership, change and a strong future for IMPA:

Susan steps down as Chair and CEO

After years of dedication as Chair and CEO of IMPA, Susan Wraae Koefoed is passing on the baton. She spoke to Felicity Landon.

After many incredibly rewarding years, Susan Wraae Koefoed says it's the right time to start a new chapter, both for herself and for IMPA. Preparing to step down from the position of IMPA Chair and CEO at the end of this year, she says: "It has been an honour to serve the members of IMPA. I have learned an enormous amount from my colleagues in the industry and have been inspired by their professionalism and generosity. And, of course, the maritime procurement sector continues to play a huge role in global shipping!"

Professional and family changes have helped to prompt the decision to vacate the IMPA chair, says Susan. She recently took on a new role in the finance department at Weco Tankers, the company where she has worked for 39 years, necessarily leaving less time to devote to IMPA. "I have also recently acquired three grandchildren, and spending time with my family has become increasingly important," she says.

"However, I believe that any organisation benefits from fresh leadership and new ideas, so I feel that this is the right moment. IMPA is financially strong, well respected and well positioned for the future. It is not about stepping away, because the job is never finished – IMPA is continuing to evolve."

Susan started her career as a chartering broker, working in this role for several years abroad before relocating back to Denmark, where she worked in different positions

IMPA is financially strong, well respected and well positioned for the future. It is not about stepping away, because the job is never finished – IMPA is continuing to evolve.









2015: The IMPA Networking portfolio expands with the very first IMPA Singapore event.

2016: The first IMPA Education online programme for procurement and supply chain management launches.

2017: The IMPA Networking portfolio expands with the very first IMPA Greece procurement event.

2018: The first ever IMPA Education student cohort graduates successfully. IMPA joins the UN Global Compact to further cement its commitment to sustainability.

2020: IMPA launches IMPA SAVE and signs up 10% of the global fleet. Marine Stores Guide launches its first Online Service.



FELICITY LANDON
Freelance Journalist

before being appointed a purchase and logistic manager at Weco, setting her on the path of procurement. Working in shipping, she says, is a job that brings real satisfaction. “I landed in the right place when I came into shipping – and especially procurement.”

As IMPA Chair and CEO, she says her focus has always been on making a positive contribution. “Every year has brought new opportunities and challenges. Balancing my IMPA role with my responsibilities at Weco has not always been that easy, but I have been very fortunate to have a super supportive company and colleagues, helping me to do this. At IMPA, we have a very committed board, a secretariat which is excellent and a super well-oiled team. My wonderful family has been both supportive and very understanding as I have travelled a lot and used up a lot of weekends and evenings. Leadership is always a team effort and without that support, it would be impossible.”

> I don’t think it has been achieved by just one individual – it has always been the result of a committed board and a fantastic secretariat, as well as many volunteers, sponsors and members.

She says she is “proud of everything” achieved during her years as Chair but insists: “I don’t think it has been achieved by just one individual – it has always been the result of a committed board and a fantastic secretariat, as well as many volunteers, sponsors and members.”

Of course, procurement – and IMPA – have seen some remarkable changes. Digitalisation has transformed procurement processes; sustainability is now front and centre of every agenda; IMPA continues to develop its events and networking opportunities; supply chain resilience has









2020: The IMPA Insights team launches the IMPA BLOG and the IMPA CAST podcast.

2021: The IMPA Sustainability team launches the IMPA Green Business Programme, helping evaluate suppliers’ sustainability credentials.

2022: IMPA passes 1,000 purchaser and supplier members for the very first time in its history.

2023: Marine Stores Guide launches brand-new API allowing third-party users to access cloud-based MSG data.

2024: IMPA unveils the groundbreaking IMEF sustainability initiative set to redefine emissions reporting. MSG 8th Edition Book and Data Set launch. IMPA and the UK Chamber of Shipping partner to increase industry collaboration on sustainability.

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Susan Wraae Koefoed, IMPA Chair and CEO






become a major priority, particularly following the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic and the geopolitical challenges in the years since. And high on the agenda, of course, has been education – including the launch of IMPA's online foundation course for those new to maritime procurement.

"My 'headlines' would include our international expansion, with more than 1,000 members now, along with education and the digital transformation," says Susan. "We worked super hard to make IMPA a trusted voice for the procurement community. We supported members during the periods when it was difficult, where there were many significant changes, along with technology, regulatory and economic challenges.

"I am so proud that IMPA is still strong and visible, and I feel we are enormously relevant to our members. We have expanded our international reach with events in Athens, Hamburg and Singapore and I believe we are in a good place."

The pandemic stands out as a major challenge, she says. "The hardest part wasn't just cancelling the events – it was wondering how we could continue to develop and deliver value with the technology that we had available. It meant changing completely the traditional way we normally brought people together."

IMPA responded with determination: "Instead of meeting here, there and everywhere, we sat down and focused on the specifics, developing the technology and changing the way we worked. Our industry continued to operate under this extraordinary pressure as the pandemic tested every aspect of the supply chain. But then again, we focused on adaptability and the strong partnerships that people had built up in IMPA. It demanded a lot of work from all our teams – and it was, of course, super tough on the finances. IMPA did not abandon its longer-term objectives because of Covid-19. The time when we could not meet in person was used to work on sustainability and responsible supply chain work, as well as education and developing various digital solutions."

More recently, IMPA and its members have navigated through inflation, disruption, congestion, geopolitics, sanctions and regulatory changes that appear to creep in from every direction.

"We can bring all these challenges to the table; we can make our members aware and suggest solutions. We cannot tell people what to do – that is not our function – but we can bring people together who can share what they have done and possible ways to move forward."

2025: IMPA's first junior-level online programme for entrants to the maritime procurement industry launches with tens of students joining the first wave. IMPA steps in to support the newly established Global Maritime Procurement Council.

2026: IMPA launches the new Rope Circularity Initiative, attempting to close the Loop on maritime materials.

I am so proud that IMPA is still strong and visible, and I feel we are enormously relevant to our members. We have expanded our international reach with events in Athens, Hamburg and Singapore and I believe we are in a good place.

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The star example would be the IMPA SAVE initiative, which was born through members' absolute determination to get rid of the plastic water bottles that had become the 'norm' on board ships. As Susan says, members can sit together and come up with solutions – but it is always up to them whether they adopt those solutions or not. "As an organisation, our role is to inspire and enable debate and discussion."

Susan says when she first stepped into the role of Chair and CEO, her aim definitely wasn't to reinvent IMPA. "It was to strengthen and modernise if necessary, and to be relevant to the next generation. I am very keen on the education side and working to attract young professionals, and I am amazed by the abilities of young people coming into the industry. There is so much that we can learn from young people. And from my experience at Weco, those starting as trainees come with a humility which I'm not used to. They have a very humble attitude towards learning the business."

During Susan's time as Chair, IMPA has further developed IMPA ACT, IMPA SAVE and the whole sustainability agenda, as well as the Marine Stores Guide with the six-digit code book and digitalisation of that. Like any organisation, IMPA must constantly evolve to bring value to its members, says Susan. She believes the role of Chair has probably evolved too, from maintaining a successful organisation to continuing to prepare for the future.

She is reluctant to give any advice to her successor, except this: "Listen carefully – you are surrounded by excellent people. And remember that IMPA exists to support its members."

For her own part, she says she will always be a proactive and supportive member of IMPA – "absolutely, it's been a big part of my life". She had already been an IMPA member for several years before becoming a Council Member in 2008 and then Chief Financial Officer in 2012, stepping into the role of Chair in 2015. She will, of course, continue in her new role at Weco, a company she says has supported her throughout her career.

"Above all else, I would like to say thank you to all who have supported me during my time as Chair, particularly those behind the scenes. It is important that IMPA continues to grow – and I believe that it will, through embracing all the technologies and highest standards of sustainability and efficiency. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and am excited to see what comes next!"

Would you like to help shape the future activities and direction of IMPA? IMPA will soon be calling on all members to register their interest in standing for a role on the board; there is a set process for doing this. After London, we will write to members with the details, and there will be an opportunity to talk to me, the current council, or the administration team at IMPA London.









"

Like any organisation, IMPA must constantly evolve to bring value to its members. The role of Chair has probably evolved too, from maintaining a successful organisation to continuing to prepare for the future.

Words from the IMPA Council and Ambassadors



Jesper Alex Larsen, *IMPA VP of Insights, Managing Director, AXIA Maritime & VP Technical Purchasing, OSM Thome.*

"Susan has done a great job as the CEO of IMPA for many years, also during difficult times. She is a big reason that IMPA have grown successfully. It has always been a pleasure working with Susan. She is trustworthy and transparent and she always wants the best for people and for IMPA. She will be missed."



Jennifer Schlemeier, *IMPA VP of Networking, Procurement Manager - Fleet Procurement, Oldendorff Carriers.*

"Working with Susan on the Council has been one of the great pleasures of my time with IMPA. Under her leadership, IMPA helped elevate maritime procurement from a supporting role to a genuine strategic driver of resilience and value — yet what I'll remember most is her warmth, her honesty and her generosity of spirit. She always made sure that members, colleagues and the wider community felt valued, and it has been a real privilege to serve alongside her. She will be greatly missed, and I wish her every success in her next chapter."



Yuzo Koike, *IMPA VP of Marine Stores Guide, and President, Fuji Trading Co. Ltd.*

"Susan-San, I have always admired your fairness, neutrality and steady leadership — qualities that truly define a great leader. Thank you as well for always taking the time to listen and support me whenever I needed advice. We will continue to work seriously on IMPA MSG's digitalisation and do our best to bring it successfully to market."









"

Above all else, I would like to say thank you to all who have supported me during my time as Chair, particularly those behind the scenes. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and am excited to see what comes next!



Marco Spandri, *IMPA VP of Membership, & General Manager, GMS Global Marine Supplies SpA*

"Competence, professionalism and a deep, comprehensive knowledge of the sector are merely the most visible attributes of a person who excels through empathy, attentiveness, care and dedication in every endeavour. Over the years, Susan has been — for me, and I believe for all of us — a steadfast, reliable, and enlightened guiding presence. I offer her my deepest gratitude for her invaluable contribution throughout this long period."



Stephen Alexander, *IMPA Secretary General and Chief Operating Officer*

"Working with Susan has been such a great experience. I've learned so much from her along the way. She has a real gift for staying calm under pressure, and she always makes decisions with such assurance and confidence. It hasn't gone unnoticed how much thought and care she puts into leading this association, and what a fine leader she's been because of it. Thank you for everything, Susan, for your guidance, your steadiness, and the example you've set for the rest of us."



Heroyice Patel, *IMPA Special Ambassador for Global Development, and Vice President - Commercial, Reliable Ship Supply in Houston, Texas*

"Your visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and passion for advancing the global maritime supply chain have left an indelible mark on the organization. Under your guidance, IMPA has continued to grow, innovate, and support its community in meaningful ways — from championing key educational initiatives to driving important industry standards."



Yan Jie, *IMPA Ambassador in China, and Managing Director at Ancomarine Service Co Ltd.*

"I wish her continued youthfulness and joy in all that lies ahead."



Juan Salomón, *IMPA Ambassador in Argentina and CEO of Ins Argentina*

"Susan has been, is, and will continue to be everything one expects of a leader — displaying composure, firmness and vision through both the best of times and the most difficult moments. Our market presents a constant challenge, and we undoubtedly need leaders of her calibre. Thank you very much for everything!"



Jim Costalos, *IMPA Ambassador in Australia and Managing Director at Costalos Maritime Services*

"It was indeed a pleasure to work with Susan, IMPA's first female Chair. She was very professional and led with a calm and respectful way. We will miss her."



Captain Govind Azhakath, *IMPA Ambassador in India and Director - Marine, Synergy Group Kochi (India).*

"Susan has always struck me as someone who brings warmth and positivity wherever she goes. Although our interactions have not been frequent, I have always remembered her genuine smile, her approachable nature and the gracious way she engages with people. It has been a pleasure knowing her through IMPA, and I wish her every success and happiness in the next chapter."

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Global Maritime Procurement Council

Continues to Expand

The Global Maritime Procurement Council (GMPC) continues to evolve as an industry-led platform, bringing together procurement leaders from across the maritime sector. Recent developments reflect both its growing membership and its commitment to greater visibility and accessibility.

The Global Maritime Procurement Council (GMPC) is pleased to announce the addition of three new members: (1) Robert Kruse, Global Head of Procurement, Nordic Hamburg Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG, (2) Marco Rohde, Director Global Sourcing and Procurement, Mercy Ships, and (3) Mandar Pendse, Deputy Procurement Director, Wah Kwong Ship Management (HK) Limited. These latest additions bring the Council's combined fleet representation to more than 5,300 vessels worldwide, reflecting continued and growing engagement from across the maritime industry.

Each new member brings a distinct perspective to the Council's work, ranging from ship management experience and a commitment to knowledge exchange across the industry, to a unique humanitarian dimension and deep expertise across tanker, gas carrier, and bulk carrier operations. Together, they further enrich the diversity of experience and insight that has come to define the GMPC's membership.



Robert Kruse, Global Head of Procurement, Nordic Hamburg Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG

"Nordic Hamburg Shipmanagement is pleased to be part of the GMPC and looks forward to exchanging knowledge with industry peers, contributing practical ship management experience, and supporting the continued development of procurement practices and standards across the maritime industry."



Marco Rohde, Director Global Sourcing and Procurement, Mercy Ships

"Joining the GMPC is a natural step for a procurement function built around a humanitarian mission. Every efficiency we find in the supply chain translates directly into care delivered aboard our hospital ships. I'm looking forward to bringing that perspective to the Council — and learning from peers driving the same push toward standardisation, digitalisation, and sustainability across the industry."



PAOLO MAGONIO
Head of Group, Procurement & Services,
Scorpio Group and GMPC Council Member,



Mandar Pendse, Deputy Procurement Director, Wah Kwong Ship Management (HK) Limited

“At Wah Kwong, my core focus is leading our strategic sourcing, managing global maritime supplier relationships, and ensuring our expanding fleet of tankers, gas carriers, and bulk carriers operates with highly resilient supply chains. The global maritime landscape is undergoing a massive shift driven by digitalization, regulatory compliance, and a collective need for standardisation. Today, procurement must look beyond simple cost-management; it is a critical driver of structural change, operational agility, and industry innovation. I am proud to represent Wah Kwong as we join forces with our global peers within the Global Maritime Procurement Council to shape the future of our shared ecosystem.”

Building on Active Foundations

The GMPC currently operates across three priority workstreams — Digitalisation, Talent Management, and Regulation and Standardisation — each focused on addressing shared challenges and developing practical guidance that members can apply within their own organisations. The recently launched Regulation and Standardisation workstream, led by Erik Foort of Anthony Veder, reflects the industry's increasing attention to regulatory alignment and the role procurement plays in meeting evolving compliance requirements.

As membership grows, so does the depth of expertise available to each workstream. The GMPC's model — built on peer collaboration rather than top-down prescription — means that every new member strengthens the collective capacity of the Council to produce guidance grounded in real operational experience.

GMPC Councils Meet at IMPA London

The GMPC General Council and Forum Council will convene on the second day of IMPA London, Wednesday 23 September. Members will take stock of the past year's progress across the Council's active workstreams and discuss plans and strategic priorities for the year ahead.

“The meeting represents an important opportunity for senior procurement leaders from across the membership to come together, share perspectives, and shape the direction of the Council.” said Paolo Magonio, GMPC Chairman.

The GMPC remains open to shipowning and ship management companies wishing to contribute to the Council's work. For further information or to express interest in membership, contact Stephen Alexander or Paolo Magonio at salexander@impa.net or pmagonio@scorpiogroup.net, visit www.thegmpc.org.

GMPC
Global Maritime Procurement Council



‘Look at the whole, value-creating picture’ – Erik Foort

Procurement should be recognised as a strategic, value-creating discipline, says Erik Foort, Manager Procurement at Anthony Veder. He spoke to Felicity Landon about collaboration, commitment and long-term partnerships.

Procurement creates the greatest value when professionals spend less time on transactions and more time improving supplier relationships and supply chain performance, says Erik Foort. He is passionate about his profession.

Indeed, he says: “I joined the Global Maritime Procurement Council (GMPC) because I believe collaboration is essential if procurement is to become recognised as a strategic, value-creating

discipline rather than simply a cost-focused function. By sharing best practices and working together with owners, suppliers and other industry stakeholders, we can further professionalise procurement across the maritime sector.

“Put likeminded people together faced with the same challenges and we can debate, discuss and agree on single or multiple solutions – and the push will be stronger. One company alone saying ‘this will need to change’ is unlikely to deliver any change. That’s what makes the GMPC such a strong proposition.”

Erik didn’t set out to pursue a career in maritime – he started his career in the pharmaceutical industry while studying management, economics and law at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. However, during that time he met IMPA’s VP of Education, Rob C. Scharff, who was then heading up procurement at Stolt Tankers (he is now Head of Procurement at Allseas). “He inspired me to pursue procurement,” says Erik. “He showed me that economics and law could be practical, dynamic and commercially relevant.”

Breaking into the maritime industry wasn’t easy, he says, “but within two years, I knew I had found the right sector”. After more than six years at Stolt in tactical and procurement roles, he moved briefly into aerospace to broaden his perspective. “This confirmed how unique maritime procurement is and how much potential our industry still has to mature. I soon returned to shipping, joining Anthony Veder, where I have now been Head of Procurement for the past two-and-a-half years.”

His varied experience influences the way he thinks in his role today. “In our industry we still tend to think of procurement as ‘I need a purchase order because I need it to be ordered and delivered to the ship’ – it’s a very reactive way of looking at it. But I learned from the pharmaceutical and aerospace sectors that procurement and supply chain thinking should be about reducing the total cost you are creating throughout that chain, not just in isolation. You need to look at the whole picture.”

Maritime procurement specialists often find themselves with legacy software that doesn’t really allow for supply chain management, so that “it seems to be almost a surprise every month”, says Erik. “We are working to make that improve.”

Anthony Veder’s fleet of 27 gas carriers operates worldwide and transports gases including LNG, ethylene and LPG. “Reliability is everything in gas shipping. At the same time, a fleet built partly through second-hand acquisitions naturally contains a wide variety of equipment, making standardisation challenging. We try to at least standardise the type of maintenance we apply to the equipment and try to consolidate with trusted partners. But there is no way around having multiple equipment makers on board a plethora of ships; eventually that requires some level of diversification. That’s just the way it is, and it makes your procurement chess board a little bit more complex.”

> By sharing best practices and working together with owners, suppliers and other industry stakeholders, we can further professionalise procurement across the maritime sector.

When Erik joined Anthony Veder, procurement was spread across almost 2,000 active suppliers, limiting standardisation, supplier accountability and learning. “Today we have reduced that to around 500 active suppliers, supported by approximately 65 strategic partnerships. Those partnerships allow us to improve reliability, share lessons learned and jointly manage performance. I’m particularly proud of what our procurement, technical operations and reliability teams have achieved together.”

The company’s small-scale LNG fleet regularly calls at ports with limited supplier networks, where local expertise and spare parts are not always readily available. At the same time, many onboard components are business-critical and may require immediate replacement, he explains.

“We mitigate this through strategic supplier partnerships, emergency stock held by suppliers and ourselves, and continuous analysis of critical spare parts across our diverse fleet.”

When it comes to key strategic goals in procurement, Erik says the company’s priorities start with safety – for its people and for the environment. “Beyond that, we believe successful procurement is built on craftsmanship, long-term partnerships and consistently delivering on our commitments.

“Strategically, we focus on increasing contract coverage for critical equipment, strengthening supplier governance, reducing supplier complexity and delivering sustainable cost savings. We also monitor supplier performance through reliability



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indicators such as Mean Time To Repair (MTTR) and Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF). We aim to build resilient procurement strategies before disruptions occur. For major geopolitical or supply chain risks, we perform structured risk assessments and prepare mitigation measures in advance."

Although Anthony Veder had no vessels trading directly in the Middle East, it has been impacted by the effects of the conflict there through higher energy costs, reduced engineer availability, freight disruptions and currency fluctuations. The response, says Erik, has included diversifying supply chains, increasing strategic inventory, accelerating purchases of critical components, expanding remote service capabilities and working even more closely with key suppliers.

Sustainability starts with creating a safe, healthy and positive environment for people, goals that align closely with Anthony Veder's culture, says Erik. The company's decarbonisation initiatives include installing wind-assisted ship propulsion on two vessels, operating LNG-fuelled vessels and eliminating most single-use plastics onboard.

"Sustainability is also embedded in future vessel design through greater focus on energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Anthony Veder has long been a pioneer in small-scale LNG [recognised as a 'transition' fuel], and we intend to continue expanding our role in that value chain."

Erik says that for more than 85 years, Anthony Veder has combined entrepreneurship with a strong maritime culture and genuine care for people and customers. "Today our strategic focus is on reliability, because reliability improves safety, maximises vessel availability and helps our customers keep their cargo moving. Procurement plays an important role in that ambition by strengthening supplier partnerships and managing total cost of ownership rather than purchase price alone.

"We focus on long-term partnerships with petrochemical producers, LNG producers, utilities and LNG bunker customers. Rather than simply transporting cargo between terminals, we often become an integrated part of our customers' logistics chain. That requires specialised vessels, tailormade solutions and operational flexibility, from ice-class capability to fast-cooling ethylene carriers and complex parcel logistics."

Digitalisation is essential to achieving the balance between cost and performance in procurement, says Erik. "Today,



Often, the value that you are adding is preventing things from going wrong. But how does a procurement manager prove that he or she has prevented bigger issues from happening on the ships?

identical information such as catalogues, pricing and supplier compliance data is often maintained by multiple parties. Better integration and shared platforms can significantly improve efficiency. Likewise, greater visibility of logistics data would enable smarter supply chain decisions.

"Many digital solutions already exist, but integrating them into legacy IT environments remains expensive and complex. At Anthony Veder we are following a digital roadmap that supports greater system integration and a more flexible software ecosystem. We are also exploring AI responsibly. We use large language models to support contract drafting and administrative tasks, while ensuring sensitive information and our competitive knowledge remain protected."

Reflecting on his experience to date, Erik says maritime procurement requires expertise in economics, law and international trade – while communication and relationship-building skills are equally important. "Procurement professionals spend much of their time aligning internal and external stakeholders to achieve the best outcome."

As people progress into leadership roles, they should also learn to communicate the value that procurement creates for the business, he says – although it isn't always easy. "Often, the value that you are adding is preventing things from going wrong. But how does a procurement manager prove that he or she has prevented bigger issues from happening on the ships? Proving that you have prevented something is historically difficult! So, procurement professionals need the backing of their senior management teams to carry forward the vision of reducing integral costs in this way."

Erik says that early in his career he sometimes hesitated to ask questions, because he thought others knew more than he did. "Looking back, that was unnecessary. My advice to young professionals is simple: stay curious, ask questions and base your decisions on facts. Above all, remain humble, stay connected with your colleagues and invest in developing the people around you."

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Build a rapport with crew and suppliers: it's a gamechanger

Make use of AI tools and Teams where appropriate – but never lose sight of the importance of personal contact, as well as the need for new recruits to learn the business, says Fiona Kerr, Head of Procurement at North Star. She spoke to Felicity Landon.

> I am a little 'old school' – I believe that making the effort to go and meet people face-to-face, having that rapport, seeing the crews, it a gamechanger. When I was looking after rigs, it was a while before I went offshore – but when I did, everything made more sense.

Fiona Kerr is a relative newcomer to the shipping world but her previous experience in the offshore drilling industry, where she worked for Odfjell and Maersk, is directly relevant to her role at North Star. As Head of Procurement, she heads up a team responsible for more than 50 vessels which provide round-the-clock support to the international offshore wind and oil and gas sectors. Established more than 140 years ago to support the fisheries industry, North Star diversified in the 1970s into oil and gas, and moved into offshore wind in 2021. Today it is the UK's market-leading fully integrated offshore infrastructure service provider; based in Aberdeen, it has operational bases in Lowestoft, Newcastle and Hamburg.

