

Integrated solution vital in today's market

Before the current recession, operators and owners had become used to certain vessel trading patterns with very few disruptions. Now it is more of a case of how to get the maximum value out of a moribund market.

When regular schedules become disrupted, such as occurring in today's market, how do owners and operators deal with the possible reallocation of their assets? How can they visualise their resources and optimise their schedules in a proactive way when faced with a loss of a timecharter, or coa.

One solution is Veson Nautical's Integrated Maritime Operations System (IMOS) where chartering, operations and financial requirements can be seen and analysed using one system. Vessel scheduling assessments can be quickly undertaken using financial, risk and compliance parameters, especially when route planning is called for to optimise the best allocation of resources.

A major challenge facing the industry is being able to visualise the data received while at the same time taking into account all the commercial possibilities. "We have to do more to be proactive," John Veson said. Data analysis has to be facilitated allowing companies to visualise their next move in a more informed way, he thought.

Risk comes into the equation even more so today when quoting for business by way of how far an owner/operator is exposed when dealing with counterparties. For example, open vessel or cargo positions can be analysed with credit ratings using one system.

Veson thought that now was a good time to invest in an integrated solution, rather than wait for the boom times to return. The company has found that many companies were still using spread sheets to analyse information and might only use a part of an analytical system.

Today perhaps more than ever, the commercial department should invest in a fully integrated solution, which will enable the staff to take a holistic look at the

Times have completely changed for an owner's, or operator's commercial department.

operations to see the trade's complexity, volume and volatility, especially in the current tanker market.

"One of the key things is to tailor a product without expensive add-ons," Veson advised. The analytics and solutions can be customised for more strategic implementation decisions.

Veson said that the company was increasingly being asked for advice and that the system was being used more as an overall solution provider. The company has employed personnel with experience in finance and derivatives to help ramp up the trading and risk management elements of the solution.

At present, over 90 concerns use IMOS. The figure is roughly equally split between owners and charterers and about the same between wet and dry interests.

Operational benefits

Veson recently outlined the visual approach to several different commercial aspects, such as optimising vessel route scheduling.

Here within IMOS, a system called 'cargo matching' is claimed to quickly show the optimal solution when cargo scheduling. This allows the shipper to work with the specific vessels and cargoes dedicated to the trade to see the impact of different scheduling scenarios. It is possible to minimise the total transportation cost, time delays, sailing day, etc for each cargo, as well as across the whole fleet.

Another situation can arise with dangerous cargoes whereby companies having multiple tanker types in their fleet can deal with specific requirements and modify their processes as needed. The system is also designed to cope with a chemical carrier owner, or operator lifting multiple cargoes on a single voyage.

Chemical and products tankers also often

load and discharge at multiple ports and terminals. Many parcels are shipped in one vessel often for different customers, destinations, or at different freight rates. By using IMOS' visual approach, both the shore staff and seafarers will be able to stay on top of operations anywhere in the world, Veson claimed.

Different time zones will throw up different problems, making it difficult to get a complete picture of business activities, therefore delaying action on critical decisions, such as problems, or time-critical market opportunities.

For example, a different approach maybe needed in the Caribbean to that of the Mediterranean, or low sulphur fuel ECA regions. Departments need to seamlessly transfer the commercial management, as the vessels move from one area to another and be able to monitor operational performance.

Veson's solution is claimed to be an integrated, intelligent system that is able to handle these processes and allow companies to run reports on their own defined operating areas, or routes, enabling them to analyse how their profit and losses vary taking into account many factors.

Using the integrated solution, several departments are able to access the same information at different stages in the process, for example, from planning to commitment, to final billing, or invoicing. By using this system there will be less data duplication, which helps to eliminate time wasting, expensive errors and the inefficient use of company resources.

A recent endorsement for IMOS came from National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia's (NSCSA) vice president of commercial operations, Michael Hudson-Davies who said; "We are 24/7 in the tanker chartering business and are online at all hours. With Veson's IMOS we can view and discuss calculations with our chartering staff in real time. It greatly enhances the ability to see details – the right information is there and we have the ability to look at the business from anywhere. This allows us to make quicker decisions."

TO