

CHARTERING

Growing operations needed a powerful solution

Midway through 2005, the shore staff at the National Shipping Corp of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA) began seeking alternatives to the Excel spreadsheets and conventional office software it had been using for chartering and operations purposes.

They felt that they needed to find a new solution that would integrate the vessel and voyage functions with the accounting and back office departments. NSCSA required a powerful software package that would help it eliminate the 'islands of information,' provide total visibility across functions and seamlessly link business operations.

It began with a thorough six-month evaluation of Veson Nautical's Integrated Maritime Operations System (IMOS), to establish whether NSCSA's chartering and operations needs would be addressed by IMOS.

NSCSA evaluation personnel and decision makers felt they were able to access the system easily with remote access to the Veson server, as well as perform tasks with a minimum of assistance. In June 2006, NSCSA chose to license IMOS to manage chartering and operational activities for its fleet of tankers, including VLCCs, operating in the global markets.

Real Time

IMOS was selected for a number of reasons. The solution provided one integrated, common platform to share commercial information across various company sites, allowed NSCSA to seamlessly integrate with its subsidiary Mideast Ship Management, and report financially and administratively to the company's Riyadh corporate headquarters. The time from purchase to full installation and go-live took about eight weeks; during this



Michael Hudson-Davies evaluated Veson's software both in the office and on board ship.

time Veson Nautical delivered several customised solutions requested by the company.

The NSCSA office in Dubai hosts IMOS and performs the commercial/chartering functions as well as oversees voyage financials. Once the IMOS Accounting Module is installed, the head office in Riyadh will leverage it for voyage P&L reporting purposes.

IMOS is already facilitating strategic decisions on vessel operations handling for the fleet expansion currently underway. The common platform IMOS provides has become the most efficient way to share commercial information across various company sites. Michael Hudson-Davies, NSCSA's Dubai vice president commercial explained, "We are 24x7 in the tanker chartering business and most of us are online at all hours. With Veson's IMOS we can view and

discuss calculations with our chartering staff at any time.

"It greatly enhances the ability to see details quickly - the right information is there and we have the ability to look at the business from anywhere. IMOS saves time because it provides quick access to accurate data. This allows us to make quicker decisions", he concluded.

Advantages

Since purchasing the system in 2006, NSCSA has already received a major upgrade and is now operational on Veson's latest version, v. 5. IMOS provides NSCSA with access to crucial information in real time. "The system allows the company to prepare for growth as we've been able to reduce the time necessary to integrate new staff into our chartering and operations departments. The system helps people to quickly understand marine business intricacies and to adhere to company determined processes and requirements," explained Hudson-Davies. The IMOS platform is real-time, allows for easy collaboration among distributed offices, and is completely integrated; delivering the efficiency the company was seeking, Veson claimed.

The company has also decided to move ahead with installing an interface to the corporate accounting system. Once this is completed, IMOS will bring up-to-the-minute information to the back office staff as well. Hudson-Davies explained, "We see that the efficiency is there, although at this point it is too soon to realise all the benefits. Installation was

very quick - we fast-tracked the commercial solution because it was our immediate priority. We plan to schedule more resources and training time to complete the accounting piece in the back office at a later date. Overall we are excited about what the new software will do for us."

NSCSA is also evaluating Veson's IMOS OnBoard module to further enhance efficiency and reduce data entry by enabling easy communication between the ship and shore personnel.

NSCSA owns and operates 10 double hulled VLCCs, and has seven additional newbuilding VLCCs on order or under construction, each with a capacity of 2.1 mill barrels and a deadweight of more than 300,000 tonnes. Technically managed by its wholly owned subsidiary, Mideast Ship Management (MSML), Dubai, the VLCCs operate in the global markets with a mixture of spot voyage and timecharter employment. NSCSA also provides project cargo shipping services with Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro), container and Break-bulk ships, offering liner services linking the Middle East with North America, the Far East and Europe.

The VLCC fleet has grown steadily in the last 10 years. By the end of 2005, it had transported approximately 27 mill tonnes or 200 mill barrels of crude oil on ships that completed more than 100 voyages on the spot voyage market. The VLCC fleet will continue to expand over the next few years and will nearly double in size from nine to 17 ships by 2009.

TO