The fleet includes service operations vessels (SOVs) and emergency response and rescue vessels (ERRVs), mainly operating in the North Sea. Recently, North Star expanded its operations and geographical reach with the acquisition of four new SOVs from Edda Wind, taking its offshore wind fleet to 14 vessels.

The variety of projects, work scopes, vessels and schedules creates some particular challenges for the North Star procurement team, which is meeting the needs of the 1,700 offshore and onshore personnel employed by the company. Sometimes seafarers may be on board for two weeks – sometimes much longer. Vessels are working around the globe, so time zone changes and language barriers are all part of the mix.

"We are providing a service for the client and making sure we are meeting their needs where their work is," says Fiona. "We want to build a strong supply chain and make sure we are supporting all aspects of this, including processes, systems and catalogues, to ensure everything flows well from start to finish. Sustainability is also at the forefront, making sure that ties in with our day-to-day tasks."

Good food is essential for seafarer happiness, she says. "It is important to remember they are away from their families and homes. Sometimes the simplest things matter most. This could be a proper meal that reminds them of home, a birthday cake for someone's special day or just having their favourite treats on board. Looking back on her previous role in offshore drilling, she recalls: "Some of the offshore rigs had 3 o'clock 'cake time', when the cakes would be put in a different place each day. This meant the workers would meet and speak to people they might not otherwise see."

At North Star, making sure the seafarers have good food, and other vital supplies, requires the procurement team to build strong relationships with local suppliers in ports close to where the vessels are working. "Managing sanctions, geopolitical upheavals, customs clearance, conflicts, etc., can all be made easier if you can source locally," says Fiona. "For any new project, we have to find new suppliers – for example, the four new vessels are working in locations where we are not already based, so we are reaching out to new suppliers, doing our due diligence, and building these relationships from scratch.

"You learn a lot every day about which suppliers can supply what. A lot can be done remotely through Teams, etc., and people are using this more. But I am a little 'old school' – I believe that making the effort to go and meet people face-to-face, having that rapport, seeing the crews, it a gamechanger. When I was looking after rigs, it was a while before I went offshore – but when I did, everything made more sense. You can understand what someone might complain about, you can see how the stores and logistics work. I encourage my team to go on the vessels and to build a rapport with crew and suppliers."

PPE and workwear are good examples of where standardisation is important, Fiona explains. "If every vessel requests different brands or specifications, it creates unnecessary complexity for buyers and makes it harder to maintain consistent quality and availability. Our aim is to



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establish approved products and specifications that meet North Star's requirements, so crews receive the same reliable standard wherever the vessel is operating."

North Star has invested about £5 million in digitalisation projects in recent times, including in its ERP platforms, improved onboard wifi and connectivity, training, and the use of AI tools.

"My opinion is that AI can help when analysing data or finding the right words when trying to write an email quickly. But in procurement, you need to have that rapport and those relationships with your suppliers and your team. You are negotiating, doing contracts, sometimes asking the supplier to help you out of a really difficult situation. If they don't know you – if you are just a name on an email – it won't work so well. If you have a personal connection, the supplier will be there for you when you need their help.

"AI is most valuable when it's applied to the right tasks. For us, that's things like supplier onboarding, where it helps to speed up compliance checks that would otherwise take much longer to work through manually. However, what about juniors just starting out? Some of these tasks should be given to newer members of the team to learn the business from the bottom up, and we should not use AI to take that away. It is important to focus on learning and development, not just use AI to do half your job."

Sustainability efforts at North Star are particularly focused on seeking greener fuel alternatives, as well as improving operational efficiency – working with clients – to reduce fuel consumption. Time is also taken to analyse the travel patterns of seafarers, to reduce journeys where possible.

Having joined North Star, Fiona was quickly introduced to IMPA by Joanne McCulloch, Global Head of Fleet Procurement & Logistics at V.Group. "I went to meet Joanne to discuss some training plans. It was a nice feeling to talk to someone else about procurement – because if you love it, you love it!" she says. "Being part of IMPA gives me an opportunity to speak to other people who love procurement, which is especially valuable for me, because I'm new to marine and many people have been in it so much longer than me. The GMPC provides a very supportive forum for sharing experiences and learning how people have responded in a particular situation. Some of the issues being discussed are the simplest, but also the most challenging."

AI is most valuable when it's applied to the right tasks. For us, that's things like supplier onboarding, where it helps to speed up compliance checks that would otherwise take much longer to work through manually. However, what about juniors just starting out? Some of these tasks should be given to newer members of the team to learn the business from the bottom up, and we should not use AI to take that away. It is important to focus on learning and development, not just use AI to do half your job.

Fiona heads a team of 13, including six buyers based in Aberdeen and two in Lowestoft. Those who choose procurement as a career must be able keep a cool head, she says – "there is a lot of pressure."

"Solving problems depends on a really good ability to think outside the box. For example, if a vessel can't leave port because a part is needed and the normal supplier doesn't have that part, you have to think fast about the alternatives – but don't panic. It's about reaching out to other team members and to suppliers, and that goes back to encouraging them all to build those relationships. A supplier might not be able to help you but they may know someone else that can."

Fiona's advice to anyone embarking on a career in procurement is – don't just sit behind your desk! "Build those relationships, go and speak to people within your own company, including accounts and technical. Ask questions and don't be scared to reach out to people if you are not sure. You learn so much by talking to everyone else; having that understanding and information enables you to make much better choices and decisions."

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Why order what you don't need?

galleyapp promises 'catering intelligence'



GalleyApp is on a mission to switch marine catering from 'execution mode' to 'intelligence mode'. Why order imported produce that has travelled half way around the world, when local products are available with the same taste and consistency?

One benefit of intelligent sourcing is cutting costs – but that isn't the main point, says Noel Ethirveerasingam, Chief Commercial Officer of GalleyApp. "The most important thing about catering is that you are dealing with crew welfare. When looking to maintain a vessel's budget, a caterer shouldn't be cutting back on food – they should be adding more products that are in season and available at a good price. It will taste better and be fresher, having not been frozen and shipped halfway around the world."

GalleyApp was launched last year, offering users one smart system for maritime catering operations that tracks stock in real time, monitors costs and helps users to stay compliant with the Maritime Labour Convention and other regulations. The app can be deployed as a standalone solution within offshore or shipping sectors, or integrated via APIs.

In the past year, GalleyApp Co-creator Barry Samms and Noel Ethirveerasingam, who previously worked at ShipServ, have focused on a series of refinements and new modules for the system.

Three areas are highlighted by Noel: "First, when it comes to catering, especially procurement and provisions, one of the main problem is wastage – and that is attributed to inventory issues. That is where we are focusing heavily because knowing what you have is important to managing your waste. Second, now that you know how much you have, how do you buy small amounts efficiently to help with costs? We have built modules such as contracts in place – vessels themselves utilise those contracts and directly drive the procurement, rather than have to go through another team. Third, the cooks on board. This is all about how you plan your meal preparation and it's where AI really comes into play, helping them to plan ahead. By using our tools, the cook becomes more of a decision-maker rather than administrator. They have access to vast options; they can plan; and they can execute."

> The most important thing about catering is that you are dealing with crew welfare. When looking to maintain a vessel's budget, a caterer shouldn't be cutting back on food – they should be adding more products that are in season and available at a good price. It will taste better and be fresher, having not been frozen and shipped halfway around the world



NOEL ETHIRVEERASINGAM
Chief Commercial Officer
GalleyApp

GalleyApp does away with the need to walk around with a laptop doing laborious stocktaking; once the user has pinned down the initial inventory (very accurately), then every order made through the system automatically updates the inventory. The system flags up low stocks and asks the 'are you sure?' question if an order is submitted for an item which is already there in abundance.

"We are building up the system in which AI will suggest and predict products that the vessel is frequently consuming and might need. It might recommend a quick stocktake of those items – so instead of having to check 200 or 300 stock numbers in your inventory every time, AI helps users to focus on the materials that matter the most that they might have forgotten. It flags up the things that are going to run short and gives users a signal ahead."

Equally, GalleyApp is focusing on waste management in the coming months, using AI to help prevent over ordering. "This will also inform the team running the budget, who can now ask the question: if you already have five sacks



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Freelance Journalist

of potatoes, why do you need another five? Of course, as the cook I might still want to order something I have already got. But the platform will also inform them how long it takes (routinely) to use certain items, so they can plan – perhaps understanding that their current supplies can last another few weeks."

Summing up, he says: "It's about knowing how much you have and knowing when you need to place the order, for the people on board and also the people in the office."

Asked about the functions that differentiate GalleyApp, Noel says: "Catering is not always perceived as a distinct category because it's a relatively small spend and tends to slide under the bigger arm of technical, hence losing the features it needs to manage a better process. We built the tool based on experience in the catering industry, for catering professionals.

"The feature we are building, plugging AI in to manage your inventory, is all about building efficiency into the transactional process. We are cutting down the steps – and have made 50% efficiency gains in some cases. Our approach is a bit like preventive maintenance, which in catering can only come through clear management of your stock and visibility."

A major offshore operator has deployed GalleyApp to its catering function for vessels with up to 600 people on board. "The feedback is very positive," says Barry. "The catering manager has reported that their catering cost has dropped by $2 per person per day, so the app is saving them tens of thousands of dollars every month. Reducing the figures wasn't their objective in using GalleyApp – they just wanted the cook to have a better understanding of the stock on board. Now they say they don't have to go back to the cooks and ask why they are ordering so much of a particular product, because the cooks have the visibility when making their orders and can reduce amounts accordingly."

Barry compares this to shore-based people walking around a supermarket without knowing exactly what's in the cupboard at home. "We think, have I got any of that?

"A major offshore operator has deployed GalleyApp to its catering function for vessels with up to 600 people on board. The feedback is very positive. The catering manager has reported that their catering cost has dropped by $2 per person per day, so the app is saving them tens of thousands of dollars every month.



BARRY SAMMS
Co-founder, Sea Steward
and Co-creator of GalleyApp

And we tend to pick it up just in case. We are all guilty of that and ships even more so. If they are on the spot market and not sure where they are going next, the tendency can be to fill up the storerooms and freezers just in case – and that is where the wastage comes in."

The GalleyApp team has also developed an AI tool to assist with menu planning, which will prompt the cook to use particular dishes based on the stock they have. "Utilising the current inventory to cleverly generate the menu is important," says Noel. "The platform is designed to suggest recipes using particular ingredients – which, of course, the cook can alter and make their own."

The potential of GalleyApp to improve sustainability is obvious – not least because of the emphasis on using seasonal, local products as far as possible, reducing transport and refrigeration costs and benefiting from fresher produce sourced nearer at hand. Depending on the port of call, the app can prompt the cook to consider avocados, mangoes or fresh berries. "The transport of food is a key contributor to a vessel's carbon footprint," says Noel. "We are keen supporters of IMPA SAVE and are getting more involved in this aspect in terms of understanding, measuring and giving the right visibility to the user."



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All systems go

Onboard water filtration systems are an environmental no-brainer – they're also hard to beat from an operational perspective. We spoke to four experts to get an understanding of what procurement execs need to know before specifying…

With plastic still clogging the oceans, the argument for reducing bottled water onboard vessels is an open and shut case. While efforts to reduce that pollution are making progress, challenges remain for procurement departments looking for alternatives. Of course, the benefits of onboard water filtration systems are well documented, though it remains less clear how to specify that delivers consistently when it up against the realities of life onboard.

Capacity and water quality matter, but so do the conditions of existing infrastructure, maintenance and access to consumables. There's also the small matter of building trust with crew, all of which shift the buying decision away from equipment and toward performance across the system's working life.

So, what do procurement teams need to know? We spoke to five experts to find out.

What are the most important factors procurement teams should consider when selecting a freshwater maker for different vessel types and operating profiles?

Martin Schütz, *CEO Nordic Hospitality, BRITA distributor of water dispensers:* When selecting a water dispenser for onboard use, procurement teams should look beyond the initial purchase price and evaluate the total value it delivers throughout its lifecycle. Key considerations include daily water consumption, passenger and crew numbers, available installation space, and the vessel's operating profile (premium or midscale).



TOM HOLMES
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> Installing a suitable Water Filtration Unit (WFU) with Reverse Osmosis (RO) technology, such as the Alcona AHS Water Filtration Unit, remains essential due to the unknown condition of onboard water pipelines.



HARRY HENG
Director, Product Development
Seven Seas Group

Jad Mouawad, *Chief Executive Officer, URSA AS:* We do not differentiate vessels by type or operating profile. URSA Essential Water Systems Point-of-Use (POU) systems treat water directly at the point of consumption—galleys, crew messes, control rooms, bridges, and passenger areas. When you treat the water just before consumption, you remove stale taste, pipe corrosion, bacterial regrowth, and residual chemical taste from chlorination. I always encourage ship owners to install a trial unit and get feedback from the crew about quality.

Jesper Weller, *Founding Partner, AQUAREX International:* Above all, it's important to consider the pre- and after-sales concept of the equipment supplier – no professional vessel operator wants to equip the fleet with an unsupported solution. A technical discussion with the equipment supplier at an early stage is obviously very effective for evaluating the level of expertise and support that can be expected before and after placing an order. If the supplier can discuss technical details, best practices onboard, drinking water quality testing, freshwater production onboard vs freshwater bunkering, safety measures and typical crew reactions, it's typically a good sign.

Harry Heng, *Director, Product Development, Seven Seas Group:* Freshwater makers can significantly reduce plastic waste by eliminating the need for single-use mineral water bottles onboard. However, installing a suitable Water Filtration Unit (WFU) with Reverse Osmosis (RO) technology, such as the Alcona AHS Water Filtration Unit, remains essential due to the unknown condition of onboard water pipelines. Corrosion, rust, and other contaminants may be present within the piping system, potentially affecting the water's Aerobic Plate Count (APC) and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS).

John Gabriel, *Director of Sales, FCI Watermakers:* First, understanding the dynamics of how that vessel will operate will be integral to ensuring the right system is selected. Procurement teams should evaluate crew and passenger loads, daily consumption, voyage duration, tank capacity, available power, and operating environment. Watermakers are a long-term system and just finding a system that is rated for a specific production level is not enough. A brand's longevity in the market, proven reliability, systems operational efficiency, and a systems design framework that provides compact installations but enough space to maintain in place are all factors to consider.

> If the supplier can discuss technical details, best practices onboard, drinking water quality testing, freshwater production onboard vs. freshwater bunkering, safety measures and typical crew reactions it's typically a good sign.



JESPER WELLER
Founding Partner
AQUAREX International

What are the biggest mistakes you see buyers make when specifying or procuring freshwater makers, and how can they avoid them?

Martin Schütz: One of the most common mistakes is focusing primarily on acquisition costs rather than total cost of ownership. A lower-priced solution may lead to higher maintenance requirements, increased service costs, or operational disruptions over time. Another frequent mistake is underestimating actual water demand or failing to consider user experience.

Jad Mouawad: Lack of engagement with the crew is the biggest mistake in my opinion. Our biggest hurdle is always crew adoption of our solutions, and this requires trials and testimonials, feedback from fellow crew at all levels, in addition to the required testing and environmental benefits.



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Jesper Weller: Put in plain terms - only a fool doesn't fear the crew – unfortunately, we see too many vessel operators coming to us after they initially bought an unsupported cheap "corner-shop" solution and therefore are being pushed by the crew to get hold of a quality water purifier system. Such unfortunate situations can easily be prevented – all truly professional suppliers can help procurement teams to make the right decisions and keep the crew happy from day one.

Harry Heng: Customers are often hesitant due to the initial capital investment required. To address this concern, we typically present a cost-saving case study that demonstrates the long-term financial benefits of installing a Water Filtration Unit (WFU). In addition to eliminating the recurring cost of purchasing bottled mineral water, customers can also save up to US$2340 a month on additional requirements, transportation, and disposal of plastic waste, as calculated by IMPA SAVE.

John Gabriel: Many times, redundancy is not even considered. For something as mission-critical as water, with only one system, even a scheduled outage for standard maintenance can create strain on the vessel's freshwater availability, let alone an unplanned outage. By having a redundant setup, a vessel has full control over its freshwater, regardless of demand or circumstance. This tends to be a significant cost saving as well, as not only can the vessel rotate system operation to extend maintenance intervals but also have access to freshwater production in the case of a system outage, eliminating the need to adjust the vessel's schedule due to no freshwater.

> "Many times, redundancy is not even considered. For something as mission-critical as water, with only one system, even a scheduled outage for standard maintenance can create strain on the vessel's freshwater availability, let alone an unplanned outage.



JOHN GABRIEL
Director of Sales
FCI Watermakers

> "Modern water dispensers use advanced filtration and hygiene innovations to neutralise chlorine tastes and odours while eliminating biological risks. This shift delivers massive operational advantages.



MARTIN SCHÜTZ
CEO Nordic Hospitality,
BRITA distributor of water dispensers

How has freshwater maker technology evolved in recent years, and which innovations are delivering the greatest operational benefits for vessel operators?

Martin Schütz: Water dispenser technology has evolved significantly from simple dispensing units to intelligent hydration solutions. Modern systems now offer advanced filtration, energy-efficient cooling technologies, touch-free dispensing options, and digital monitoring capabilities. Modern water dispensers use advanced filtration and hygiene innovations to neutralise chlorine tastes and odours while eliminating biological risks. This shift delivers massive operational advantages.

Jad Mouawad: With the introduction of our DW PLUS and DW-HC PLUS series, we introduce point-of-use UV-C LED disinfection to our system. Our UV-C LED lamps are top of the line in the world today and unmatched in their disinfection efficiency. The benefit for ships is that they don´t need to rebuild FW systems anymore; they treat the water with the FWG as usual, and we will take care of the rest. For a small cost, ships can extend the life of their FW systems by years.

Jesper Weller: There are already very innovative technologies on the market; however, vessel operators seem to prefer well-proven technologies that deliver reliably and are well known. On the commercial side, we at AQUAREX have innovated by developing a leasing concept which greatly benefits positive cash flows – a simple flat fee per month per crew for unlimited amounts of high-quality drinking water – all included, totally predictable and totally transparent. This is helping certain vessel operators a lot, as all costs are OPEX, no CAPEX at all.

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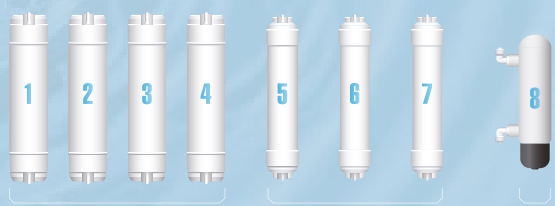
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John Gabriel: While simple, straightforward systems are still available, now more than ever, technological integration and multi-point visibility are almost a requirement. Being able to offer systems that not only maintain the level of reliability and longevity of systems past, but propel them forward by offering real-time operational data, in-depth system alarms, and the ability to be integrated into a central alarming station or a ship automation control system. Additionally, installation space is scarcer than ever, so being able to evolve and offer multiple system configurations is essential.

Looking ahead, what trends do you believe will have the biggest impact on onboard freshwater production over the next five to ten years?

Martin Schütz: The strongest trend will be the continued move away from single-use plastic bottles, as well as glass bottles, toward sustainable drinking water solutions onboard. Vessel operators are under growing pressure to reduce waste, lower carbon emissions, and meet increasingly ambitious ESG targets.

Jad Mouawad: With the risk of being obvious, I believe all ships in the next 5-10 years will move away from bottled plastic water to point-of-use systems like ours. This is expected coming from a manager in a company that lives from selling those systems, but if you think about the following, I believe this conclusion is justifiable:

- Bottled water delivered on ships is contaminated and not suitable to drink in more than 70% of the times we tested it. Why do ships still import them? Because, as one Master told me, the ships avoid MLC and WHO requirements for testing potable water onboard.

- Plastic litter regulations from the IMO are around the corner. A ban on the use of plastics, the delivery of plastic garbage, and the mere logistical nightmare of sorting out plastics will force ships to find alternatives.

- Economically, our systems are much cheaper than bottled alternatives (plastic or not), with less logistics and hassle. This is coming from hands-on experience onboard 100s of ships. It is a no-brainer.

“
Bottled water delivered on ships is contaminated and not suitable to drink in more than 70% of the times we tested it. Why do ships still import them? Because, as one Master told me, the ships avoid MLC and WHO requirements for testing potable water onboard.



JAD MOUAWAD
Chief Executive Officer
URSA AS

Jesper Weller: Looking back to look forward… it seems like crews increasingly are looking at having the same “beverage comfort” at sea as they have on shore, meaning good coffee, good juices, and good water. Much like how internet connectivity gained ground at sea – crews are used to accessing the internet everywhere onshore, and they want the same option onboard.

The same goes for beverages. What is normal onshore will eventually also be the norm onboard. In terms of drinking water production onboard, this “trend” means better water and more water. In 5 years, we will not see a lot of plastic bottled water anymore onboard, for many different reasons – health and safety, comfort, cost, environmental matters, etc. Replacing plastic bottled water onboard is absolutely possible in cooperation with a professional supplier of water purifier solutions.

John Gabriel: Without a doubt, systems' energy efficiency and power requirements will be at the forefront. Commercial vessels will continue to put greater emphasis on reducing operating cost and fuel consumption. Support systems like watermakers must adapt to those constraints and provide solutions that support these vessels underway. Additionally, automation and vessel integration will likely be a massive driver for innovation. It will not be long before systems are required to have full integration capabilities for operation and alarming. I see these systems becoming savvier, with elements like predictive maintenance becoming commonplace and alerting crew in real time before a system goes down.



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With solutions for seawater, brackish water, and municipal water treatment, and production capabilities ranging from 200 GPD to 500,000 GPD and beyond, FCI's portfolio is built to address a wide range of water sources, applications, and operating requirements. From compact commercial systems to high-capacity production, advanced automation, and complex installations, the focus remains the same: matching the right solution to the need.

The common denominator is not the system. It is the expectation: reliable freshwater production engineered for the application.

The right system starts with the right requirements

Capacity matters, but gallons per day alone do not define the right desalination system.

Operating environment, available space, water demand, power, controls, automation, maintenance access, and operator involvement all influence system design. Understanding those requirements at the outset is what separates a system that simply meets a specification from one that works effectively within the operation.

An island property may prioritise ease of operation and independence from local infrastructure. Hotels and resorts require dependable production that can keep pace with daily demand. Commercial vessels and mega yachts add space constraints, onboard systems, and varying levels of automation. Offshore platforms and larger commercial operations can introduce significant capacity and integration requirements.

FCI's product range is designed to address that spectrum rather than force every application into the same solution.



JOHN GABRIEL
Director of Sales
FCI Watermakers

When space and performance both matter

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FCI's Atlas+ Series is designed specifically for applications where footprint matters, delivering 1,400 to 3,600 GPD in FCI's most compact commercial platform. Available in Framed and Modular configurations, Atlas+ gives operators and specifiers greater flexibility when machinery rooms, existing infrastructure, or installation requirements limit available space.



Atlas+ Series



Neptune+ Series

For applications requiring higher purity water, Atlas+ is also available in Double-Pass configurations, expanding its capabilities for operations with more demanding water-quality requirements.

The result is a commercial platform that combines meaningful freshwater production with the flexibility to work within the realities of the installation.

When the application demands more

As production requirements increase, flexibility in configuration, controls, and integration becomes increasingly important.

FCI's Neptune+ Series produces 3,400 to 10,000 GPD and is available in Horizontal, Modular, and Vertical configurations. Those options allow the system footprint to be better matched to the available environment, whether installed aboard a commercial vessel or mega yacht, on an offshore platform, or within another space-constrained commercial application.

Control can be matched to the operation as well. Neptune+ is available with manual pressure regulation or one-touch Automatic Pressure Control. FCI's V4-controlled systems also feature native MODBUS capabilities, supporting integration with central alarming or automation systems when required.

The objective is not technology for technology's sake. It is providing the right combination of production, configuration, and control for the application.

Capability at every scale

Atlas+ and Neptune+ represent just part of a much broader FCI Watermakers portfolio.

Across seawater, brackish water, and municipal water treatment, FCI's capabilities extend from compact 200 GPD systems to engineered solutions producing 500,000 GPD and beyond. Systems can be selected and configured around source water, required production, available space, desired water quality, controls, and end use.

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Engineered around the need

Water sources change. Operating environments change. Production requirements change. The right solution needs to account for all of them.

For more than 35 years, FCI Watermakers has built its capabilities around understanding those differences and engineering systems accordingly. From compact commercial systems to advanced automation and high-capacity freshwater production, the goal remains the same: engineer the right system, build it to perform, and support it wherever the operation takes it.

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Rethinking onboard drinking water:

the lifecycle case for point-of-use filtration

As shipping looks to reduce single-use plastics, procurement decisions around onboard drinking water are increasingly being assessed on lifecycle impact rather than purchase price alone…

Reducing reliance on single-use plastic water bottles is a practical objective for many shipping companies, driven by cost, waste reduction and wider environmental commitments. Through initiatives like IMPA SAVE's Getting to Zero campaign and the development of the Maritime Environmental Footprint (IMEF), procurement teams are increasingly expected to consider the lifecycle impact of everyday operational purchases.

For drinking water, that shifts attention away from the bottle itself and towards how delivering water onboard through water dispensers. And, according to Christian Schmitt of BRITA, the greatest environmental benefit from point-of-use water dispensers comes not during manufacture but throughout their operational life.

By replacing bottled water with refillable options, vessels eliminate much of the logistics chain associated with packaged drinking water, including production, transportation, storage and waste handling.

"The largest impact occurs during the customer use phase," Christian Schmitt explains. "By switching to a dispenser, vessels can avoid single-use bottles entirely and replace them with refillable consumption."

That reduction can be measured directly. Every litre dispensed can be translated into the equivalent number of PET bottles avoided, providing operators with straightforward data on plastic reduction. It's an approach that has a huge impact on emissions.

"In lifecycle terms," Christian Schmitt adds, "this translates into up to 86% lower CO_2 emissions vs. bottled water, strongly linked to avoided plastic production and transport. In real vessel operations, data from dispenser usage (litres dispensed, filter changes) enables transparent reporting aligned with sustainability KPIs."

Looking beyond operational emissions

As procurement teams scratch beneath the surface of products to assess their environmental impact, it is lifecycle cost rather than purchase price alone that emerges as a significant criteria.

Naturally that extends throughout the entire value chain of a product's life, from raw material through to pick,



CHRISTIAN SCHMITT
Head of Sales - B2B Distributor Markets - EMEA
BRITA Group

pack and dispatch. It is against that process that BRITA assess the carbon footprint of its dispensers, as Christian Schmitt explains.

"BRITA conducts Product Carbon Footprints (PCF) across the full lifecycle (raw materials → production → transport → usage → end-of-life). These calculations are externally validated (e.g. TÜV) to ensure transparency and credibility for procurement decisions."

Scope 3 emissions are a key focus, especially from materials, upstream supply chain, transport and disposal. Procurement managers can use this data to benchmark alternatives (e.g. bottled water vs. dispenser) and directly support IMEF reporting requirements. Standardised lifecycle data enables integration into ESG frameworks and supplier reporting, aligning with initiatives like IMPA SAVE and IMEF.

Working with existing vessel systems

Most commercial vessels already produce potable water through onboard generation systems, but rather than replacing this infrastructure, BRITA positions its dispensers as the final stage in the process.

The dispensers are designed to connect directly to existing potable water supplies, providing additional filtration and improving taste and hygiene immediately before consumption.

This retrofit approach avoids the disruption and material requirements associated with installing new water generation equipment while allowing operators to make use of infrastructure already in place.

According to Christian Schmitt, the result is relatively low installation impact. "Dispensers complement onboard desalination or water generation by adding filtration, hygiene and user access points rather than replacing systems," he says.

"Instead of replacing onboard water generation, BRITA acts as a "final barrier" solution, improving water quality, taste, and hygiene at the point of use. This "add-on" approach ensures fast deployment, low disruption and immediate sustainability benefits."

Applying circular economy principles

Beyond operational use, BRITA says it applies circular economy principles throughout the product lifecycle. Dispensers removed from service are inspected and refurbished where possible before being redeployed, extending product life.

> Two things, make the difference: crew acceptance and operational resilience



Units that reach end-of-life are recycled in accordance with local regulations, while filter cartridges can also be collected and recycled where transport logistics make this practical.

Recycling programmes currently depend on regional infrastructure and transport feasibility, particularly within global maritime supply chains, but BRITA says customers can receive recycling certificates that include associated carbon savings where programmes are available.

Operational value alongside environmental gains

For most shipping companies, environmental benefits alone are unlikely to justify investment unless operational performance also improves.

Christian Schmitt points to feedback from Nordic Hospitality, one of BRITA's maritime distributors, which suggests that successful adoption depends largely on crew acceptance and operational resilience.

"Two things," he says, "make the difference: crew acceptance and operational resilience."

When onboard or bunkered water is consistently well filtered and palatable, crews are more willing to use refillable bottles rather than rely on bottled supplies. At the same time, reducing dependence on bottled water deliveries simplifies onboard logistics and removes the need to store, handle and dispose of large volumes of plastic packaging.

For operators, the commercial return therefore extends beyond direct purchasing costs. Lower logistics requirements, reduced waste handling and measurable progress against ESG objectives can all contribute to the business case while supporting initiatives such as IMPA SAVE and IMEF.

As shipping companies place greater emphasis on lifecycle procurement, point-of-use water treatment illustrates how relatively straightforward operational changes can reduce environmental impact without requiring major changes to vessel infrastructure.



Fresh (water) thinking

Effective freshwater testing requires more than selecting the right kit. Here we find out why buyers must connect onboard monitoring, laboratory verification and supplier support within a vessel-specific water safety programme.

Freshwater testing isn't a periodic exercise in which a sample is sent ashore, and a satisfactory result closes the issue until the next inspection. On that score, the latest WHO guidance on drinking water reinforces that a preventative, risk-based approach that covers the entire supply chain is necessary.

Nicole Brinkley, Global Head of Sales of Martek Marine identifies the same problem in both testing practice and record-keeping.

"The most frequent mistake is approaching water safety as a periodic compliance checkbox through isolated lab samples, rather than establishing a disciplined onboard testing routine. Another widespread vulnerability is inconsistent record-keeping. Whether testing is conducted manually or digitally, fragmented records and misplaced paper logs undermine compliance during Port State Control inspections and leave operators unable to verify historical water safety."

> "The practical shift is towards managing risk across the complete onboard system, rather than relying on test results alone.
>
> **NIALL ARMITAGE**
> Warehouse Manager and Marine Water Treatment Specialist, Star International

As Niall Armitage, Warehouse Manager and Marine Water Treatment Specialist, Star International says, the practical shift is towards managing risk across the complete onboard system, rather than relying on test results alone.

"The shift is mainly towards a more risk-based approach. Testing is important, but it should sit alongside good system management, regular inspection and an understanding of where contamination risks can develop across the vessel. It's not just about getting a compliant test result, but managing water quality consistently from source to point of use."



TOM HOLMES
Freelance Supply Chain Writer

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> Laboratory analysis remains essential, but it represents only a snapshot of the water present at the sampled outlet and at the time of collection.



DUSTIN WILSON
Technical Director
Octo Marine

Laboratory testing remains an important part of that process, but it only provides a snapshot of the water at one outlet and one moment. As Dustin Wilson, Technical Director at Octo Marine points out, that does not establish whether the wider system is being controlled.

"Drinking-water safety should not be judged solely by whether an occasional laboratory sample passes or fails. Instead, operators should demonstrate that the entire water supply is being continuously managed through preventive risk assessment, operational monitoring, verification testing and documented corrective action.

"Laboratory analysis remains essential, but it represents only a snapshot of the water present at the sampled outlet and at the time of collection. It cannot confirm that every storage tank, treatment stage, distribution branch, dead leg, low-use outlet or piece of connected equipment is being adequately controlled."

Instead, he adds, operators should demonstrate that the entire water supply is being continuously managed through preventive risk assessment, operational monitoring, verification testing and documented corrective action.

In a similar vein, the precise requirements will vary between vessels and flag states. Guillaume Drillet, Global Marine Services Manager of SGS says that the latter differ in how they implement the MLC's potable water provisions. Some prescribe limits and testing schemes, while others have broader goal-based requirements. So, in that sense, it is necessary to be prepared.

"Some countries define clear limits for specific water quality parameters and establish testing schemes through regulation to ensure acceptable potable water standards," Guillaume says. "These systems are typically supported by regular independent testing by accredited laboratories, which I believe is the correct approach.

"Other countries take a goal-based approach, providing limited guidance to owners and managers on what should be monitored and how. The underlying assumption is often that if the crew appears healthy and no complaints are raised, then the water quality must be acceptable. Among these flag states, some refer to WHO guidelines while others do not."

With that in mind, equipment selection should follow this assessment rather than preceding it; and according to Cynthia Lakis, Vice President Business Unit Management and Marketing of Drew Marine, before buying kits, companies should establish representative sampling locations, monitoring frequencies, operational limits and corrective actions. Establishing on board monitoring schedules is paramount for a sound water safety programme.

> Together, onboard operational monitoring and shoreside analysis provide a more complete picture of the potable water system's health and are best marine practice.



CYNTHIA LAKIS
Vice President Business Unit Management and Marketing
Drew Marine

"Sampling locations (and frequencies) should be predetermined and representative of the onboard system," she says. "At a minimum, samples should be taken from the storage tanks and from a point farthest from the tanks. Results, deviations, investigations, and corrective actions should be documented.

"Regular onboard monitoring should also be complemented by shoreside laboratory analysis for additional parameters

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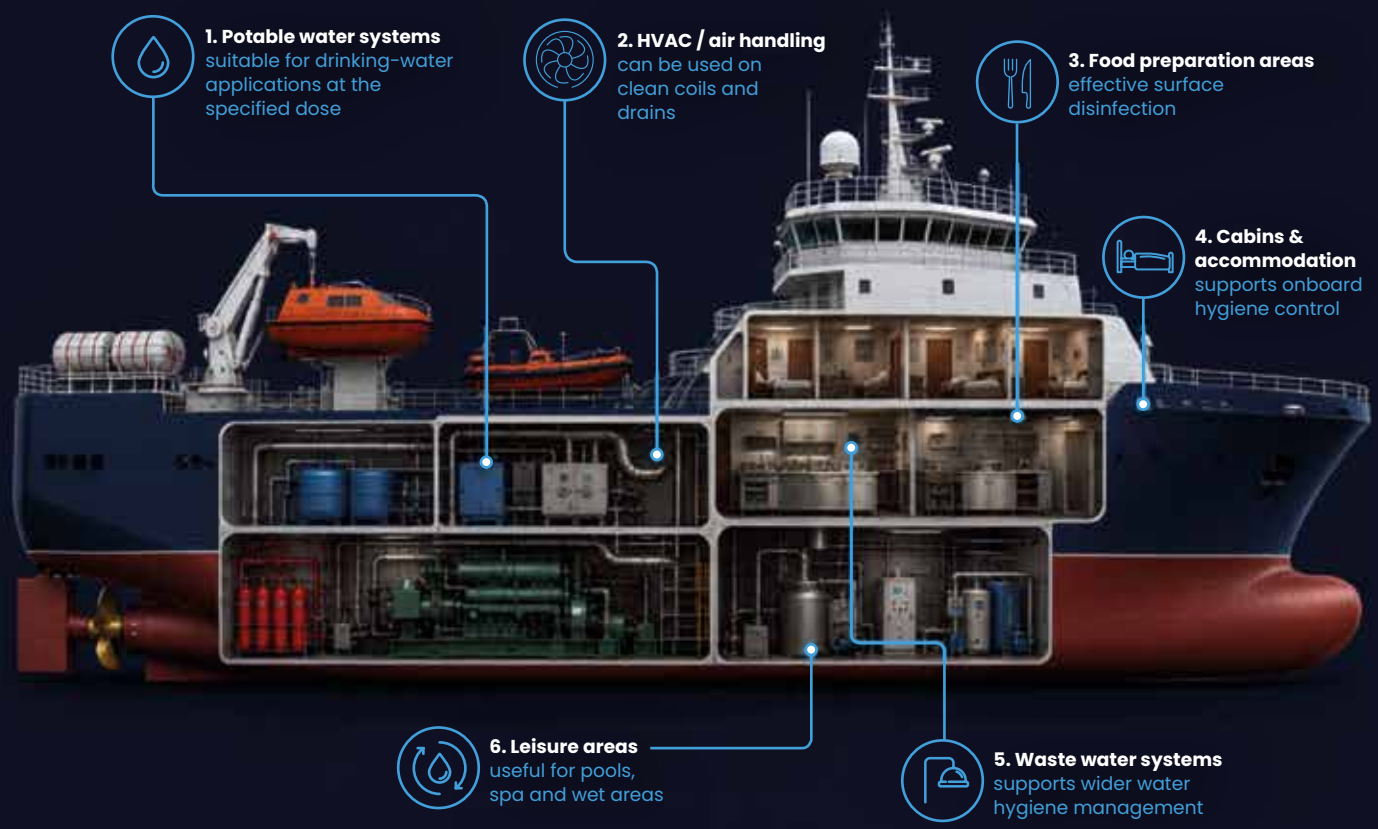
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not routinely measured onboard, such as certain metals or chemical contaminants that could be present due to upsets. Together, onboard operational monitoring and shoreside analysis provide a more complete picture of the potable water system's health and are best marine practice."

Testing results must also be interpreted in the context of the vessel's physical water infrastructure. Niall warns that one of the most common mistakes is treating the test itself as the solution.

"A sample tells you what's happening at that point in time, but if there's a wider issue with the water system, you still need to understand what's causing it and address that properly. You need to consider the condition of tanks and pipework, stagnation, low-use outlets and whether there is an underlying biofilm or contamination issue that needs addressing."

Match onboard testing with laboratory verification

Onboard testing and shoreside laboratory analysis perform different roles within a freshwater-management programme. The procurement objective is not to choose between them, but to establish which parameters the crew can monitor reliably at sea and which require specialist sampling, equipment or interpretation.

Routine onboard tests should provide timely information about treatment performance and wider system health. Depending on the vessel's Water Safety Plan, these may include pH, temperature, disinfectant residual, conductivity, turbidity, total coliforms and E. coli.

As Cynthia explains, frequent monitoring enables crews to identify an emerging problem, investigate its cause and take corrective action within hours. "When carried out frequently, onboard testing utilising the latest technologies is beneficial because it enables the crew themselves to assess system health within a matter of hours, investigate upsets when they occur, and quickly take corrective action."

However, some contaminants cannot be measured adequately using shipboard kits. Guillaume says that heavy metals, volatile organic compounds and certain microbiological contaminants are among the parameters better suited to accredited laboratories.

"These sampling activities must also be carefully planned. Certain samples cannot be transported over long distances and must be analysed locally within a limited timeframe.



GUILLAUME DRILLET
Global Marine Services Manager
SGS

Attempting to replicate laboratory capability onboard may also be impractical because of vibration, limited space and the cost of installing, maintaining and calibrating specialist equipment.

"These sampling activities must also be carefully planned," he says. "Certain samples cannot be transported over long distances and must be analysed locally within a limited timeframe."

Therefore, he advises buyers should verify vendors' claims regarding testing kits with a laboratory professional to ensure that 'they're robust enough and provide data of sufficient quality for the crew to make informed decisions, including appropriate detection limits and accuracy.'

"This is often the most significant procurement-related concern when buying kits (simply because they do not know)."

That said, laboratory results have their own limitations. Dustin points out that they represent conditions at a specific sampling point and time, and as such should verify the wider management programme, rather than substitute for routine operational monitoring throughout the vessel.

The overall advice is that buyers should ask suppliers which tests support onboard decisions, which findings require confirmation and how abnormal results will be escalated. They should also examine whether competent laboratory support is available across the fleet's trading area. The best arrangement combines rapid onboard visibility with periodic independent verification, creating a fuller and more dependable picture of water quality.

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Assess usability, support and lifecycle cost

Testing equipment must be accurate, but it must also work in the hands of a rotating crew under pressure. As such, an instrument that requires specialist interpretation, difficult calibration or extensive sample preparation is unlikely to be suitable for onboard use.

As Nicole puts it, usability and reliable consumable management are the primary considerations. “Seafarers are mariners, not laboratory technicians, so testing equipment must be straightforward to operate while delivering consistent, repeatable results across different crew members.”

And as Nicole points to digitalisation as the most significant recent development. “The progression into digital, cloud-connected testing is a real gamechanger,” she says. “Traditional onboard kits provide immediate answers on the vessel, but digital devices go further by automatically syncing data straight to the cloud. Shore teams get instant visibility across the fleet without chasing reports, removing admin burden from crew, and giving the office complete peace of mind.”

“Testing that is difficult or time consuming is often performed incorrectly or not performed at all,” says Dustin. Buyers should therefore assess repeatability, measurement range, detection limits and known interferences alongside portability, operating time and ease of use.

At the same time, consumables can have a substantial effect on lifecycle cost. “Some consumables expire quickly, resulting in actual testing costs that are much higher than initially expected,” says Guillaume. So, he advises, procurement teams should examine reagent shelf life, storage requirements and likely consumption across the vessel’s testing schedule.

They should also establish whether refills can be ordered individually and supplied at ports along the fleet’s trading routes. Otherwise, apparent savings at purchase may be lost through expired stock, urgent deliveries or unusable equipment.

Nicole recommends asking suppliers two practical questions: “Buyers should ask: ‘How seamlessly does this solution enable our crew to perform routine testing and maintain an audit-ready compliance trail?’ Minimising administrative burden while maintaining verifiable data is essential. Buyers should also evaluate global support by asking: ‘Can individual reagents be replenished quickly at our core trading ports without requiring full kit replacements, and what is the guaranteed shelf life of those consumables?”

> “The progression into digital, cloud-connected testing is a real gamechanger. Traditional onboard kits provide immediate answers on the vessel, but digital devices go further by automatically syncing data straight to the cloud.
>
> 
>
> **NICOLE BRINKLEY**
> Global Head of Sales
> Martek Marine

Finally, supplier support is particularly important when crews encounter an unusual result or need help interpreting a test. Cynthia recommends assessing the “supplier’s ability to provide technical support, including log reviews, especially in the case of upsets”. Training, clear instructions and consistent recordkeeping also help reduce user variability.

Procurement teams should also establish what support surrounds the equipment throughout its working life. Niall recommends asking what the equipment measures, whether it suits the vessel’s testing regime, how it will be calibrated and maintained, and what happens when an abnormal result is recorded.

“The equipment is only useful if the crew can use it correctly and act confidently on the results.”

The appropriate specification is therefore neither the cheapest nor the most technically advanced. It is the system crews can use consistently, maintain globally and rely upon when an operational decision is required.



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Buying the right part for the wrong problem

Why onboard drinking water cannot be procured one component at a time.

A procurement team sources a replacement membrane to address declining water quality onboard. Twelve months later, the same problem returns. The membrane itself was not the issue. Inadequate pretreatment had been accelerating fouling from the start.

Situations like this are more common than many realise. While drinking water systems onboard are often maintained and stocked as individual products, they operate as interconnected systems. A change in one part of the water chain can affect performance somewhere else, directly impacting water quality and, in turn, crew health and safety. That makes drinking water procurement fundamentally different from many other technical purchasing decisions.

"We sometimes see a customer trying to solve a water quality problem by replacing one component, while the actual cause is somewhere else in the system," says Guy Heijnen, Chief Commercial Officer at Hatenboer-Water. "You have to look at the complete water chain. If you only focus on the individual product, you can easily miss the bigger issue."

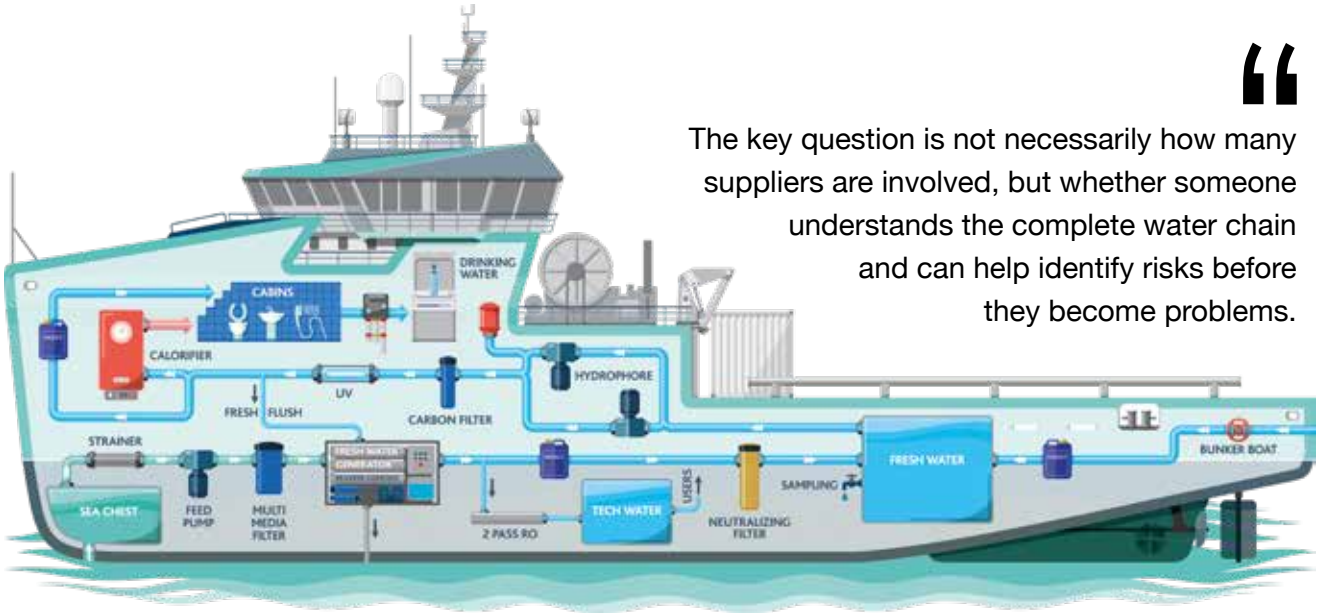
Looking beyond the part number

An onboard drinking water system typically consists of freshwater generation, treatment, disinfection, storage, distribution and water quality monitoring, supported by measures that help ensure compliance. In practice, this involves a chain of interconnected equipment, from watermakers and disinfection systems to pressure sets, filtration and point-of-use treatment. Each stage has its own equipment, maintenance requirements and operational considerations, yet none works in isolation.

Reverse osmosis (RO) provides a good example. While the membrane is often seen as the heart of the system, its performance and service life depend on the quality of the feed water entering the unit. Inadequate pretreatment allows more particulate and organic matter to reach the membrane surface, accelerating fouling, reducing efficiency and increasing maintenance requirements. The membrane may be the correct replacement part, but replacing it alone is unlikely to solve the underlying problem if the conditions causing premature wear remain unchanged. The same principle applies further



GUY HEIJNEN
Chief Commercial Officer
Hatenboer-Water



> The key question is not necessarily how many suppliers are involved, but whether someone understands the complete water chain and can help identify risks before they become problems.

downstream. From a procurement perspective, components may be purchased separately, but their performance remains interconnected.

"This is where technical knowledge becomes important," Heijnen explains. "You need to understand why a particular component is being used, what the system was designed for and what water quality requirements must be achieved. Otherwise, you can end up buying the correct product for the wrong application."

The hidden cost of isolated purchasing

Procurement decisions are often evaluated on price. For drinking water systems, however, the more relevant question is the total cost of ownership.

A lower-cost membrane, filter or chemical may appear attractive during the purchasing process. Yet if that choice results in shorter service intervals, additional maintenance, reduced efficiency or more frequent replacement, operational costs can increase throughout the lifecycle of the system. In other words, the lowest-cost component is not always the lowest-cost decision.

Understanding why parts fail

Critical spare parts present another challenge. Procurement discussions often focus on identifying the required replacement component and ensuring availability. Equally important is understanding why it needs replacing.

"If a component fails, simply ordering a replacement may not solve anything," says Heijnen. "Sometimes you need to step back and understand what is happening elsewhere in the system."

That requires more than a spare parts catalogue. Equipment design, operating conditions, maintenance history and water chemistry all influence performance. A part number alone rarely tells the full story.

This is also where supplier relationships become more valuable. The key question is not necessarily how many suppliers are involved, but whether someone understands the complete water chain and can help identify risks before they become problems.

Procurement with water quality in mind

For procurement professionals, this changes the way drinking water equipment can be evaluated and specified. Instead of viewing a membrane, filter, test kit or dosing chemical as an isolated purchase, it becomes important to understand the role that product plays within the broader system.

How does it affect other components? What operating conditions was it selected for? Which consumables, spare parts, monitoring activities and compliance measures are critical to its performance? And what are the lifecycle implications of changing the specification?

"Our goal is not to sell a membrane, a filter or a watermaker," Heijnen concludes. "Our goal is to ensure that every part of the water chain, from production and treatment to monitoring and compliance, works together to deliver safe, reliable drinking water throughout the system lifecycle."

Ultimately, drinking water compliance is achieved through the performance of the entire water chain. The most effective procurement decisions therefore start with a broader question: not whether a component is correct, but whether it is correct for the system as a whole.

Water, water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink

Headaches, muscle aches, cough, and fatigue are often attributed to the demands of life at sea, but they can also be early signs of exposure to waterborne bacteria or chemicals, making preventive water management and appropriate testing essential.

Investing in regular potable water testing helps ensure a safe water supply, protects crew health, and reduces the risk of costly operational disruptions and compliance issues.

Crew health is one of the most valuable assets on board, and maintaining a safe water supply is essential to protecting the wellbeing of everyone at sea. Potable water should be routinely tested—not only the water used for drinking, but also water used for showering, handwashing, and washing food, and other aerosol-generating outlets, as these can all be potential sources of exposure to harmful waterborne bacteria such as Legionella.

Most health-critical potable water parameters, such as harmful bacteria and heavy metals, have to be sent to a laboratory for analysis. While fast test kits are available for some parameters, harmful bacteria require incubation at the exact right temperatures to get accurate results that meet the legal requirements. For heavy metals as well, a laboratory is needed to meet the strict analysis requirements set by the various drinking water standards. For many parameters, the analysis has to be started within 24 hours of the sampling. This can make sample logistics challenging for vessels at sea and may require access to suitably located laboratories. Potable water quality is affected both by the origin of the water (different suppliers in different ports can supply very different quality), but also by the potable water treatment system on board, and by the state of the pipes carrying the potable water. Even with a good water treatment system, corrosion or bacterial growth in the potable water pipes may cause issues.

The Marine Labour Convention (MLC) requires that the crew is provided with clean potable water. Most countries have ratified the MLC, and many more have additional requirement in their own legislation. This leads to many different potable water standards applying worldwide, with the World Health Organization (WHO) Guide to Ship Sanitation serving as a key international reference



DR. PETER STEHOUWER
Global Scientific Manager Shipping
SGS

for potable water management on board ships . But other regulations may apply, depending on the class and flag of the vessel. For instance, many European countries (Germany, France and Denmark, for instance) have specific potable water testing requirements for ships sailing under their flag. Potable water testing is most likely required for your vessels, with both the testing parameters and testing frequency depending on the registry flag.

SGS has conducted potable water testing on hundreds of different vessels, according to a range of different potable water regulations. The most common type of testing is according to the WHO Guide to Ship Sanitation, with our experience showing that there were non-compliances with at least one parameter in 59% of potable water samples tested. This includes non-compliances for potentially harmful bacteria such as Legionella (non-compliant in 21% of samples) Escherichia coli (non-compliant in 5% of samples) and Enterococci (non-compliant in 7% of samples). Similarly, non-compliances were observed for heavy metals and other harmful chemicals such as lead (2%), iron (14%), trihalomethanes (6%) and ammonium (3%). This shows that non-compliance with the drinking water regulations is not uncommon, and the microbiological and chemical exceedances can occur even on vessels with expensive and advanced water treatment systems. Apart from health concern parameters, hardness and conductivity should also be monitored and analysed within hold time of the sample. Water produced on board by reverse osmosis or evaporation systems are often very low in minerals, so remineralisation is commonly used to improve the acceptable criteria like taste and to help the protection of the pipes from corrosion.

The cost of a drinking water analysis is modest, especially when considering the financial and operational risks that come with failing a health inspection. Or even worse, suffering a major disease outbreak on board, leading to emergency disinfection, vessel delays, off-hire time, repatriation of sick crew, potential fines from flag states or port, etcetera.

Regular potable water testing is a proactive measure that helps ensure a safe water supply, protects crew health, and reduces the risk of costly operational disruptions and compliance issues. It also helps increase confidence in the on-board drinking water for both crew and passengers, leading to less use of bottled drinking water which in turn helps reduce plastic waste.

“

SGS has conducted potable water testing on hundreds of different vessels, according to a range of different potable water regulations. The most common type of testing is according to the WHO Guide to Ship Sanitation, with our experience showing that there were non-compliances with at least one parameter in 59% of potable water samples tested.





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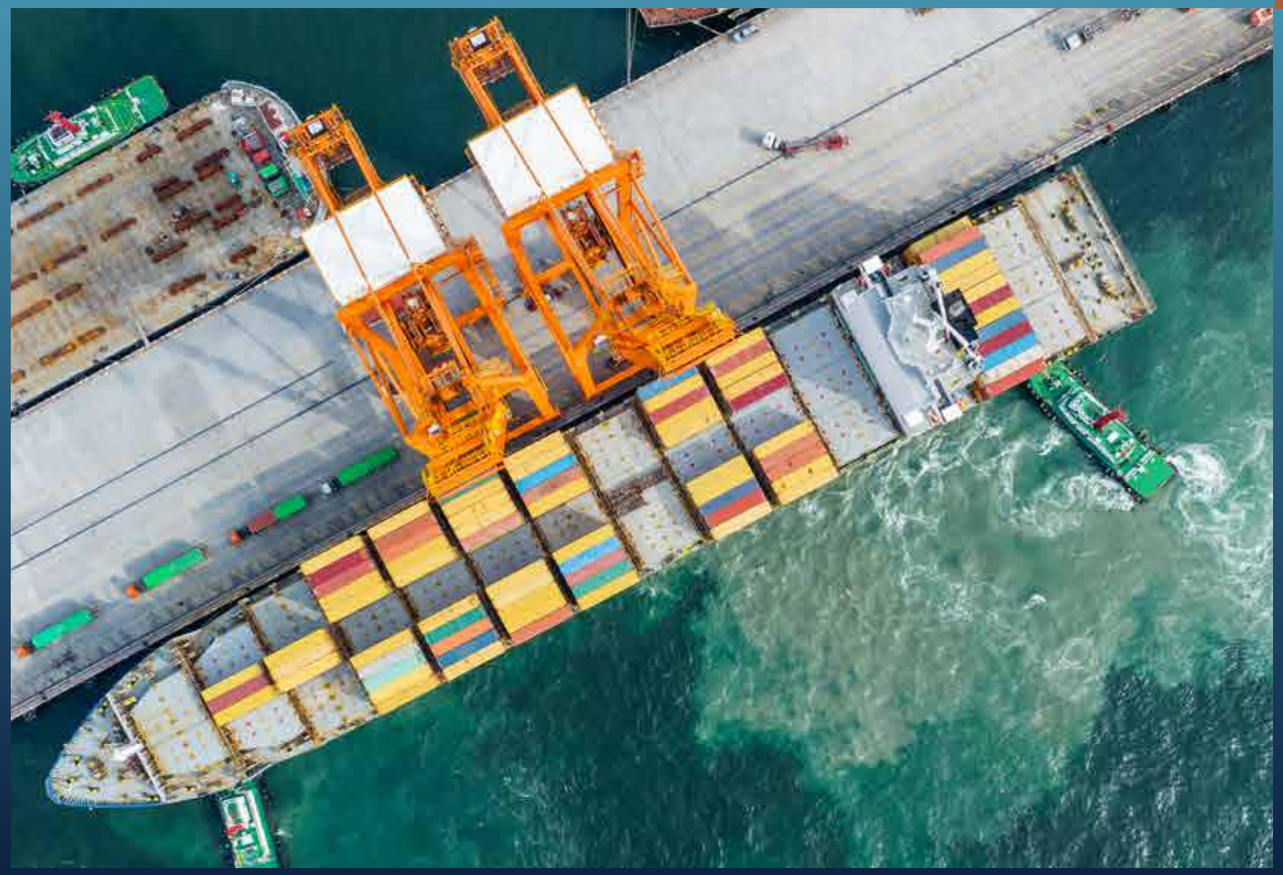
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Beyond compliance:

specifying onboard medical chests

Effective medical-chest procurement has to go beyond compliance to consider operational suitability, lifecycle support and how connected technologies can strengthen medical readiness across the fleet. We get the lowdown from three experts.

While a vessel's medical chest may be defined by regulation, effective procurement involves more than matching medicines to a list of flag-state requirements. What to stock depends on the vessel's operating profile, who's likely to use what, and suppliers' ability to maintain compliance throughout the chest's lifecycle. For procurement, that means assessing inventory data, as well as telemedicine and diagnostic tech to strengthen medical supplies across the entire fleet.

Specify for medical capability, not minimum compliance

Regulatory compliance should be thought of as the starting point for medical chest specification, the jumping point from which best practice begins, rather than a target in and of itself. What you need to specify thereafter depends on the vessel's flag, classification, crew, voyage duration and trading area. Compliance, therefore, establishes the baseline rather than defining the entire procurement scope.



TOM HOLMES
Freelance Supply Chain Writer

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"A medical chest should therefore not be selected simply by comparing item lists and prices," says Dr. Tülsner, CEO of Marine Medical Solutions, a member of OneCare Group. Instead, he says procurement teams should consider the chest alongside diagnostic equipment, crew competence, procedures and the medical support available to the vessel.

This is particularly important where there is no medical professional onboard. Medicines and equipment must be suitable for use by trained crew members, often under remote clinical guidance. A compliant item that cannot be used safely or effectively by the people onboard contributes little to the vessel's actual medical capability.

Requirements also differ substantially between operating profiles. A cruise ship carrying holidaymakers and a dedicated medical team has different requirements from a commercial cargo vessel operating with a small crew and no onboard doctor.

Buyers should therefore provide suppliers with a detailed operational brief covering vessel type, crew and passenger numbers, routes, voyage duration, onboard medical competence and foreseeable health risks. Company medical policies may exceed flag-state requirements and should be incorporated into the specification from the outset.

Nicole Brinkley, Global Head of Sales of Martek Marine makes a similar point: "Any medical provisions or devices on board must first and foremost give the crew the best possible protection. That means factoring in the number of people on board, the type of vessel, and crucially, how long it will operate without access to shoreside medical support. Once those operational needs are clear, the focus turns to making sure all equipment and medicines meet the exact standards of the vessel's flag State and relevant regulatory bodies. That creates the right balance between kit that is genuinely fit for purpose and fully compliant wherever the ship trades."

Chionoulla Neofytou, SeaMed24 Medical Manager of Oceanic agrees, advising procurement teams to prioritise "regulatory compliance, operational suitability, quality, and lifecycle support rather than simply focusing on the lowest purchase price."

To reiterate the point: a common mistake is treating the medical chest as a static compliance checklist. This can result in inappropriate quantities, unnecessary duplication, incomplete inventories or medicines that are difficult to administer.

> "The cheapest compliant medical chest is not necessarily the most cost-effective medical chest. Product origin and traceability also require scrutiny. Pharmaceutical rules may vary by formulation, product combination, country of origin, and local approval.



DR. TÜLSNER
CEO of Marine Medical Solutions,
member of OneCare Group

A more useful evaluation asks not only whether the chest is compliant, but whether it provides a practical and coherent means of responding to illness and injury within the vessel's particular operating environment.

Evaluate the complete supply and support model

As with most categories, the purchase price represents only a small part of the medical chest's total cost – the reality is that medicines expire, regulations change, and vessels move between jurisdictions. Effective procurement – and budgeting – must take that into consideration by examining how the chest will be supported throughout its operational life.

Expiry-date management is central to that assessment. Buyers should establish the minimum remaining shelf life accepted at delivery, how expiry dates will be monitored and whether replenishment can be consolidated to reduce waste and freight costs. Without reliable inventory information, operators risk both running short of essential medicines and buying excess stock that expires unused.

"The cheapest compliant medical chest is not necessarily the most cost-effective medical chest," says Dr. Tülsner. Product origin and traceability also require scrutiny. Pharmaceutical rules may vary by formulation, product combination, country of origin, and local approval. Buyers should ask how medicines are sourced and qualified in each region, how substitutions are authorised and whether batch-level records allow recalled products to be traced to individual vessels.

Controlled drugs create additional responsibilities involving secure transportation, documentation, customs clearance

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> A medical chest is not a one-time purchase; it's an ongoing compliance and safety program, highlighting the need to approach the medical chest from the perspective of its entire life.



CHIONOULLA NEOFYTOU
SeaMed24 Medical Manager
Oceanic

and jurisdiction-specific restrictions. A supplier's claimed international capability should therefore be tested against the ports the fleet actually uses and the supplier's performance in that region. That includes realistic turnaround times, port-specific import requirements, customs expertise and the ability to manage urgent supplies in complex and/or time-sensitive locations.

Supplier evaluation should cover ongoing service as closely as product content. Buyers should ask who clinically reviews the configuration, how regulatory changes are monitored, what happens when an item is unavailable and how quickly affected vessels can be updated. The service may also need to include documentation, inspection support, controlled-drug records and assistance during audits.

Nicole says buyers should test both compliance and the support behind it: "Buyers should ask two fundamental questions: do the equipment and provisions strictly meet regulatory standards, and can the supplier reliably support them once the vessel is at sea? Compliance must be verified against flag State and trading area rules, but equal weight must be placed on the availability of replacement consumables in major global ports.

"That mindset should apply to all critical medical and safety equipment. The right supplier does not just focus on the initial supply; they provide the dependable global network and ongoing support needed to keep that equipment operational throughout the ship's lifecycle."

"A medical chest is not a one-time purchase; it's an ongoing compliance and safety program," says Chionoulla, highlighting the need to approach the medical chest from the perspective of its entire life.

To that end, standardisation can simplify this programme across a fleet, but it should not erase genuine operational differences. The objective is a controlled common framework that permits justified variations by flag, route, vessel type, crew complement, and medical risk.

Connect inventory management with onboard care

Technology is moving medical chest management away from periodic manual checking and towards continuous fleet-wide oversight. Digital inventory systems, automated expiry monitoring and proactive replenishment can reduce administrative work while giving shore teams a clearer view of medical readiness.

Many operators still depend on vessel spreadsheets, email chains, and telephone calls. This fragments information and makes it difficult to establish which products are onboard, where shortages exist or which vessels are affected by an expiry, regulatory change or product recall.

Centralised platforms can provide a consolidated view of stock, documentation and compliance status, as Chionoulla explains: "Digital inventory management systems allow operators to monitor stock levels, track expiration dates, and schedule replenishments before shortages occur."

Nicole sees the same shift: "Technology is increasingly enabling onshore teams to connect directly with vessels and take a proactive role in managing onboard medical supplies. Digital inventory systems provide real-time visibility into stock levels, expiry dates, and upcoming replenishment requirements, allowing shore-based teams to spot and resolve potential gaps before they become operational issues.

> Technology does more than reduce administrative burden. It ensures that seafarers remain fully protected wherever the vessel operates



NICOLE BRINKLEY
Global Head of Sales
Martek Marine

"This shifts responsibility away from the crew, who would otherwise scramble to identify shortages at the last minute, ensuring ships never sail without the critical provisions they need. Ultimately, technology does more than reduce administrative burden. It ensures that seafarers remain fully protected wherever the vessel operates."

The value of better data extends beyond admin. Consumption records can help procurement forecast demand, identify overstocking and distinguish routine use from unusual patterns.

For example, unusually high use of gastrointestinal medicines on one vessel might warrant investigation of potable water quality, food handling or wider crew-health conditions rather than being treated solely as a replenishment requirement. Data, in that respect, can improve efficiency and help to protect crew health.

Connecting the inventory with telemedical support could have an even greater impact. If a clinician ashore can see the precise medicines, dosage forms, quantities and expiry status available on a vessel, advice can be based on its actual treatment capability. Connected vital-sign monitors, ECGs, point-of-care testing and digital examination devices can also improve the information available for remote assessment.

"The distinction between a medical chest and an onboard medical system will increasingly disappear," says Dr. Tülsner. Over time, operating profiles, consumption patterns, routes and anonymised health data may help fleets configure chests more intelligently beyond the regulatory minimum.

Predictive tools will not remove the need for crew training, clinical oversight or physical inspections. They can, however, identify gaps earlier, support more efficient replenishment and provide stronger evidence for purchasing decisions.

The procurement question is therefore becoming broader: not simply what medicines a vessel is required to carry, but what medical capability its crew may need and how reliably that capability can be maintained.







The obsolescence trap:

why proactive retrofitting is the **only cure** for an ageing fleet

The global merchant fleet is ageing rapidly. Driven by high capital costs, rising interest rates, and regulatory uncertainty over future fuels, shipowners are holding onto existing assets longer. The average age of the world fleet has climbed to around 13 years, and a significant percentage of vessels are past their mid-life survey cycles. While this keeps assets moving and sustains global trade, we must ask an uncomfortable question: are we investing enough to keep these ageing ships safe, or are we simply postponing the upgrades they increasingly require?

The danger of doing the bare minimum

As vessels age, shipboard crews and technical managers face increasing pressure to keep equipment operational while controlling maintenance costs and avoiding disruption. In conversations with superintendents, I have seen a worrying trend where safety is treated as a checklist exercise to pass the next Port State Control (PSC) audit, rather than an active, daily discipline.

But PSC pressure is real and growing. The Port State Control Annual Report 2026 shows that detentions have rebounded sharply. In fact, ClassNK fleet detentions alone rose from 381 in 2024 to 425 in 2025. These are driven by critical deficiencies in fire safety, life-saving appliances, and emergency systems. When inspections reveal corroded pipework, faulty gas detectors, or unreliable emergency shut-offs, inspectors do not hesitate to act.

For older tonnage, the statistics are unforgiving: ships over 25 years old recorded a 16.2% detention ratio, while those 20 to 25 years old recorded 11.1%. PSC authorities, particularly in high-volume regions such as China and Australia, are subjecting these older hulls to intense scrutiny. Waiting until arrival in port to address a known safety fault therefore creates a significant and avoidable risk of detention.

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That risk is compounded by the operational pressures facing crews and technical teams. High workloads and crew shortages can lead to the normalisation of shortcuts. I have heard of crews bypassing safety measures, turning off alarms, or resorting to unsafe workarounds to get underway. Ignoring these warning signs is a dangerous gamble that can result in port detentions, cargo delays, or worse.

The obsolescence trap and class dispensations

The biggest headache for older vessels is system obsolescence. If a vessel was built 15 or 20 years ago, it is running critical safety systems designed with technologies that are now potentially out of production. Microchips become obsolete, manufacturers discontinue sensor lines, and user manuals refer to parts that simply no longer exist. I regularly see operators scrambling for a solution because a critical safety system has failed weeks before an inspection, and parts cannot be found anywhere in the world.

In my experience, relying on class dispensations to keep sailing with degraded equipment is a dangerous game. While classification societies can issue temporary, short-term dispensations to reach a repair port, these are strictly emergency measures, not operational loopholes. Today, obtaining these is becoming incredibly difficult as registries and Class societies face pressure to eliminate substandard ships.

A dispensation is a ticking clock. Once it expires, or you enter port without a permanent fix, PSC can immediately detain the ship. When engineering and delivering a new marine-approved system can take 8 to 12 weeks, the financial exposure is staggering. A detained ship incurs far more than simple port fines. Between off-hire penalties, charter-party breach claims, rescheduled tugs, and reputational damage with charterers, a single detention can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Meanwhile, port authorities and charterers are pressuring you to sail. The "savings" made by delaying an upgrade are quickly outweighed by a single day of port detention or off-hire costs.

Footprints and pipelines: a proactive approach

Prevention is always cheaper than the cure. Proactive safety retrofits during scheduled drydocks or routine maintenance windows avoid last-minute crises. Timing an upgrade during a planned yard stay allows technical managers to negotiate better labour rates, coordinate Class approvals calmly, and ensure equipment is commissioned before the ship ever faces an inspector.

“

Historically, retrofitting struck fear into technical directors because it conjured images of massive structural modifications, rewiring, and weeks of downtime. Today, however, retrofitting has become a far more refined engineering discipline, with modern marine safety hardware designed specifically for straightforward integration.

Historically, retrofitting struck fear into technical directors because it conjured images of massive structural modifications, rewiring, and weeks of downtime. Today, however, retrofitting has become a far more refined engineering discipline, with modern marine safety hardware designed specifically for straightforward integration.

Rather than replacing existing infrastructure, modern systems can be engineered to match the exact physical footprint of the old legacy cabinet and align with existing sample lines and pipework. The best safety partners in the market do not offer off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all equipment.

Instead, they design bespoke systems that adapt directly to your vessel's existing pipework, cable runs, and bulkhead space. This physical footprint matching helps to avoid high labour costs, structural modifications, and Class approval delays that have historically made retrofits such a headache.

Safety is a commercial enabler

As our global fleet continues to age, we must shift our mindset. Proactive retrofitting is not an annoying capital expense or a grudge purchase to satisfy regulators. It is a vital commercial strategy that protects your crew, safeguards your assets, and ensures you can continue trading without the threat of detention, fines, or catastrophic failures.

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Best foot forward

Safety footwear has to protect crews without making a long shift even harder. Getting the specification right means understanding the risks onboard, listening to the people wearing it and looking beyond the initial price…

The consequence of slipping on deck could be severe. A safety boot may look right on paper, but if it cannot provide reliable grip on wet steel or contaminated surfaces, it falls short when it matters most. And performance is only part of the equation. Comfort, fit and durability are just as important.

For procurement teams, that creates a complex balancing act. They need footwear that delivers the right level of protection, fits correctly, stands up to demanding environments and supports workers throughout the working day. That means looking beyond certification and cost to consider factors such as weight, materials, slip resistance, fit and product lifespan.

We spoke to three leading suppliers for advice on what procurement teams should ask for...

Specify footwear for the actual working environment

As with other safety-centric categories, footwear is governed by certification and regulation, though meeting those does not necessarily mean a particular product is suitable for a particular vessel. And as Schéhèrazade Mokiem, CEO of Scandia Gear, explains, certification is the bare minimum procurement teams should be looking for.

"Compliance with international safety standards is only the starting point," she says. "Procurement teams should focus on footwear that is specifically designed for the challenging conditions at sea."

In that context, buyers should understand the hazards crews will face when on board. That looks different depending on the vessel type. It could be wet or oily decks, smooth painted steel, steep ladders, fuels or hydraulic fluids – the bottom line is to keep in mind the risks they will face.

"Slipping remains one of the highest causes of injury onboard vessels due to wet decks, oily floors in engine rooms and smooth painted steel surfaces," says Junqiang Soh, co-founder of workXwear. He adds that procurement teams should therefore examine how an outsole performs on representative onboard surfaces, for example, rather than relying on a general claim of slip resistance.

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Freelance Supply Chain Writer

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> Compliance with international safety standards is only the starting point. Procurement teams should focus on footwear that is specifically designed for the challenging conditions at sea.



SCHÉHÈRAZADE MOKIEM
CEO
Scandia Gear

Best practice dictates that EN ISO 20345:2022 compliance and the appropriate protection category, such as S1P, S3, S3S or S3L, should be verified. Depending on the role, the specification may also require protective toe caps, penetration-resistant midsoles, fuel-oil resistance and ladder grip.

Junqiang adds further, that ladder grip should be a primary consideration because seafarers routinely use "stairways, ladders, companionways" while working onboard. Fuel-oil-resistant soles may be particularly relevant in machinery spaces where lubricants, fuels and hydraulic fluids are routinely present.

If it were not inherently obvious, a single fleetwide model will not necessarily meet every operational requirement, with Schéhèrazade warning that "engine room personnel, deck crews, and offshore technicians often face very different working conditions." Engine-room footwear may need particularly strong resistance to oil and heat, while deck crews may place greater importance on waterproofing, corrosion resistance and reliable grip in exposed conditions.

Specifications, therefore, should be based on a role-level risk assessment. Buyers should ask suppliers for test evidence covering wet steel, oily surfaces and other conditions, including any testing conducted beyond mandatory certification. This helps to distinguish footwear that is technically compliant from footwear demonstrably suited to the realities of the work its users will carry out.

Comfort isn't an afterthought

Given the extent, nature and duration of the work crews undertake, footwear should be comfortable – and no, this isn't a nice to have. If footwear fits badly, is heavy or offers inadequate support, it'll increase fatigue, restrict movement and increase the risk of injury. Crews are also far less likely to wear them, too.

"Poor comfort leads to higher foot fatigue and lower PPE compliance," says Junqiang. To counter that, recent product development has sought to reduce weight while retaining protection, with features like steel toe caps and midsoles being replaced by composite alternatives using materials such as fibreglass, carbon fibre and Kevlar.

> Poor comfort leads to higher foot fatigue and lower PPE compliance.



JUNQIANG (JQ) SOH
Co-founder
workXwear

Similarly, engineered mesh, knitted fabrics and microfibre uppers can also offer greater flexibility and breathability than conventional leather, although buyers should still verify that these materials provide the required waterproofing, durability and resistance to onboard contaminants.

"Crew members often wear safety footwear for 12-hour shifts or longer, so lightweight construction, cushioning, and ergonomic support contribute directly to reducing fatigue and improving productivity," says Schéhèrazade. Wider toe boxes, secure heel support, shock-absorbing midsoles and supportive footbeds can all affect comfort over an extended shift, while waterproof, breathable membranes may also help keep feet dry without trapping excessive heat and moisture.

Fastening systems are evolving as well. Junqiang says that twist-lock or rotary-dial closures are offering an alternative to traditional laces, making footwear easier to put on and remove while wearing gloves. While such features may appear relatively minor on a specification sheet, they can make a significant difference to everyday usability onboard.

Comfort, however, cannot be assessed from technical data alone. Fit obviously varies between wearers, and footwear that performs well in laboratory testing may not suit the movements, temperatures and shift patterns experienced at sea. Wearer trials should therefore form part of the selection process, as Schéhèrazade explains: "The people using the footwear every day provide valuable insights into comfort, durability, and performance that should influence future procurement decisions."

"Wearer trials should be structured rather than informal," explains Clair Weston, Marketing Manager at uvex. "A representative group of crew members should test the footwear during normal duties and provide feedback on fit, grip, comfort,

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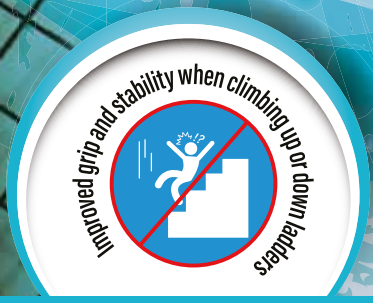
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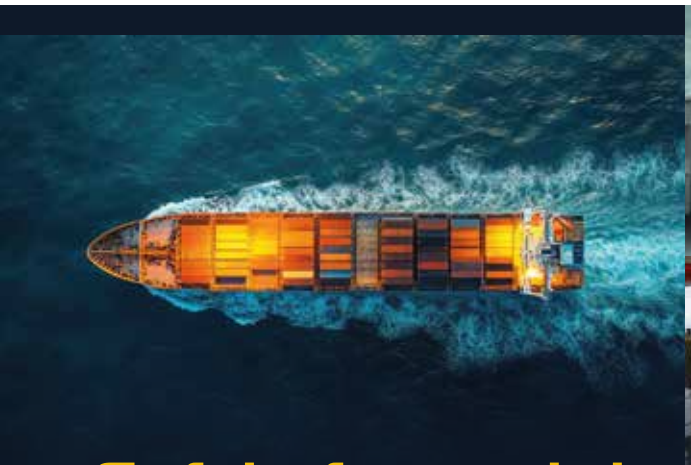


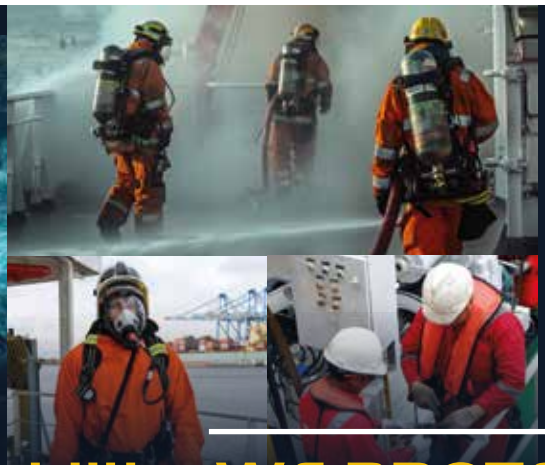
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> A representative group of crew members should test the footwear during normal duties and provide feedback on fit, grip, comfort, moisture management, ease of fastening and end-of-shift fatigue.



CLAIR WESTON
Marketing Manager
UVEX SAFETY (UK) Ltd.

moisture management, ease of fastening and end-of-shift fatigue. This gives procurement teams practical evidence to compare alongside certification and supplier claims, while helping to identify whether more than one footwear option is required for different roles, foot shapes or working conditions".

This is where partnering with a footwear manufacturer that offers wearer trials can help ensure the right fit for teams. Suppliers such as uvex can add value through customised fit offerings, rather than expecting one standard model to suit every wearer. "Options such as alternative widths, supportive insoles, different closure systems and guidance on correct fitting can help address common issues such as heel movement, pressure points, toe compression and arch support. For mixed crews, this is particularly important because poor fit can quickly undermine both comfort and compliance," says Clair.

Evaluate lifecycle value and supplier capability

As we often say, the price is not the cost, and nor is it representative of value. With footwear specifically, there is a tendency for lower cost items to deteriorate prematurely, perform poorly and require frequent replacement. If you buy cheap, you buy twice.

As is common, procurement teams are well advised to compare the price against the expected working life of the product, taking into account durability, wearer acceptance, replacement rates and operational costs associated with supplying fleets.

"A boot that lasts longer, remains comfortable throughout its service life, and requires fewer replacements offers a significantly lower total cost of ownership," says Schéhèrazade. She adds that buyers should ask suppliers to define the expected service life under operating conditions and explain the evidence behind that estimate. Generic durability claims are of limited value unless they reflect exposure to saltwater, oil, hydraulic fluids, wet steel and extended shifts.

Material selection is central to this assessment. "Unsuitable materials for outsole, midsole and upper may lead to increasing replacement frequency," says Junqiang, adding that procurement teams should establish which components are most likely to wear first, whether performance declines as the footwear ages and how expected lifespan varies between deck, engine-room and shoreside roles. References and sea-trial results can provide a more reliable indication of performance than certification alone.

uvex advises that a safety boot is only effective if it is worn correctly, cared for properly and replaced at the right time. That means aftercare should form part of the specification conversation, and not be treated as an afterthought. Buyers should look for suppliers that can provide clear guidance on cleaning, drying, storage, inspection and signs of wear, helping crews understand how to maintain protection throughout the product's service life.

In marine environments, this guidance is particularly important. Saltwater, mud, contaminants and long shifts can accelerate deterioration, so wearers should be encouraged to clean footwear after use, allow it to dry naturally away from direct heat, check soles for worn tread or embedded debris, and inspect uppers, seams, stitching, toe protection and fastening systems for damage. By supporting customers with practical care and maintenance advice, uvex can help improve wearer compliance and ensure footwear is replaced before performance is compromised.

Junqiang adds further that future resilience is becoming another consideration, and expects greater emphasis on "comfort, ergonomics and user acceptance", alongside higher-performance materials, changes in outsole construction and sustainability. Schéhèrazade agrees and anticipates "greater use of recycled and bio-based materials," but qualifies this with an important caveat: they must "meet the demanding performance requirements of maritime environments.

Procurement teams should ask suppliers to substantiate environmental claims with evidence on material content, durability and end-of-life options, since a shorter lifespan that drives higher replacement volumes is not automatically a sustainability gain. The strongest proposition will combine verified protection, dependable service life and credible supplier support, introducing new materials without compromising performance onboard.

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Safety footwear for maritime, docks and offshore environments:

simplifying EN ISO 20345:2022

For maritime, docks and offshore teams, safety footwear must do more than meet the standard. It must protect against wet decks, oily surfaces, fuel exposure, cold conditions, falling loads and frequent ladder access, writes uvex's Clair Weston.

Safety footwear is a crucial part of PPE, particularly in maritime, docks and offshore environments where workers may be exposed to wet walkways, oily decks, fuel residues, cold weather, heavy cargo, moving equipment and regular ladder or gangway access. Since March 2023 safety shoes and boots have been subject to the updated EN ISO 20345:2022 standard. That has presented some cause for concern for safety professionals whose staff are still wearing footwear produced under EN ISO 20345:2011. However, there is no need to worry. Here is a simple overview of what the new standard means and the key footwear markings to consider for high-risk marine and offshore applications. *For further information, see our White Paper: Demystifying the new safety footwear standard: A simple guide to EN ISO 20345:2022.*

Basic requirements

Most basic requirements remain the same under the new standard. EN ISO 20345:2022 still mandates the height, ergonomics and comfort of the footwear which are crucial to ensure adequate protection, fit and overall 'wearability'. It determines the resistance, non-toxicity and properties of the materials used in the sole and shoe/boot upper. The toe cap must also meet minimum requirements, including passing a drop test equivalent to 20kg from a height of approximately one metre and a compression test with a load of about 1,500 kilograms.

However, the slip resistance is the most significant change and has now been added as a basic requirement for all safety footwear. Shoes/boots must meet a standard similar to the old 'SRA' certification with a test involving sodium lauryl sulphate on ceramic tiles. No additional markings are shown for this.

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CLAIR WESTON
Marketing Manager
UVEX SAFETY (UK) Ltd.

> The slip resistance is the most significant change and has now been added as a basic requirement for all safety footwear. Shoes/boots must meet a standard similar to the old ‘SRA’ certification with a test involving sodium lauryl sulphate on ceramic tiles.



Left boot: uvex Heckel Maccrossroad 3.0 meta boot – it has D3O® Metatarsal protection and a water resistant leather upper. Right boot: uvex Heckel Maccrossroad 3.0 boot with BOA lacing system

However, if the footwear also passes a test with glycerol on a ceramic tile – much like the old ‘SRB’ certification – they can be marked with ‘SR’.

This is particularly important in docks, harbours, shipyards and offshore platforms, where slips can occur on wet metal, painted surfaces, ramps, decks, gangways and areas contaminated by oil, fuel or seawater. While slip resistance is now part of the basic requirement, footwear marked ‘SR’ has passed the additional glycerol test and should be considered where slip risk is a critical factor.

Additional requirements

Depending on workplace hazards, there may be additional requirements beyond the basics. Footwear that offers protection in these specific areas are marked with letter-based codes. Under the 2022 standard, the range of additional requirements has gone from 12 to 18.

Changes include the introduction of ‘LG’ to indicate ladder grip. This additional certification is based on a ladder grip test originally associated with footwear intended for firefighters, but it is also highly relevant for maritime, docks and offshore work where employees may climb ladders, access platforms, board vessels, use gangways or move between different deck levels. The test focuses on the area of the sole between the heel and forepart, below the arch, where the footwear rests on ladder rungs, and includes specifications regarding the dimensions and depth of this sole area.

The new footwear standard now includes resistance to hydrocarbons, indicated by an ‘FO’ marking, as an additional test for environments with hazards such as fuel oil, petrol, diesel, lubricants and other oil-based contaminants. For maritime, docks and offshore applications, this is a key consideration because outsoles may regularly come into contact with fuel residues, hydraulic oils, machinery lubricants or contaminated surfaces. Previously, ‘FO’ – resistance to fuel oil – was a basic requirement for safety footwear marked with S1 to S5.

Cold insulation, marked ‘CI’, should also be considered for outdoor docks, quaysides, cold storage areas, offshore platforms and marine work where low temperatures, wind chill or prolonged exposure to cold surfaces may affect wearer comfort and safety. Footwear that helps insulate against cold can support comfort, circulation and all-day wearability, particularly for teams working long shifts in exposed conditions.

Metatarsal protection, marked ‘M’, may be required where there is a risk of heavy items falling or rolling onto the top of the foot. This can be relevant in docks and offshore environments where workers handle cargo, chains, mooring equipment, tools, cylinders, pallets, mechanical components or other heavy materials. A toe cap protects the front of the foot, but metatarsal protection helps address impact risks across the upper foot area.

Some of the additional requirements under the 2012 standard have expanded and evolved. Under the new standard, safety footwear that protects against nail penetration is marked differently: ‘P’ is used for metallic soles tested with a 4.5 mm nail, ‘PL’ for non-metallic soles tested with a 4.5 mm nail, and ‘PS’ for non-metallic soles tested with a 3 mm nail, offering higher protection due to the smaller diameter nail's higher pressure. This expands on the old standard, where all such footwear was simply marked with ‘P’.

The EN ISO 20345:2011 standard used ‘WRU’ for shoes/boots with water-resistant uppers, but this did not guarantee waterproof footwear. The 2022 standard replaces ‘WRU’ with ‘WPA’, which stands for water penetration and absorption and indicates that the upper material has limited water penetration and absorption. ‘WR’ was also used in the 2011 version for waterproof footwear, but the new standard introduces the

> The new footwear standard now includes resistance to hydrocarbons, indicated by an ‘FO’ marking, as an additional test for environments with hazards such as fuel oil, petrol, diesel, lubricants and other oil-based contaminants.

shorthand protection classes S6 and S7: S6 is based on S2 with an additional WR test, while S7 is based on S3 with an additional WR test.

For marine and offshore settings, water performance should be assessed alongside outsole resistance, insulation and grip. Waterproof footwear marked ‘WR’ may be appropriate where workers face standing water, sea spray, washdown activities or prolonged wet conditions, while ‘WPA’ may be sufficient where the requirement is water penetration and absorption resistance rather than full waterproofing.

Protection classes

Safety footwear is divided into different protection classes depending on the requirements fulfilled. This has become a little more complicated under the new standard. Under EN ISO 20345:2011, the protection levels were divided into six classes: SB, S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5. Now, there are eight main protection classes: SB, S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and S7. The two new protection classes – S6 and S7 – are waterproof in the line with the new ‘WR’ certification.

In addition to the new classes, the class codes may also be followed by ‘P’, ‘L’ (or ‘PL’) and ‘S’ (or ‘PS’) to indicate additional perforation resistance in line with the ‘P’, ‘PL’ and ‘PS’ certifications.

In practical terms, those specifying footwear for maritime, docks and offshore work should look beyond the class code alone and check the additional markings against the site risk assessment. Depending on the task and location, useful markings may include ‘FO’ for fuel oil resistance, ‘SR’ for additional slip resistance, ‘CI’ for cold insulation, ‘M’ for metatarsal protection, ‘LG’ for ladder grip, ‘WR’ for waterproof footwear and ‘P’, ‘PL’ or ‘PS’ for perforation resistance.

Taking action

The new standard has brought numerous improvements, however, as with any change to standards, it also potentially makes life more complicated for those working in PPE procurement, especially until all involved are familiar with the changes. The good news is that most will not need to take any action at this stage.

While EN ISO 20345:2022 is now in place, we are still in a transition extending up to five years, allowing for a gradual integration of the new standard. Customers can therefore expect to encounter safety footwear certified under either the 2011 or 2022 standard until November 2029. During this time, manufacturers with valid certificates can still produce footwear under the 2012 standard and it is still perfectly legal to purchase them. If you bought your footwear from a reputable supplier and it has been performing effectively and well maintained, it should not need to be replaced.

You should, however, consider buying shoes or boots produced under the 2022 standard if you carry out a new risk assessment and identify hazards such as fuel or oil exposure, cold conditions, ladder access, wet or contaminated surfaces, falling objects, moving cargo, sharp debris or prolonged outdoor work. You should also look to replace any safety shoes or boots that have degraded due to wear and tear, especially if the outsole, upper, waterproofing or protective components are no longer performing effectively.

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The uvex safety footwear range has been created to provide reliable protection in a wide range of industry sectors, including demanding maritime, docks and offshore environments, as well as automotive, manufacturing, chemical, construction, service and logistics, ‘clean’ environments and outdoor workspaces such as horticulture, agriculture and forestry.

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For marine and offshore teams, that means helping employers identify footwear that supports grip, stability, protection and wearer comfort in real working conditions, whether the risk is fuel oil contamination, wet decks, cold exposure, ladder use or impact from heavy equipment.

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Beyond Supply: Why PPE Training Matters

Why competent use matters as much as compliant equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has one very specific role in occupational safety: it is the last line of defence. Within the hierarchy of controls, elimination, substitution, engineering and administrative measures all take priority because they reduce risk at its source. PPE removes nothing; it simply stands between the worker and the hazard, so how well it works depends on how it is selected, worn, maintained and understood. A helmet left hanging on its hook protects nobody, nor do gloves in the wrong size or a respirator that never quite seals. Equipment alone does not create safety; competent use of it does.

That distinction is becoming harder to ignore across the shipping industry. Supplying compliant PPE is no longer the end of the safety conversation; it is the starting point, with training the element that turns supply into actual protection.

Choosing the right equipment

PPE only works when it matches the specific hazard, task and individual wearing it. A cut-resistant glove suitable for one job may offer little protection in another; hearing protection must match the noise exposure; a harness must be adjusted correctly to arrest a fall safely. Training teaches people to read markings, understand relevant standards and recognise when an item is suitable for the job and when it is not.

Fit, life cycle and legal duty

Fit is one of the clearest examples of how training affects performance. Respiratory protective equipment only works when it forms an effective seal against the face: facial shape, facial hair and how the mask is put on all affect that seal. Training explains why fit testing and a seal check before every use matter. The same applies to fall-arrest systems, where correct connection and adjustment separate a controlled arrest from a serious impact.

Proper use also goes well beyond the moment equipment goes on. Training must cover the full life cycle: inspection before use, correct donning and doffing, storage, cleaning, maintenance and timely replacement. Workers who know how to inspect their equipment catch cracks, worn straps,



GEORGE VLACHOS
Trainer
STOP S.A.

expired filters or contamination before these lead to failure. Doffing is often underestimated: remove contaminated gloves incorrectly, and the substance you were protecting yourself from ends up on your skin regardless. These mistakes are easy to make, especially during high-intensity periods such as dry-docking, when PPE use is most frequent.

There is a legal dimension too. National, European and maritime safety requirements place clear duties on employers to provide suitable PPE and ensure workers receive the training needed to use it correctly, a serious control measure, not a formality.

Why people actually wear it

The greatest benefit of training, however, is human. People are more likely to wear PPE consistently and correctly when they understand what it protects them from and how it works. Explain how respirable dust penetrates the lungs, or how noise damage builds up gradually, and an abstract rule becomes personal: that is what produces genuine compliance, the kind that continues even when no supervisor is watching. Workers simply handed equipment without explanation may remove it because it is uncomfortable or trust it where it offers insufficient protection. For marine purchasers and suppliers, the same principle applies: correct sizing, compatibility, replacement parts and practical on-board conditions all determine whether PPE can actually be used as intended.

> “PPE, in the end, is only as good as the person using it.

From principle to practice

Recognising this gap between supply and competence, maritime service providers are increasingly building structured training around it. STOP, drawing on its experience supporting companies across the sector, has developed the STOP Academy to address precisely this practical side of PPE use and other high-risk on-board activities.

The Academy's seminars, including Work at Height, Confined Spaces and PPE Inspection, rest on the same principle running through this article: safety improves when people understand not just the rule, but the reasoning behind it. Sessions are designed for crews, technical teams and contractors, aligned with the real conditions of on-board operations, maintenance, dry-docking and shore-based technical work. Well-trained personnel identify hazards earlier and respond with more composure when conditions demand it: the difference between a task performed under pressure and one performed with confidence.

Training is the bridge between the equipment an employer provides and the protection a worker actually receives. Investing in it is not a box-ticking exercise; it is what allows PPE to do the one job it has: keeping people safe when every other control has reached its limit.







About STOP Academy

STOP Academy delivers focused, field-tested safety training for the maritime sector, built on STOP's experience supporting shipping companies, technical teams and contractors across the industry. Training includes: • Work at Height • Confined Spaces • PPE Inspection.

Sessions are designed for on-board operations, maintenance activities, dry-docking projects and shore-based technical work. **Book your session with STOP Academy: academy@stop.gr or https://corporate.stop.gr/en/stop-academy**



BSM CATERING SERVICES

Navigating mental health at sea

Looking after minds, one meal and one conversation at a time

When we think about staying healthy onboard, we often think about safety procedures, physical fitness and proper nutrition. But there is another essential part of our health that deserves just as much attention: our mental health.

Life at sea is a unique experience. It can be rewarding, exciting, and full of opportunities, but it can also bring challenges. Long periods away from loved ones, demanding schedules, changing time zones, and the pressures of living and working in a confined environment can all affect how seafarers feel, think, and cope. **Just as a vessel relies on regular maintenance to perform at its best, our minds also need care, attention and support to remain healthy and resilient.**

“

The good news? Supporting mental wellbeing doesn't always require major changes. Often, it's the simple everyday moments that make the biggest difference. A conversation with a colleague. A laugh shared over dinner. A call home. A favourite meal. A few quiet moments to unwind after a busy day.

Why mental health matters

Every year on October 10, the world marks World Mental Health Day, an opportunity to raise awareness, encourage open conversations, and promote better mental health for all.

The message is simple: **’Looking after our minds is just as important as looking after our physical health”.**

Mental health challenges can affect anyone, regardless of age, nationality, rank, or profession. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 1 in 7 people worldwide, approximately 1.1 billion people - were living with a mental disorder in 2021, with anxiety and depressive disorders among the most common.

Seafarers are no exception.

Fatigue, loneliness, homesickness, family concerns, stress, disrupted sleep and interpersonal tensions can all affect mental health, making it especially important to recognise when we may need support.



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Speaking up as a sign of strength

The maritime industry has made important progress in bringing mental health into the conversation. More organisations, employers and industry leaders are encouraging open discussions and investing in mental health initiatives that support crew wellbeing. *Still, stigma can still prevent people from speaking up.*

A seafarer may worry about being judged, treated differently, or even affecting future opportunities. But asking for support should never be seen as a weakness.

Recognising when you need support demonstrates **self-awareness, professionalism, and resilience.**

Sometimes, the most important question is simply:
"Are you okay?"
And sometimes, the most important answer is:
"Actually, I could use some support."

Food and mood – what's the connection?

Most of us have experienced it. Skip a meal and you may feel tired, irritable, or unable to concentrate. Enjoy a satisfying, balanced meal and you may feel more energised and ready to tackle the day. ***Coincidence? Not quite.***

Food cannot prevent or treat stress, anxiety, or depression on its own. However, a varied and balanced diet can support brain function, steady energy levels and concentration. Think of your body as a vessel and your brain as its control centre. To keep both performing at their best, they need the right fuel.

For seafarers, mealtimes can also offer much more than nutrition. They provide routine, comfort, connection, and a chance to pause during a demanding day. A well-prepared meal, shared in a clean and welcoming environment, can help create a sense of normality and belonging onboard.

There is no single "magic" food for mental health. Instead, variety and balance are key.

Foods such as oily fish, nuts and seeds, bananas, citrus fruits, colourful vegetables and even a little dark chocolate can all contribute to a nutritious and balanced diet that supports overall health and wellbeing.

Beyond the plate: creating a home away from home with BSM Catering Services

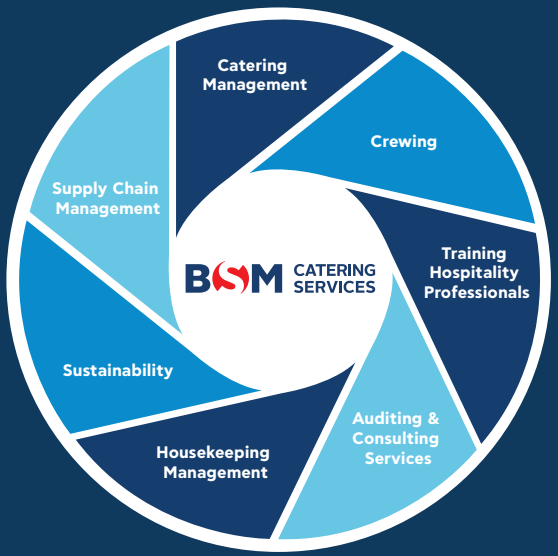
When we talk about wellbeing at sea, it is about much more than what is served on a plate. It is about the everyday moments that help crew members feel comfortable, valued, and connected while away from home. Through catering management, housekeeping, hospitality services, supply chain management, training, auditing, and consulting, BSM Catering Services helps create an onboard environment where seafarers can live and work at their best.

A familiar meal after a long day, a clean cabin, a welcoming mess room, or time spent sharing a meal with colleagues can make all the difference.

The positive impact of food on crew wellbeing starts long before a meal reaches the table.

Across more than 600 vessels, BSM Catering Services carefully audits and vets suppliers to support the consistent and timely delivery of high-quality food provisions. Our Cooks receive pre-joining training and continuous onboard support, including guidance on nutritious, multicultural menus tailored to the tastes and dietary needs of over 40 nationalities. **Hospitality training also equips crew members to create welcoming dining and living environments that foster comfort, inclusion and belonging.** Together, quality provisions, skilled people and dedicated shore-side support help make every meal part of a healthier and more positive onboard experience.

Because maritime hospitality is about more than food. It's about people. And when people feel supported onboard, every positive experience can contribute to better wellbeing at sea.



Mental wellbeing matters every day. Let's keep the conversation going.

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Jaqueline Esteves
Senior Director, Import Operations at Dollarama
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The questionnaire should take roughly 10 minutes and all who fully complete it will be in with a chance to win a £100 Amazon voucher. Follow the link below to help us give you the best MSG possible now and into the future.

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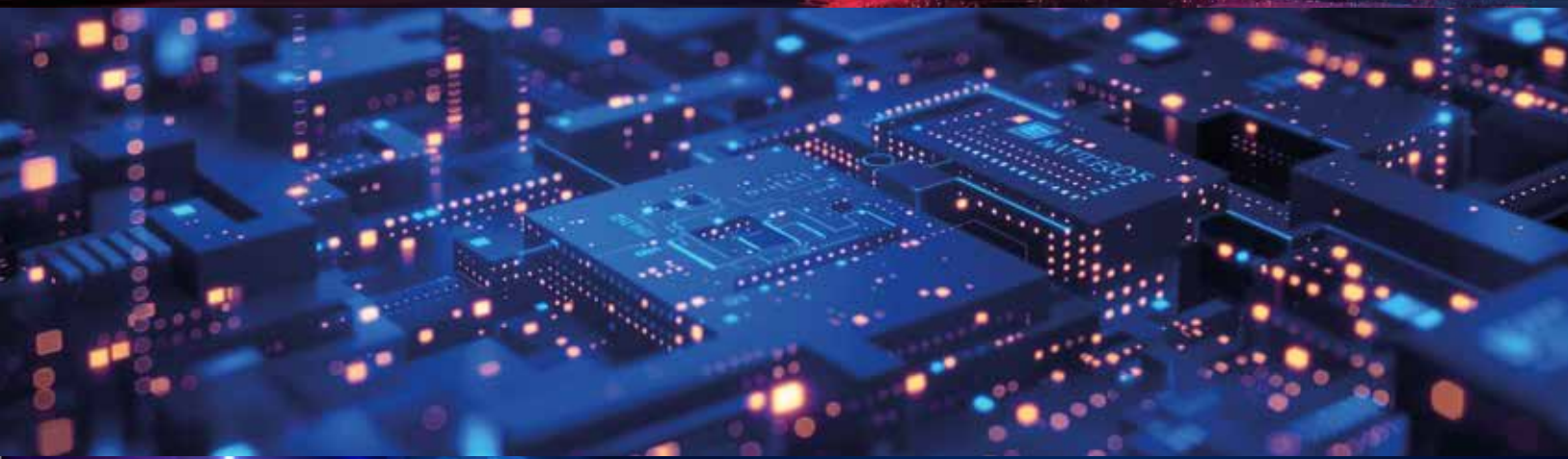
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PART TWO
2026

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MT MAGAZINE



Will Rush:
a man on a mission that almost didn't happen

AI can transform a ship supplier's operations – but there must always be a human strategy behind any technology and AI, says Will Rush, CEO and Co-Founder of Breakwater OS. He spoke to Felicity Landon.

Trapped in an old-school ERP system? Wondering if you can ever leave? Will Rush says too many ship suppliers are still stuck on ERP systems implemented 25 years ago; they might have enabled a few updates, and they might even have slightly modernised the system, but at the core is still the old-school infrastructure.

"I see blue chip ERP systems like the bad girl or boyfriend who keeps you locked up in the house saying 'no, you can't leave'," he says. "They trap you in their ecosystem. We are strong minded on data freedom. Hopefully, with our system, we are the girl or boyfriend saying: 'The door is open, you can take all the data if you want to with one click, but we want you to stay.' We want to be the best."

Will is a man on a mission to transform ship supply through AI, but it's a mission that almost didn't happen. As the son of Don Rush, owner of Delaware Ship Supply, he seemed destined to be a fifth-generation member of the family firm. "Growing up, everyone in my family had been a ship supplier for as long as I can remember – and I interned for my dad during high school and college," he recalls.

But while his brother joined the family firm, Will embarked on a career in technology. He founded an AI software company used by more than 600 schools and universities and has been behind a number of other successful AI-based start-ups. He specialises in building AI-driven workflows that reduce operational cost, labour and manual overheads.

A few years ago, having sold a business to investors, Will was home visiting his parents and figuring out his next venture.

"My dad had an ERP system that was initially installed in 1988. I was born in 1989," he says. "They hadn't changed their technology in so long. They would do quotes by pulling down Excel spreadsheets – they did things in a very old-school way. I offered to help him. I did not think this would be the thing that I spent the next years working on!"

And so, the foundations were laid for Breakwater OS and its Blue Horizon software platform. Will spent weeks studying and analysing every quote, every transaction and every item supplied. He combed through spreadsheets, supplier invoices, quote requests, PDFs, email attachments, inventory sheets and pricing documents and organised all this data into a streamlined, consistent format enabled by AI.

Who knew that there are dozens of different ways you can describe asparagus – green, vegetable, long, pointy, fresh, frozen, tinned? Or coriander – fresh cilantro, whole coriander seeds, ground coriander, or even, mistakenly, parsley? The concept behind Blue Horizon is to assign specific codes to very specific products.

The company had very experienced employees, he hastens to add. "But every human being makes mistakes. So does AI make mistakes. But put humans and AI together, and they are right more often.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves in the story. Working on Delaware's systems, Will found he could reduce the time for completing 200-line quotes to seven minutes, "the first really big win".

"We turned it on fully and the team would come in and find most of the quotes completed. Some would need humans to revise the out-of-the-ordinary or any queries – you need humans to be the expert judgment layer on top of the routine work. Dad thought maybe I was waking up at 3am and doing all the quotes in the background before they came into the office – but I was asleep. Pretty quickly it became a way for them to quote more, quote faster, and increase the accuracy of the quotes too."

The company had very experienced employees, he hastens to add. "But every human being makes mistakes. So does AI make mistakes. But put humans and AI together, and they are right more often."

After the first year, Will moved on to PO acceptance and procurement modules. "As we added technology into their workflow and got employees used to using it, we got to a point that I knew it was making a really big difference. One time there was a bug in the app and they couldn't put a quote through; the employee was happy to wait 30 minutes for me to fix the bug, rather than do it in the old way in the old system. At this point, I knew I needed to build a team and make it a business."

Breakwater was created in 2024. After his father's company reported the best year and highest revenue in its 150-year history, Will and Breakwater Co-Founder Nick Ost started to work with other ship suppliers in North America. Many of them are 'living in a past way before AI', he says, and they are not ready to leap instantly to AI. His first goal is to get them into the 2000s technology-wise – then into 2026.



FELICITY LANDON
Freelance Journalist

“AI is the topic of the day that everyone wants to talk about and using AI practically for things that really matter is something we have got good at over time. But generally, the application of modern technology too has enabled the system that we deploy for our customers to be as powerful as possible.”

As with his first work at Delaware, he says the first step towards implementing the Blue Horizon system is to spend acres of time analysing historical data and following through on quotes and orders to identify the issues.

“Understanding the industry and what they are dealing with allowed me to refine the AI to make it really effective. And every AI model we build is customised, adapted to the customer’s way of work, their inventory data, sourcing, and so on.”

Blue Horizon can be deployed to automate quoting and procurement processing and inform pricing strategy. However, Will emphasises: “Our system is built for humans to be experts and AI to be the orchestrator of the actual work. So everyone using it will go from being analyst/associate to managing the AI and reviewing its work. That transition can be difficult for people; they are so used to ‘doing’, not ‘reviewing’ and they are worried about losing their job.

“But once they see the system operate, they realise that the things we have removed with technology are the parts of the job they probably didn’t like anyway, like typing data sheets, extracting data or understanding the 70 types of asparagus. I believe there will always need to be a human strategy behind what technology and AI does and our company and product is heavily built on that premise – making sure that what we build takes on the tasks that people rarely enjoy doing, while enabling them to do the work that is tactical and strategic.”

How much resistance to technology does he find in this rather traditional industry?

“I would say 70 per cent of the maritime supply industry is family businesses, where there can be an aversion to technology – it’s often seen as expensive and hard to understand. They are used to sweeping floors and stacking boxes as much as sitting down at a computer, and that operational reality has not been served well by technology. That’s why I try to live and breathe the ship supply industry, to understand it properly. We aren’t building for plumbing companies or other industries, and that means we keep that focus and attention to the workflow.”

AI has the ability to bring to the top of a quote the ten lines you might want to look at – it’s incredibly powerful. And AI isn’t going to cover up if it doesn’t understand something. We have programmed it to be very transparent.

Some customers want to keep their ERP and add layers of Breakwater’s tech to that; others have migrated directly from their ERP to Blue Horizon. “We know the industry well enough to give them a menu of what they might like. And I learn something new with every client.”

Will says up to half of the maritime world is ‘doing something with AI’ while the other half is just doing business as usual. “Maybe they’re heard about AI and maybe the manager is asking ChatGPT how to water the plants – but AI is not part of the daily workflow. My first question is – what’s stopping you? It can be a competitive advantage to go try something with AI. We have found that quoting workflow is such a universal pain point, it’s a very safe place for companies to experiment and get a pretty clear ROI quickly. I would say – go experiment, go try things. AI is going to change things.”

Those at the ChatGPT level often find it hard to appreciate what AI is really good at (or not), says Will. He suggests: “AI has no ego – it is good at telling you when it’s not confident about something. AI has the ability to bring to the top of a quote the ten lines you might want to look at – it’s incredibly powerful. And AI isn’t going to cover up if it doesn’t understand something. We have programmed it to be very transparent.”

He believes that in the near future, quote-to-cash workflows will be at least 50 per cent autonomous – if not more. As for the next big thing – what about warehouse operations? “There are incredibly exciting things happening with a mix of AI and robotics and so many use cases for the ship supplier with automation of straightforward warehouse operations as well as AI-managed inventory management. We are going to see so much advancement in a very short period of time.”

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‘AI – I am happy to walk before I run’:

Martin Cunningham, Marcas

Martin Cunningham, Managing Director of the maritime contracting association Marcas, says his team offers ‘additional horsepower’ to members’ procurement functions – and AI is helping drive forward that mission. He spoke to Felicity Landon.

I am happy to walk before I run when it comes to AI, which we are seeing benefits from introducing. We will be continuing to introduce agent solutions across our business functions using this exciting technology, which will support our continuous improvement cycle and give our team more time to manage our clients and suppliers.

Marcas doesn't have clients – it has members. That's a difference that Martin Cunningham is keen to emphasise. This unique purchasing maritime association serves more than 1,000 vessels and works with more than 390 suppliers; and its supply chain is considered to be the largest volume aggregator in the maritime industry, with a buying power to match.

With a wide range of users from mega yachts, where fast delivery can take precedence over price, to offshore, leisure and internationally trading vessels including bulk carriers, container ships and tankers, where budgets are very different, what brings them together? "They all need fuel, lubes, paint – therefore many common areas of OPEX in which we endeavour to hit the sweet spot with everyone," says Martin. "We serve our members to the best of our ability – increasing our focus to make sure that within our category management configuration, the team have a real depth of understanding across the sectors.

"Traditionally, we have served containers, tankers and bulkers on long transits with predictable routes. However, as we grow we want to make sure we are sufficiently attracting every sector – and that means a more nuanced approach."

Marcas is a business unit within V.Services, one of two divisions within V.Group. The other division, V.Ships is a member of Marcas, but the membership is a mix of V.Ships managed vessels and others outside the V.Group family.

The category management structure offered by Marcas is unique, says Martin. "My team don't replace members teams – they provide additional horsepower when needed across the various activities within the procurement function. In terms of continuing to attract larger clients, they will have their own contracts and buying power, which might mean the aggregator is less important. I want to ensure that Marcas is as flexible as possible – for example, after category-wide benchmarking, we may initially focus on two or three category sweet spots, the perfect way to introduce the relationship so they can see the benefits from day one."

Martin joined Marcas in early 2025, having built wide experience in process mapping, strategy, change management and continuous business improvement in previous roles at Rolls-Royce Marine and Kongsberg Maritime. "My baseline approach at Marcas is to introduce more tech where appropriate to help with process, automation and efficiency," he says. "We are focused on tools to make us more scalable as we increase our membership. Recent additions to membership and building a new client pipeline is a particular area of focus, as our intention is to have a lot more vessels in the association. Therefore, we are ensuring our business is match fit and can embrace the growth experience. We need good processes and tools."

However, he underlines: "I am happy to walk before I run when it comes to AI, which we are seeing benefits from introducing. We will be continuing to introduce agent solutions across our business functions using this exciting technology, which will support our continuous improvement cycle and give our team more time to manage our clients and suppliers."



FELICITY LANDON
Freelance Journalist

An example is that Marcas has introduced a digital marketplace, developed for the Shipsure ERP integrated management platform used by the V.Ships fleet. “This really took off over the past year or so and is now well embedded globally for fleet cells. Typically, a procurement requisition cycle starts with a request for quotation (RFQ), which then leads to multiple quotations being received. The subsequent analysis eventually leads to a decision on supplier selection and contract award. That can sometimes be days, weeks or even months, depending on complexity. The digital marketplace provides instantaneous multiple competitive offers, therefore supporting compliance and governance requirements already covered, after the requisition is raised. This is revolutionising how we are doing things within V.Ships.”

A direct member version trial is under way. “It will be available for our direct members in the coming months and will seamlessly interface with their ERPs,” said Martin. “We are really excited about this step change in how we work; we are liaising with a lot of members, and they tell us it is what they are looking for.”

AI tools are already driving product intelligence on the platform, he points out, and there is much more to come. “We have a number of AI initiatives already embedded – consolidating and aggregating opportunities. With all the vessels on the platform, that’s multiple opportunities for aggregation and taking a more consolidated view.”

The perception of AI is often that it is there to “chase out head count” but it is the opposite, Martin says. “I want my team to use these tools as efficient management processes. We need our talented people with their skillsets, competence and experience to do the interpretation. My team is very capable in this environment, and the tools are supporting that capability for us to become even more useful to our clients and evolve our offering. We have category specialists who are very confident and competent in working with suppliers and members to make sure we are matching exactly what our members require. Service delivery is critical and we do have to intervene at times – it still can be very hands-on at times.”

“
The perception of AI is often that it is there to “chase out head count” but it is the opposite. I want my team to use these tools as efficient management processes. We need our talented people with their skillsets, competence and experience to do the interpretation. My team is very capable in this environment, and the tools are supporting that capability for us to become even more useful to our clients and evolve our offering.

Sometimes, for example, the offshore sector can throw up challenges due to legacy systems and configurations which can’t be solved immediately by a typical supplier. “Then we are looking at a more reverse engineering technical service.”

Marcas’s contracts cover all categories, including food and supplies, paints, coatings, lifesaving appliances, logistics, protective equipment, firefighting gear and specialist technical services. Geopolitical upheavals have led to spikes in pricing – and surcharges on top of those spikes – “so exceptional costs beyond what we would normally be seeing”, says Martin. “We are also seeing vendors proactively managing their stock, in response to irregular buying patterns as buyers make sure they have what they need. Being part of an association, with real specialists in category areas to provide support, gives our members additional reassurance.”

Predicting where AI will have taken us in five to ten years’ time is “quite a stretch”, says Martin. “A lot of things we are doing now with AI could shortly be outdated! My prediction is that we’ll see more partnerships, collaboration and consolidation. But the main priority for me is that we need a healthy supply chain. This is not about chasing every single cost – it’s about creating strong partnerships and relationships. That’s critical to us and our members’ success.”

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From automation to advantage:
how AI is shaping supply

AI is beginning to reshape sourcing, supplier workflows, and procurement decisions. Five technology specialists discuss where it delivers value, how trust can be established and why human expertise remains essential.

In the last issue, we saw how AI is moving rapidly from a peripheral interest to a practical priority in marine procurement. As suppliers and vendors also explore how it can accelerate sourcing, improve decision-making, and reduce administrative work, they must preserve the judgement and relationships the industry depends on.

In this roundtable, experts from the supply and vendor side examine where AI is delivering value, what builds trust in its recommendations, and whether lasting advantage will come from the technology itself or the data and expertise behind it.

Over the past 12 months, what AI-related requests are you hearing most often from shipping companies? Are buyers asking for AI capabilities explicitly, or are they still primarily focused on price, availability, and service?

Saurish Nandi, *Head of AI-Driven Procurement Innovation & Sustainability for ShipServ at Marcura:* A year ago, AI was generally a curiosity question at the end of a meeting. Now procurement leaders are opening with it. The most common requests centre on reducing manual effort in the requisition to purchase order cycle. We're also seeing growing interest around smarter supplier selection and spend visibility across the fleet. Buyers want shorter cycle times, fewer errors, better supplier matches and cleaner audit trails.

Will Rush, *Co-Founder at Breakwater OS:* The real question is: can the supplier return a complete and competitively priced quote quickly enough for the purchasing agent, catering company or ship manager to make a buying decision for that port and vessel? RFQs often go unquoted for reasons that have little to do with sourcing ability. And for many high-service suppliers, the operating model itself creates the constraint. AI changes that trade-off. Suppliers no longer have to choose between speed and service quality. The right system can deliver the same high-touch experience, often with higher accuracy, in a fraction of the time.

Philippe Lavarde, *Founder & CEO, Closelink:* We do hear customers asking about implementing AI, but those requests are often quite broad. In many cases, they know they want to adopt AI but haven't yet defined the specific use cases. That's why we focus first on the procurement outcomes they're trying to achieve - lower costs, greater control, less manual work, and fewer surprises - and then determine where AI is the right technology to help deliver those outcomes. The demand is really for automation and better decision support. Procurement teams are overloaded with data, while valuable procurement knowledge is still locked inside emails, different systems, and unstructured files.

Grigoris Lamprou, *CEO and Co-Founder of Procureship:* We've seen a growing number of requests from shipping companies looking for AI capabilities that solve specific operational challenges rather than AI for AI's sake. Conversations have evolved from "why should we go digital?" to "how can AI and automation make our procurement processes more efficient, accurate and scalable?" These capabilities focus on automating repetitive procurement workflows, reducing manual effort and allowing procurement professionals to focus on higher-value activities.



TOM HOLMES
Freelance Supply Chain Writer

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Everyone talks about how AI will change procurement teams. From your perspective, what has AI forced you to change internally - whether that's pricing, sales, customer service, technical support, or product development?

Saurish Nandi: On the product side, we have moved from feature roadmaps to capability roadmaps, because AI collapses what used to be discrete features into orchestrated workflows. Purchaser AI is a good example of this shift. Two years ago, we would have built it as a series of features: a quote comparison screen, a scoring rule builder, an approval workflow. On sales and customer engagement, we can no longer lead with functionality checklists.

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> As a technology provider to ship suppliers, the biggest change we see is that AI lets suppliers rethink their operating model, not just add another software tool.



WILL RUSH
Co-Founder
Breakwater OS

Will Rush: As a technology provider to ship suppliers, the biggest change we see is that AI lets suppliers rethink their operating model, not just add another software tool.

Historically, software in this industry has been rigid. A supplier buys a system, adapts its process around that system, and then lives with the gaps for years. AI changes the expectation. The better model is: show us how your business actually works, and we will build the technology around that workflow.

Immo Brüggemann, *Managing Director, Creatum:* We achieved great results in invoice processing and supplier selection. As the speed in development of the technology is crazy, you need deep focus on it. As a starting point, you might check a simple case of an unstructured data set coming into the company (like a PDF) and try to make it structured data that is running into your existing system. Success would mean that people do not have to transfer data from the PDF to an existing system, therefore reducing errors in data transfer and gaining efficiency.

Philippe Lavarde: We're using it to analyse customer feedback, product usage, and procurement data, helping us identify patterns and prioritise development much faster than before. That allows us to validate ideas more quickly, respond to customer needs faster and focus development where it will create the biggest impact. We're using data and AI to understand where we can create the greatest value in our customers' procurement processes and implement changes much faster than before.

Grigoris Lamprou: Although digitalisation across the maritime industry is advancing at an incredible pace, we must not lose sight of the fact that the shipping industry is still a people business. It is an industry built on long-standing relationships and on human-to-human interactions. While we have made excellent progress in advancing the AI, automation and algorithm capabilities across the Procureship platform, we have also been sure to retain the human factor that many would not expect from an e-procurement platform.

We've heard a lot about automating routine procurement tasks. Looking ahead, which parts of the buyer-supplier relationship do you believe should always remain human-led?

Saurish Nandi: Anything that involves judgement under ambiguity, trust building, or accountability for a commercial outcome that will be judged in hindsight. AI should inform those decisions. It should not make them. A vessel needs a critical spare in Singapore in seventy-two hours. AI can rank the alternatives instantly, but accepting a forty per cent premium from a new supplier is a commercial judgement. When something goes wrong at three in the morning, the buyer who has the relationship gets the part.

Will Rush: Quote-to-cash will always need a human in the loop because excellent customer service in ship supply is not just data processing. It is judgment, context, and trust.

The best operators carry decades of knowledge that does not live cleanly in an ERP field: crew preferences, vessel history, technical substitutions, port-specific norms, customer expectations, and commercial instinct. AI can learn from that expertise over time, but humans remain the knowledge centre of the learning loop. That is why generic AI is not enough.

Immo Brüggemann: It is not so much about which decision to take over by AI but what part of a decision to be made by AI. Decisions broadly are made thus: 1) Input data 2) Preparing the decision 3) Judgement 4) Action 5) Outcome 6) Feedback. AI will

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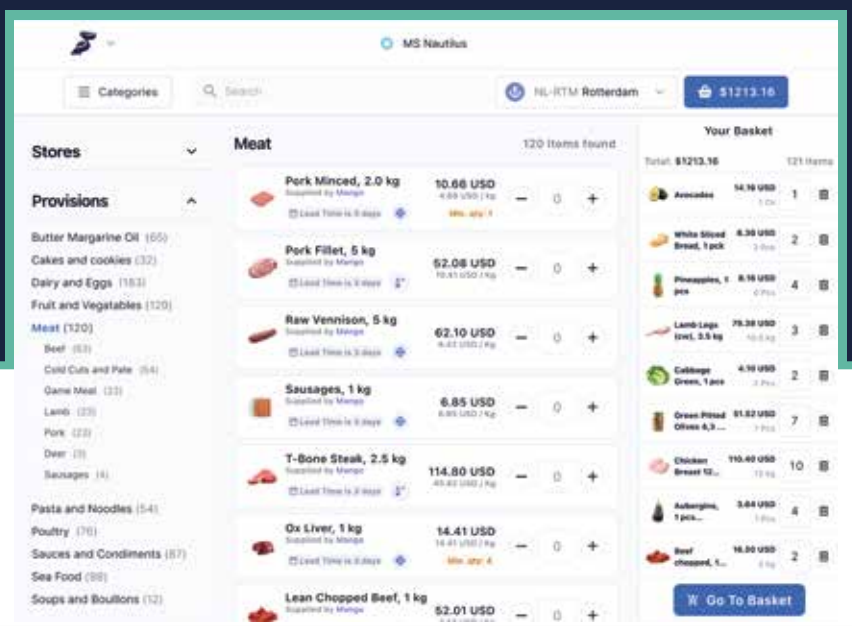
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> It is not so much about which decision to take over by AI but what part of a decision to be made by AI.



IMMO BRÜGGEMANN
Managing Director
Creatum

support almost every kind of decision in the future by taking over step 2 in a “just in time” fashion, considering the feedback learnings not just from one person’s decision from the past but from all decisions made in the past by anyone in the company. I like to call this principle “Scalable Expertise.” Therefore, uplifting the level on which decisions are made by humans.

Philippe Lavarde: Procurement has always been built on relationships, trust, and commercial judgement. Negotiations, supplier development, risk management, and handling exceptions all require context that AI can't fully replicate. Shipping is inherently unpredictable, so human oversight will always remain essential. AI should remove repetitive administrative work and provide better insight, while people remain accountable for strategic decisions. The goal isn't to replace procurement professionals - it's to free them from lower-value tasks and manual data collection and aggregation, to focus on the work that creates actual value.

Grigoris Lamprou: While AI automates many procurement workflows, we deliberately keep customer support and complex case management human-led. Users can always rely on our in-house team to provide expert guidance, resolve complex issues and build the trusted relationships that remain essential in the shipping industry. So, while data has become an invaluable tool to enhance decision-making, it is important to remember that it is the human user who ultimately drives the strategic, ethical and relationship outcomes.

> AI earns trust by being transparent about its reasoning, humble about its limits, measurable in its outcomes, and disciplined about the data it uses.



SAURISH NANDI
Head of AI-Driven Procurement Innovation & Sustainability
ShipServ (a Marcura company)

Many procurement teams are understandably cautious about relying on AI recommendations. What evidence or safeguards do you think partners need to provide before customers are willing to trust AI-assisted decisions?

Saurish Nandi: Four safeguards matter, in order: explainability at the level of each recommendation, a human-in-the-loop design where the AI proposes and the buyer disposes, measurable outcomes tied to the customer’s own KPIs, and clear contractual governance around data.

In our early pilots, we tracked override rates carefully and watched them drop meaningfully over the first three months, not because buyers stopped scrutinising, but because the system learned from their corrections. AI earns trust by being transparent about its reasoning, humble about its limits, measurable in its outcomes, and disciplined about the data it uses.

Will Rush: Trust is learned over time. No ship supplier should be asked to hand over a critical workflow to AI on day one. Our approach is crawl, walk, run. Start with quoting, prove the system inside the supplier’s workflow, keep humans in the loop, measure everything and then expand carefully across quote-to-cash. Nothing AI touches should leave the internal view without human approval. Trust is not earned in a demo. It is earned in the workflow.

Immo Brüggemann: There are a number of studies and papers out on exactly that question. Those who are succeeding follow these principles: 1) Learning loops and context retention. 2) Humble GenAI that admits uncertainty and learns from corrections. 3) External partnerships with customised vendors—twice as successful as internal builds. 4) Back-office focus—where GenAI friction is highest, and ROI is most direct.

Alongside that, I recommend focusing on one use case in the beginning and deriving into a very similar kind of AI application within other business units. That is how you make the most of the learnings.

Philippe Lavarde: Trust starts with transparency. Buyers need to understand why a recommendation has been made, not simply be given an answer. Recommendations should be backed by reliable data and aligned with a company's procurement policies and strategy. Companies also need clear governance, full audit trails, and the ability to step in manually whenever needed. The best AI doesn't remove

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control - it gives procurement teams greater confidence in the decisions they're already making.

Grigoris Lamprou: Many procurement teams are comfortable with legacy platforms despite their systems, data and processes being at greater risk of becoming outdated. The barrier to building trust is not the technology itself, but users having the confidence to use it effectively and change their established workflows. Digital platform providers across shipping need to demonstrate measurable results, explain how AI-powered capabilities work, and show how adoption accelerates when users clearly understand the technology, see tangible results and ROI, and remain in control of decision-making throughout.

> Trust starts with transparency. Buyers need to understand why a recommendation has been made, not simply be given an answer.



PHILIPPE LAVARDE
Founder and CEO
Closelink

Do you think AI will become a genuine competitive differentiator over the next three to five years, or will it simply become another expected capability that every partner has to offer?

Saurish Nandi: The presence of AI becomes table stakes almost immediately. The differentiator moves down the stack: to the quality and depth of the data, the depth of domain grounding, and the ability to orchestrate across the full procurement lifecycle.

A general-purpose AI can draft an email. It cannot tell you whether a specific paint specification is appropriate for a chemical tanker operating in tropical waters. That kind of grounding takes years to build and is nearly impossible to shortcut. AI is the interface. Data and domain are the moat.

Will Rush: In ship supply, capacity turns into revenue. If a supplier can process more RFQs, respond faster, prioritise the highest-value opportunities and maintain accuracy, they are in more buying decisions. The durable advantage will be the learning loop: customer-specific memory, historical mappings, pricing logic, exception handling, substitutions, and the accumulated knowledge of the supplier's own experts. Generic AI will become table stakes. Customer-specific AI memory will become the advantage.

Immo Brüggemann: It will uplift the quality of decisions made because it is just impossible to process all raw data just in time by humans, considering that there are always changes on shorter notice. Moreover, since decisions are better prepared, they can be done faster, resulting in longer planning horizons ultimately resulting in higher resilience of the processes. After all, AI is a great opportunity to make the expertise of one company scalable, as AI learns through the decisions and instructions of people working in the company

Philippe Lavarde: AI itself will quickly become an expected capability. The real differentiator will be how effectively companies combine industry expertise, high-quality procurement data, and AI to solve genuine procurement challenges. The platforms that stand out won't simply automate existing processes - they'll help procurement teams make better decisions and operate more strategically. AI will quickly become accessible to everyone. The companies that pull ahead won't necessarily have better AI - they'll be the ones that are most willing to rethink their procurement processes, adopt new ways of working and embed AI into everyday decision-making.

> The real competitive differentiator will be how effectively companies apply AI to solve industry-specific challenges while combining it with human expertise.



GRIGORIS LAMPROU
CEO and Co-Founder
Procureship

Grigoris Lamprou: AI will become an expected capability across maritime procurement platforms. Much like email or ERP systems today, it will be an integral part of the technology companies rely on every day. The real competitive differentiator will be how effectively companies apply AI to solve industry-specific challenges while combining it with human expertise. For marine procurement, those that harness AI alongside the relationship-driven nature of the shipping industry stand to gain the biggest competitive advantage.

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Thinking digitalisation costs too much

is the most expensive mistake in marine supply

For many smaller marine suppliers, the biggest barrier to digital progress is not technology itself, but the belief that smarter systems are only for larger companies with larger budgets. In today's market, that assumption is becoming a costly competitive mistake.

In the marine aftermarket, smaller and mid-sized suppliers are often among the hardest-working businesses in the industry. They stay close to their customers, move quickly when needed, and are used to solving problems under pressure. Yet many still rely on workflows shaped by manual handling, fragmented systems, and a heavy dependence on individual staff experience. That may have been manageable in the past. It is becoming much harder to defend today.

One of the most common traps is the belief that digitalisation is expensive by definition. For many companies, words such as "ERP", "integration", or "smart workflow" immediately signal high cost, long implementation, operational disruption, and a system full of compromises. Large organisations may be able to absorb those compromises or pay for customisation. Smaller companies rarely can. So they delay decisions, patch outdated routines, and convince themselves that staying manual is the safer financial choice. In reality, that choice is often far more expensive.

Manual and disconnected workflows carry costs that rarely appear clearly on a budget line. The cost shows up in duplicated data entry, avoidable errors, slow quotation turnaround, internal handover delays, poor visibility between departments, and too much time spent moving information from one place to another. It shows up when sales, purchasing, warehouse, shipping, and invoicing all operate with unnecessary friction. It shows up when experienced people spend their time chasing process rather than serving customers in a sector where speed, accuracy, and responsiveness matter, those inefficiencies are not minor inconveniences. They directly affect competitiveness.

This matters especially for smaller companies, because they do not have the same margin for waste as larger organisations. Few can justify investing hundreds of thousands of euros in complex systems, lengthy rollouts, and compromise-heavy implementation projects. A large company may survive poor workflow through scale and manpower. A smaller company



GLENN TURN
Founder of "DAN-MO Fairwind"
and creator of "Syndicate Software"

delay matters more. Every missed opportunity to improve productivity carries greater weight. When resources are limited, efficiency is not a luxury; it is one of the few genuine competitive advantages available.

Smaller suppliers also have to stay nimble, and the old assumption that they cannot keep pace technologically is becoming outdated. In many cases, the opposite is true. Because they are less burdened by layers of process and internal complexity, they can often adapt faster than larger competitors. That agility creates a real opportunity not just to keep up, but to take market share.

There is also a more fundamental barrier: many small business owners know AI is going to change the market, but they still have only a vague idea of what it can actually do for them. Too often, the conversation stops at automatic email replies or endless streams of generated LinkedIn posts that all look and sound the same. That is a shallow view of a much bigger opportunity. The real value of AI is not cosmetic. It lies in removing manual friction, improving decision speed, connecting workflows, and giving smaller teams far greater operating capacity. Most owners are not in denial about what is coming. They simply have not yet had the light-bulb moment that turns AI from an abstract trend into a practical business tool.

There is another reality that smaller companies know well. When a small team is already overworked, it is very difficult to become productive enough to fund the next hire. The business remains stuck in a narrow operating band — too busy to slow down, but not efficient enough to create real room for growth. This is where better workflow becomes transformative. If workflow improvements effectively double capacity, the benefit is not just operational. It gives the company breathing space to keep existing customers well served while also investing time in marketing, promotion, and winning new business. That is how growth becomes sustainable. Better productivity creates stronger service, stronger service supports expansion, and expansion makes it easier to justify and afford the next increase in manpower.

This is why the real issue is not whether smaller marine suppliers need digital tools. They do. The real issue is whether those tools are being designed in a way that reflects the realities of smaller businesses. In the marine aftermarket, a practical system should not create distance between departments or force companies into new layers of administration. It should reduce friction from enquiry to quotation, from order confirmation to warehouse execution, from shipping coordination to final invoicing and document handling. The value is not in complexity. The value is in making the entire workflow faster, cleaner, and easier to manage.

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That is why digitalisation should no longer be viewed as a prestige project or an expensive future ambition. It should be seen for what it really is: practical infrastructure for doing business well.

The market is not standing still while companies debate this. Customer expectations continue to rise. Buyers increasingly expect fast replies, accurate handling, better traceability, and fewer process failures. They may not ask what software sits behind a supplier’s operation, but they immediately notice when service is slow, communication is inconsistent, or follow-through breaks down. Competitors with better workflows begin to move faster, respond more clearly, and make better use of the same number of people. By the time a more traditional company recognises the problem, the gap may already be difficult to close.

That is why digitalisation should no longer be viewed as a prestige project or an expensive future ambition. It should be seen for what it really is: practical infrastructure for doing business well. For smaller marine suppliers, the goal is not to imitate the largest organisations. It is to build the speed, consistency, visibility, and control needed to compete more effectively on their own terms.

The question is no longer whether smaller marine suppliers can afford smart digital solutions. The more urgent question is whether they can afford to remain trapped by the assumption that they cannot. We are entering a market where size alone no longer guarantees advantage, and where the winners may look less like giants and more like Odysseus: agile, resourceful, and able to outmanoeuvre stronger rivals through better tools and better decisions. In that environment, the future will not automatically belong to the biggest players. It will belong to those who move first, adapt fastest, and turn better tools into better business.



Maritime procurement is reactive

because the data is disconnected

One pattern comes up in almost every conversation I have with fleet operators about procurement. A part is missing. A job is delayed. A dry dock window stretches. The question that follows is almost always the same: what went wrong in purchasing?

Usually, nothing.

The purchasing team responded as fast as the information allowed. The problem is that the information arrived too late for anyone to act on it sensibly. By the time procurement knew a part was needed, the only option left was an urgent request, a price premium, and expedited freight. That is not a procurement failure. That is what happens when a maintenance plan and a purchasing function have no shared visibility of the same data.

It is a systems problem. And it is worth being precise about that, because misidentifying the root cause leads to the wrong remedies.

Where the Cycle Actually Starts

In most fleets running disconnected systems, the emergency buying cycle follows a predictable path. A job is planned inside the technical management system. Required components are not cross-referenced against inventory at that point, because inventory sits somewhere else. The job reaches execution, the shortfall becomes visible, and the only available response is an urgent request.

Each function, maintenance, inventory, purchasing, is working accurately within its own boundary. The failure exists in the gaps between them.

Across a fleet, the effect compounds. The same component accumulates on some vessels while other vessels run short of it. Stock is purchased that the fleet already owns, just recorded under a different name in a different system. Budget visibility lags behind operational reality. The administrative overhead falls on everyone, but accountability tends to land on procurement.

None of this is fixed by improving procurement process. It is fixed by connecting the data.



ADAM DENNETT
CEO
SpecTec

> The procurement function does not change. The people do not change. What changes is the information available to them at the point when it is still possible to do something useful with it.

The Dry Dock Test

The clearest illustration of what disconnected systems actually cost is a dry dock window.

Dry dock is planned months in advance. The window is fixed, contracted, and expensive. A component that is missing when a job starts does not pause the schedule while sourcing takes place. It disrupts the sequence of work, extends the window, or forces a deferral that carries its own compliance and class record consequences.

The cost of that delay is substantially greater than the cost of the part. That gap between the visible cost and the full operational cost is where the real financial impact of fragmented systems sits. **Under SIRE 2.0, how a vessel manages deferred maintenance can surface in charterer-visible inspection reports, so the consequences of deferred work now extend beyond the immediate operational impact.**

What Actually Changes When Systems Are Connected

When maintenance planning, inventory, and procurement operate on the same data, the sequence changes in a straightforward but significant way.

Jobs are planned. The system checks parts availability across vessels, warehouses, and shore stores at the planning stage, not at the execution stage. Shortfalls are flagged weeks or months in advance. Purchasing teams see upcoming demand before it becomes urgent. The requisition arrives with context, not as a crisis.

The procurement function does not change. The people do not change. What changes is the information available to them at the point when it is still possible to do something useful with it.

Planned purchasing is structurally different from reactive purchasing. Spend becomes more predictable. Supplier relationships become more manageable. Emergency requests reduce, not because procurement got better at firefighting, but because the fires stop starting in the same place. Based on what we see across fleet operations using integrated platforms, connecting maintenance schedules to parts demand creates a forward visibility window of three to six months, which is what makes genuinely planned purchasing possible.

Three Questions Worth Asking of Any System

For procurement professionals thinking about whether their current technology is genuinely supporting fleet purchasing, three questions tend to surface what is actually happening.

At what point in the maintenance planning process does the system check parts availability? If the answer is at execution rather than at planning, the emergency buying cycle is still structurally in place, regardless of how capable the procurement workflow itself is.

Does the platform hold maintenance, inventory, and procurement data in a single database, or does integration between those functions rely on middleware? Middleware introduces data lag and failure points. A single shared database does not.

Can purchasing teams access demand forecasts based on the maintenance schedule, not just current stock levels? Forward visibility is the condition that makes planned purchasing possible. Without it, the function will remain reactive by default.

These questions are not specific to any platform. They apply equally to any honest audit of how current systems are performing.

The Procurement Team Is Not the Problem

Maritime purchasing professionals are among the more capable and pressure-tested people in fleet operations. They are managing global supply chains, volatile freight markets, regulatory requirements, and the perpetual urgency of vessels that cannot stop.

The structural challenge is that in most fleet environments, those teams are working with incomplete information, responding to demand signals that arrive too late to act on in a controlled way.

Improving that is not a procurement conversation. It is a data architecture conversation. Connect the maintenance plan to the purchasing workflow, and both to a shared inventory position, and the procurement function can do what capable teams are already trying to do: get ahead of demand, manage suppliers strategically, and keep the fleet running to plan.

The problem is not procurement. It never was.

AI-Powered Logistics:

From Reactive to Predictive

In recent years, the maritime industry has faced considerable challenges in achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, companies across the sector continue to take meaningful steps towards a more sustainable future. As a market leader, Marinetrans are constantly pushing digital innovation to support the transition toward more sustainable maritime supply chains.

These efforts are not only driven by increasingly stringent regulations, but also by the industry's own ambition to improve operational efficiency and reduce environmental impact.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in supporting this transition. Traditionally, logistics processes within the maritime sector have been highly reactive, with decisions often made at the last minute in response to operational demands. Today, digitalization, data analytics, and AI are enabling a shift toward more proactive and predictive operations, helping companies optimize transport flows, reduce emissions, and improve overall supply chain efficiency.

Within the maritime industry, many shipowners and ship management companies are renewing their fleets to further improve efficiency and reduce emissions. Alongside operational improvements, the industry is gradually exploring the use of alternative fuels and other sustainable transport solutions as part of the broader transition toward lower-impact operations.

While sustainable transport solutions are a daily topic within the logistics sector, the availability remains limited, mainly due to higher fuel prices. Nevertheless, companies continue to explore practical ways to reduce and optimise emissions across their supply chains.

From reactive to predictive logistics

The global delivery of spare parts to vessels has long been characterised by a reactive approach. Traditionally, ship operators place orders that are fulfilled by suppliers and delivered to logistics hubs, where they remain in storage until vessels request dispatch. This model often results in urgent, last-minute deliveries, putting pressure on supply chains and driving up operational costs—particularly when expedited air freight becomes unavoidable.





One of the key advantages of eSea Smart lies in its ability to operate at fleet level. Rather than optimising deliveries vessel by vessel, the system evaluates the entire fleet simultaneously. This enables multi-vessel consolidation, reducing the number of shipments and improving overall efficiency.

As the maritime industry continues to embrace digital transformation, there is a growing need to move from reactive logistics toward more proactive and predictive supply chain models. To support this transition, Marinetrans developed eSea Smart, an AI-powered application integrated into its eSea digital platform, designed to optimise spare parts delivery worldwide.

At its core, eSea Smart connects multiple data streams to create a comprehensive and forward-looking logistics strategy. Purchase orders—whether already stored in Marinetrans' global hubs or expected from suppliers—are combined with vessel sailing schedules and real-time positional data. In addition, vessel owners and managers can define delivery parameters such as preferred ports and delivery windows.

This information is enriched with Marinetrans' extensive database of historical shipment movements and pricing data. By leveraging these insights, eSea Smart generates automated recommendations that identify the most efficient port and timing for delivering spare parts to vessels.

One of the key advantages of eSea Smart lies in its ability to operate at fleet level. Rather than optimising deliveries vessel by vessel, the system evaluates the entire fleet simultaneously. This enables multi-vessel consolidation, reducing the number of shipments and improving overall efficiency.

By predicting demand in advance, the platform also enables a shift from costly air freight to more economical and environmentally friendly ocean freight. This proactive planning significantly reduces the need for urgent, last-minute shipments, one of the major cost drivers in traditional marine logistics.

The transition to predictive logistics delivers measurable benefits across multiple dimensions. Operationally, it reduces supply chain pressure and improves planning accuracy. Financially, it lowers transportation costs by minimising reliance on expedited shipping methods. Environmentally, it contributes to lower emissions by favouring ocean freight and decreasing unnecessary deliveries.

Moreover, improved coordination enables more efficient management of last-mile logistics, reducing the number of individual deliveries at each port and streamlining overall operations.

Increasing importance of emissions reporting

Alongside the transition towards predictive logistics and alternative fuels, transparency in emissions reporting has become increasingly important throughout the maritime supply chain. Marinetrans continuously monitors the carbon footprint of all shipments and provides customers with full visibility through the eSea customer portal.

Recently, biogenic CO2 emissions — emissions generated through the use of biofuels — were added to Marinetrans' emissions reporting capabilities. This helps clients meet evolving sustainability reporting requirements, including obligations under the European Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Toward a smarter and more sustainable supply chain

The maritime industry's transition toward more sustainable and future-proof operations requires a combination of innovation, collaboration, and practical solutions.

By combining advanced analytics, real-time operational data, biofuel solutions, and emissions transparency, Marinetrans supports many shipowners and ship management companies in building smarter, more efficient, and more sustainable supply chains for the future. Clients can follow many sustainability parameters on both company and vessel level in eSea Analytics, which can be accessed free of charge through the Marinetrans' customer portal.



Cyber compliance without the extra burden:

a procurement view of maritime cyber risk

Cyber compliance is no longer just an IT concern. It is now part of everyday marine purchasing, supplier management, and operational risk control. The real challenge is not simply meeting new requirements, but doing so without increasing cost, paperwork, and workload. For maritime teams, the next priority is to make cyber compliance practical, repeatable, and manageable.

Marine purchasing teams are used to working under pressure. They need to control costs, secure reliable suppliers, avoid delays, support vessels, and keep documents in order. Today, they face one more challenge: cybersecurity compliance. For many teams, the concern is not whether cyber security matters. The concern is how to manage it without adding another heavy layer of cost, paperwork and manual effort.

What happens when compliance becomes part of everyday purchasing?

Cyber risk management is no longer a future issue for shipping. IMO guidance, IACS UR E26 and E27, class expectations, insurance questions and customer requirements are all pushing the industry in the same direction. Compliance is becoming part of normal maritime business. But for shipowners, managers and purchasing teams, the practical question is clear: how can we meet these requirements while keeping operations lean?

This question matters because vessels are now highly connected working environments. Navigation systems, satellite communications, engine monitoring, maintenance platforms, cargo systems, remote access tools and supplier portals all create digital connections. These connections support efficiency, but they also create new weak points. CYTUR's 2026 Maritime Cyber Threat White Paper found that recorded maritime cyber incidents increased from 408 in 2024 to 828 in 2025, a rise of 103%. For procurement teams, this is no longer only an IT issue. It is a supplier risk, a contract risk, an operational risk and a compliance risk.

Can cyber compliance become a cost problem of its own?

The challenge is that most companies do not have unlimited cyber experts, budgets or time. Many maritime teams are already managing cost pressure, crew workload, technical operations and regulatory reporting. If cyber compliance becomes another manual checklist exercise, it can quickly



DR. YONGHYUN JO
CEO
CYTUR Inc.



A better approach starts with one simple principle: cyber compliance should reduce risk without creating unnecessary work. Marine buyers do not need to become technical cyber specialists.

create duplicated supplier questionnaires, repeated document requests, unclear responsibilities and slow onboarding. In other words, poor cyber compliance processes can become a cost problem themselves.

A better approach starts with one simple principle: cyber compliance should reduce risk without creating unnecessary work. Marine buyers do not need to become technical cyber specialists. But they do need a practical way to decide which suppliers, systems and contracts require closer attention. Not every purchase carries the same risk. A connected navigation system, remote monitoring platform or satellite service should receive a deeper review than a low-risk consumable item.

Are we asking the right questions before the contract is signed?

This is where purchasing teams can use three practical questions:

1. Which suppliers or products create the highest cyber risk?
2. Can supplier cyber evidence be collected once and reused instead of requested again and again?
3. Who owns the cyber risk after purchase, and does this process reduce workload, or simply add another checklist?

These questions help turn cyber compliance from a broad concern into a manageable purchasing process. They also help companies focus resources where they matter most. High-risk systems can receive deeper checks. Lower-risk purchases can move faster. This risk-based method supports both compliance and efficiency. It avoids treating every supplier the same and reduces unnecessary workload for teams that are already stretched.

Where is the evidence when the auditor asks for it?

Supplier evidence is especially important. Regulations and class requirements increasingly expect companies to show what has been checked, how risks are managed and who is responsible. In practice, this evidence is often scattered across emails, spreadsheets, PDF certificates and internal folders. That creates extra work for procurement, technical, IT and compliance teams. It also makes audits more stressful than they need to be.

A more structured process can reduce this burden. When supplier cyber information is collected in a consistent way, kept up to date and linked to the relevant vessel, system or contract, teams spend less time chasing documents. When risk status is visible, managers can make decisions faster. When responsibilities are recorded clearly, there is less confusion during audits, incidents, renewals or supplier reviews. AI-assisted tools can accelerate this further — automatically screening supplier documents, flagging outdated certificates and summarising risk status without manual review.

What is the real cost of unmanaged cyber risk?

Cyber security is often seen only as an additional expense. But unmanaged risk creates hidden costs: vessel downtime, delayed operations, duplicated supplier reviews and last-minute compliance work. The goal should be lean compliance — meeting requirements with minimal manual effort while improving safety and resilience. For marine procurement, lean compliance means clear supplier criteria, risk-based prioritisation, reusable evidence and audit-ready records. It is about making the right information available at the right time.

Marine purchasing has always helped protect the vessel by choosing reliable products and suppliers. In the connected ship era, that responsibility now includes digital reliability as well. The strongest companies will not be those that create the most documents. They will be those that make cyber compliance practical, repeatable and efficient.

Can cyber resilience be secure and manageable at the same time?

For shipping companies, the next step is not to add more complexity. It is to build a simpler way to understand supplier cyber risk, prove compliance and reduce unnecessary workload. In a market where every cost and every hour matters, cyber resilience must be more than secure. It must also be manageable.

Artificial intelligence and the human factor in maritime healthcare

Why expertise at sea still matters most



Artificial intelligence is advancing fast, and healthcare is one of its biggest success stories. AI can analyse data in seconds, flag risks, support diagnosis, predict medical events and enable more proactive, data-driven care. But maritime healthcare is not a typical clinical environment.

At sea, there are no nearby hospitals, limited equipment and no easy escalation meaning that decisions often need to be made quickly, with incomplete information and real operational consequences. That's why the future of healthcare at sea isn't about humans versus machines. It's about using AI to support clinicians, not replace them.

A unique and high-risk environment

Ships operate without the safety net of land-based healthcare systems, so when something goes wrong, there's no emergency department down the road. Support may be remote, delayed or constrained by weather and location and, as a result, maritime clinicians are not just treating patients, they are managing risk. Every decision can affect the safety



PETER HULT
CEO
VIKAND

> AI does not understand context in the way humans do, and it cannot fully account for operational constraints such as vessel location, weather conditions or evacuation risk, nor can it interpret the nuances of human behaviour, crew dynamics or cultural differences.

of the individual, the crew and the vessel itself. Evacuations, for example, are complex, costly and sometimes more dangerous than onboard treatment.

At the same time, the industry is evolving and maritime healthcare is increasingly shifting from a reactive model to one that is proactive and data-informed, using trends and insights to prevent incidents before they occur. This move towards predictive healthcare has the potential to reduce emergencies and improve overall crew wellbeing. There is also growing focus on mental health, with recent findings showing that suicide now accounts for more deaths at sea than accidental injuries, highlighting the need for earlier intervention and better support systems.

However, even with these advances, the environment itself remains unpredictable, and that's where human judgement becomes critical.

Experience, judgement and the limits of AI

In high-pressure scenarios, experienced clinicians go beyond standard protocols as they draw on pattern recognition, pick up on subtle signals and make rapid, well-informed decisions. While often labelled as clinical intuition, this is more accurately the application of experience in real time, a swift integration of knowledge, past cases and situational awareness. Research across emergency and intensive care settings shows that this kind of thinking is particularly valuable when time is limited and information is incomplete, especially when combined with evidence-based practice.

Artificial intelligence can support this process as it excels at analysing large volumes of data, identifying trends and flagging potential risks, and new tools are already helping to predict medical events, improve reporting and support more consistent care. Used well, AI acts as a safety net, prompting clinicians to consider alternatives and strengthening overall decision-making.

However, its limitations are just as important. AI does not understand context in the way humans do, and it cannot fully account for operational constraints such as vessel location, weather conditions or evacuation risk, nor can it interpret the nuances of human behaviour, crew dynamics or cultural differences. Its outputs are also only as reliable as the data it receives, and in complex or ambiguous cases, results can be inconsistent. Studies comparing AI systems with experienced clinicians show that while performance is strong in straightforward scenarios, it drops in more complex situations.

Maritime healthcare is rarely straightforward. It demands decisions in uncertain conditions, and that's where human expertise becomes indispensable. Experienced clinicians can adapt, balance risks and make calls that go beyond what any algorithm can deliver. Evacuation decisions are a clear example, where clinical need must be weighed against safety, logistics and operational impact. Knowing when not to evacuate can be just as important as knowing when to act.

There is also a human dimension that cannot be overlooked as medical decisions at sea affect not just individual patients, but entire crews and operations. Empathy, communication and accountability all play a role, and these are not qualities that can be replicated by technology.

A collaborative future

Maritime healthcare is becoming more connected, more data-driven and more proactive, but the most effective model is not automation, it is collaboration.

AI should be used to process data, identify risks and support decision-making, while clinicians retain control by applying their experience, judgement and situational awareness, which is what augmented intelligence looks like in practice.

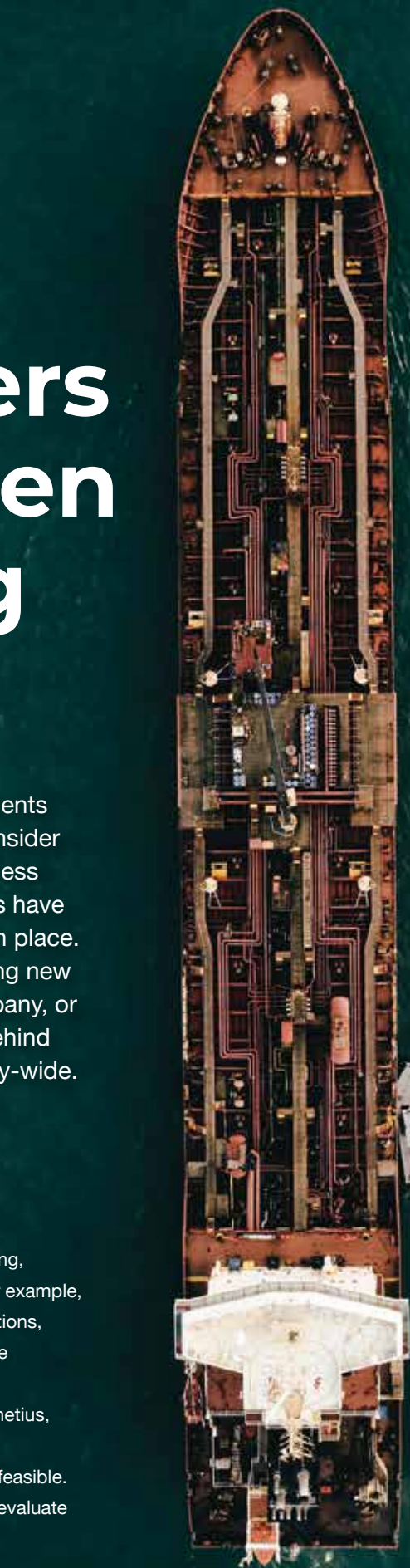
At sea, where uncertainty is part of the job, technology can enhance decision-making, but it is still human expertise that ensures the right decisions are made.

The five mistakes shipowners make when procuring software

According to a study published by WifiTalents in February 2026, 75% of shipowners consider digitalisation a core priority for their business strategy, and 60% of maritime companies have a formal digital transformation roadmap in place. Although shipowners' reasons for adopting new technologies vary from company to company, or even vessel to vessel, the main drivers behind these decisions tend to be similar industry-wide.

Software designed around emissions monitoring, voyage optimisation and weather routing, for example, are often adopted in response to new regulations, while technical fleet management solutions tend to be adopted to minimise existing challenges.

Ailsa Mottershead, senior technology analyst at Thetius, explained: "It's usually only when they have specific challenges with their current solution. It's become unfeasible. It's too outdated. Then the big project will start to re-evaluate and choose a new supplier."





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Price may also play a part in the decision-making process, but, for many industry players, it does not hold as much weight as other drivers.

However, implementing digital technology on board a vessel isn't as simple as downloading an app on your phone. Below are five common mistakes made by shipowners when procuring software:

“There is no solution in the world that will be perfect for a company from the moment they are adopted. Even the most customised solutions will need to be tweaked and refined to suit a company's needs.

1 Targeting only market leaders

This is a common approach within the industry. It's the safe choice. Leaders are leaders for a reason, and a company with software deployed on thousands of vessels is proven. Often, the deciding factor may be familiarity with the company or software or recommendations from peers.

Mottershead warned that this approach comes with its own challenges. She said: “You're making a generalisation that because it works for everyone, it'll work for me. No two shipping companies are the same, so there's a bit of a trade-off.”

Nevertheless, for smaller shipowners, opting for market leaders might be the safer choice. Larger companies have the resources to cushion the risk of adopting unproven technologies.

2 Attempting to please everybody

While it is in a company's best interest to gauge the opinions of its workers during the early decision-making stage, conflicting opinions can slow the process. There will be departments reluctant to change, or areas where the proposed solution is seen as a downgrade compared to before, but this cannot become a roadblock in adopting technology that will ideally help propel the company forward.

3 Expecting perfection

There is no solution in the world that will be perfect for a company from the moment they are adopted. Even the most customised solutions will need to be tweaked and refined to suit a company's needs.

“Unless you want to pay for those customisations, which you then have to manage internally afterwards, it's just a case of choosing the lesser of two evils,” Mottershead noted. “Even once you've chosen a software and are in the implementation process, it's highly unlikely to go smoothly.”

4 Forgetting to cleanse data

Part of the hurdle to implementation is integrating it with pre-existing software on board. This can be a challenging and time-consuming process, especially if legacy systems contain a lot of outdated or incorrect data. This is often the most expensive part of transitioning to a new technology, but avoiding doing it can be even more costly in the long run.

“It's taking the time to either do it yourself or pay for your vendor to do it, because it causes so many problems if you just leave it and input it in,” Mottershead said. “For example, procurement modules, where there are five different spellings for the same thing. It's about getting everything standardised across the board.”

5 Being data-unaware

In the age of AI, many new software modules use the data harnessed during operations to learn and further optimise results. One thing a shipowner should be wary of, ahead of signing a contract, is their rights surrounding their data. Some vendors may include clauses that, unless a company opts out, grant them access to the data to train the AI module.

Shipowners should consider the potential consequences of agreeing to let this happen: who has access to this data? How secure is it? If the contract ends, what will happen to it?

These days, protecting digital assets is just as important as protecting the physical ship.

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How AI, data and human expertise can help reduce vessel downtime and save money

Unscheduled vessel downtime is more than a disruptive headache. It can quickly become an expensive problem, affecting schedules, operations and profitability. For shipowners and operators, avoiding that downtime starts with taking proper care of critical engine components and making sure maintenance is planned, targeted and effective.



HENRIK WILHELMS
Director, Performance Services
Wärtsilä Marine



The strongest case for AI-enabled maintenance is not hype. It is practical evidence from real vessels. Across Wärtsilä's monitored fleet, AI, data and human expertise are already helping operators reduce downtime.

Scheduled maintenance will always have an important role in keeping vessels reliable. But it also has limitations. Engine components do not wear according to a fixed schedule. Operating profile, ambient temperature, fuel type and lube oil condition can all affect component wear. This means maintenance based only on time or running hours can lead to over-maintenance, adding unnecessary cost and disruption, while hidden issues may still develop between inspections.

This is where AI and data can make a real difference. AI and rule-based diagnostics can detect tiny deviations and patterns that would be difficult, or even impossible, to identify manually. This helps crews address anomalies before they lead to failures, make smarter maintenance decisions based on actual engine condition, and choose the right time to perform maintenance so that it has minimal impact on vessel operations.

But technology alone is not enough. The real value comes from combining real-time vessel data, AI and rule-based diagnostics with human expertise. Relevant alerts are carefully filtered and validated by experts before they reach the crew, so crews can focus on daily operations and act quickly when needed without wasting time on irrelevant details.

Three proven ways to reduce downtime

The strongest case for AI-enabled maintenance is not hype. It is practical evidence from real vessels. Across Wärtsilä's monitored fleet, AI, data and human expertise are already helping operators reduce downtime in three proven ways: making big savings with predictive maintenance, optimising engine maintenance intervals safely with data-driven planning, and resolving issues quickly over a remote connection.

The common thread is simple: when reliable vessel data is analysed continuously, validated by experts and turned into clear guidance, operators can reduce downtime and avoid unnecessary cost.

For shipowners and operators, this can mean fewer disruptions, lower maintenance costs and more predictable vessel operations. It also gives crews a clearer basis for action, because the focus is not on more data for its own sake, but on the right insight at the right time.

1 Make big savings with predictive maintenance

Predictive maintenance shows how small signals can have a big impact. AI and rule-based diagnostics can continuously analyse engine data and flag weak signals for investigation. Human experts then validate whether the deviation is relevant, identify the likely cause and recommend practical action to prevent the problem escalating into downtime. This filtering is essential.

In one example involving two offshore vessels, hundreds of deviations were detected over five years, but 41 were validated by Wärtsilä experts as relevant issues requiring action. By resolving them early, the vessels avoided up to €1.5 million in unplanned maintenance and repair costs. In another example involving three LNG carriers, 37 validated issues were addressed early, avoiding up to €3.3 million in unplanned spares and labour costs.

These cases show the value of combining AI with expert judgement. While technology detects



The key factor here is making sure the technology supports people. While AI and diagnostics can identify the weak signals, it is human experts that validate the findings, provide context and give crews practical recommendations.

patterns at scale, it is the people who decide what matters and guide the crew on what to do next. That is how predictive maintenance can – and should – help prevent failures, protect uptime and turn early intervention into measurable savings.

2 Optimise maintenance intervals safely with data-driven planning

Reducing downtime is not only about preventing unexpected failures. It is also about avoiding unnecessary maintenance. Data-driven maintenance planning uses engine data and inspections to understand when maintenance is truly needed, rather than relying only on fixed schedules.

For one LNG carrier, this type of maintenance planning safely extended piston and cylinder head overhaul intervals from 18,000 to 24,000 running hours, reducing the number of overhauls from four to three over 13 years.

In another case, an offshore vessel owner used data-driven maintenance to extend the time before its first major overhaul from 20,000 to 32,000 running hours. That meant 60% more running hours before the first overhaul. The result was more control over when to maintain, when to invest and how to minimise disruption.

By basing decisions on actual engine condition, operators can safely extend maintenance intervals, reduce intrusive inspections and keep vessels operating for longer between overhauls without compromising reliability or compliance.

3 Resolve issues quickly over a remote connection

Even when critical engine components are well maintained, unexpected issues can still occur. When they do, speed matters. Remote operational support gives crews access to OEM expertise 24/7 through a secure connection, allowing experts to review data, alarm lists and trends, then guide the crew through clear next steps. This can help avoid unnecessary service visits and minimise disruption.

Wärtsilä's own statistics show that 90% of issues are resolved over a remote connection, with 80% solved within one day. In one LNG carrier case, a fuel consumption issue was traced remotely to a degassing valve and resolved by replacing a solenoid.

In another, unsuccessful engine starts were resolved within hours after a remote expert guided the crew through inspections and recommended replacing pilot injectors.

The lesson is clear: crews need actionable guidance, no more complexity. When experts can connect remotely, interpret the data and support the crew in real time, issues can often be solved before they cause extended downtime.

Why the human element still matters

AI in ship maintenance has moved from promise to practical reality. The right combination of tools, data and human expertise is proven to work. Wärtsilä began monitoring engines in 2001 and today monitors more than 3,000 engines, with AI-powered maintenance services trusted on around 900 vessels globally across a wide range of segments.

The key factor here is making sure the technology supports people. While AI and diagnostics can identify the weak signals, it is human experts that validate the findings, provide context and give crews practical recommendations. This keeps the focus on relevant alerts and clear actions, helping crews act quickly without being distracted by unnecessary information.

From smarter maintenance to lower downtime

For shipowners and operators, the value of AI-enabled maintenance is practical and measurable. It can help prevent failures before they happen, reduce unnecessary maintenance, support safer maintenance planning and resolve issues quickly when they arise. Most importantly, it can help reduce downtime and save money. When real-time vessel data, AI and rule-based diagnostics are combined with expert human support, maintenance becomes more proactive, more predictable and more focused on what operators need most: keeping vessels running safely, reliably and profitably.



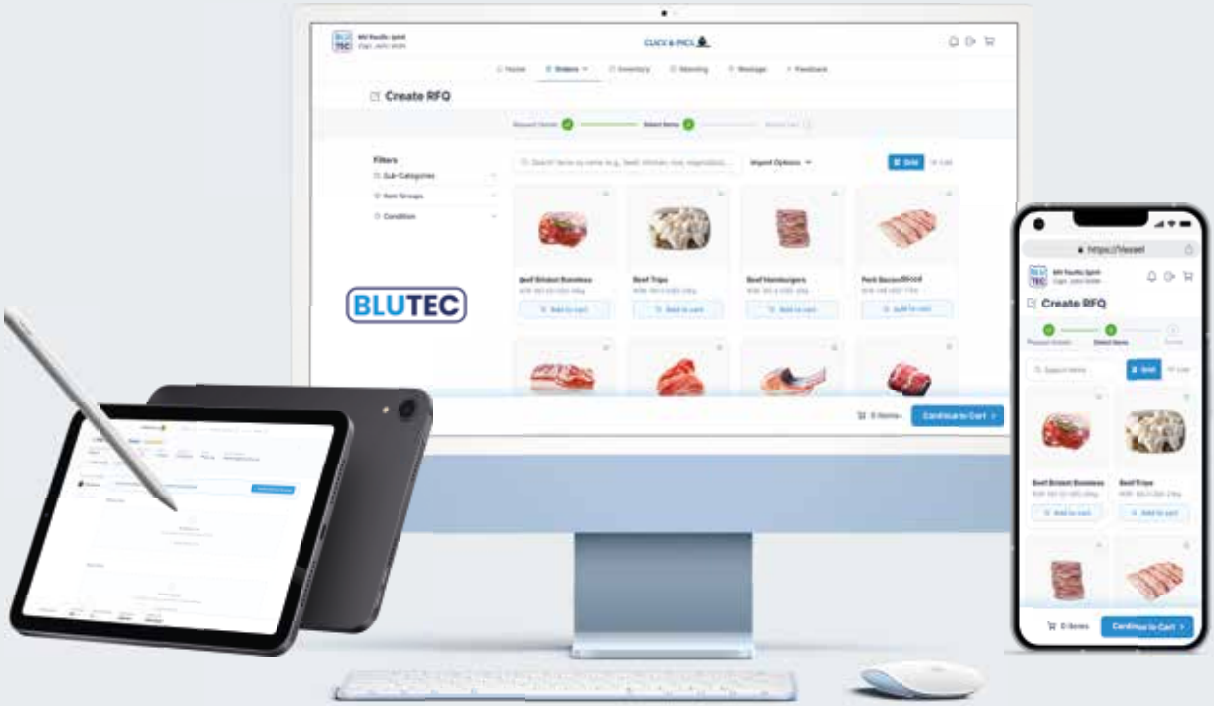
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From procurement to operational intelligence:

why maritime needs a more integrated approach



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The maritime industry has made significant progress in digitalisation over the past decade. Yet despite the growing number of systems available to ship owners and managers, many vessel operations still rely on fragmented processes, manual reporting, and disconnected data streams. As the fleets expand and operational demands increase, this fragmentation continues to create challenges for both ship and shore based teams.

At BLU Maritime, these challenges became increasingly apparent as the company grew from supporting a handful of vessels to now managing services across nearly 500 ships worldwide. Working closely with owners, managers, ship crew and catering teams provided a unique view of the operational realities onboard vessels. One issue appeared consistently, critical information was often scattered across multiple systems, spreadsheets, emails, and reports, making decision-making slower and more reactive than it needed to be.



HARMITA SINGH
General Manager
BLU Maritime

One of the most persistent challenges involves procurement and inventory management. While ordering systems have evolved considerably, the process onboard many vessels remains largely administrative. Crew members are often required to navigate lengthy catalogues, manually report month end ROBs, communicate wastage figures separately, track additional visitors, and provide operational feedback through different channels. Each activity may seem minor in isolation, but collectively they consume valuable time and introduce opportunities for error.

The challenge extends beyond procurement itself. Ship owners and managers increasingly require accurate, real time information to manage budgets, forecast consumption, monitor operational performance, and ensure compliance. However, obtaining this visibility often depends on manual reporting cycles. By the time information reaches shore teams, opportunities for proactive intervention may already have been missed.

At the same time, expectations of technology have changed dramatically. In everyday life, people are accustomed to highly intuitive digital experiences. Whether ordering groceries, booking travel, or managing household purchases, information is visual, accessible, and available instantly. Yet many maritime systems still require users to navigate complex menus and extensive data entry processes to complete relatively straightforward tasks.

Today's seafarers are increasingly comfortable with digital technology and expect systems that simplify their work rather than add to it. The industry's challenge is not simply to digitise existing processes, but to redesign them around the realities of life onboard a vessel. This is where the concept of integration becomes critical. Rather than treating procurement, inventory management, crew support, compliance, training, and operational reporting as separate activities, there is growing recognition that these functions are interconnected. A modern vessel requires information to move seamlessly between ship and shore, providing a single source of operational truth.

BLU Maritime's has shown that the greatest value often comes not from collecting more data, but from making existing data easier to capture, understand, and act upon.

“

The industry's challenge is not simply to digitise existing processes, but to redesign them around the realities of life onboard a vessel. This is where the concept of integration becomes critical. Rather than treating procurement, inventory management, crew support, compliance, training, and operational reporting as separate activities, there is growing recognition that these functions are interconnected.

Real time visibility of ROBs, wastage trends, visitor numbers, consumption patterns and user feedback can help managers make better informed decisions while reducing administrative workload onboard. Equally important is presenting this information through dashboards and reporting tools that can be tailored to the priorities of different stakeholders.

Compliance requirements such as those under the MLC 2006 continue to place greater emphasis on training, wellbeing, and living standards at sea. Access to services such as e-learning, culinary training, and operational support through a single platform can help create a more connected and user-friendly onboard environment while supporting both compliance and professional development objectives.

These industry observations ultimately led BLU Maritime to develop BLU TEC, a platform designed around the practical realities of vessel operations rather than individual functional silos. The objective was not simply to create another procurement system, but to explore how procurement, reporting, training, feedback, and operational intelligence could work together within a single ecosystem.

As the maritime sector continues its digital transformation journey, the focus is increasingly shifting from standalone software solutions to integrated operational platforms that improve visibility, reduce administrative burden, and support better decision-making. The question is no longer whether vessels need more technology. It is whether that technology genuinely simplifies life onboard and delivers meaningful insight ashore.

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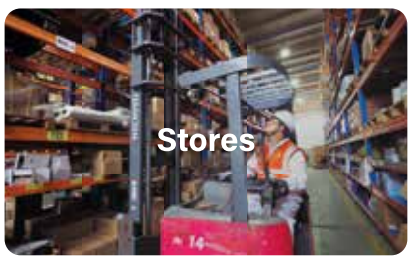


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