

O&M TECHNOLOGY SUCCESSFUL AT ZERO COST?

Should customer O&M software be free? Can no-cost technology provide advanced O&M solutions? And is this a future industry trend?

At Green Marine Solutions (GMS) the answers are yes, yes and yes. As a specialist service provider, the company gives operators high-performance zero-cost software for good commercial reasons.

In practice, GMS offers clients extremely robust, tested service platforms that only carry functions vital for ultra-reliable O&M, explains Operations Director, Richard Pargeter.

LOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Cost-free technology is then a of precisely-tailored O&M solutions, adds GMS Technical Director, Mark Swift. He feels that avoiding unnecessary frills helps to free operators from cumbersome IT legacies.

This puts excellent functionality and maximum simplicity into the hands of highly-trained technicians. GMS doesn't try to compensate for poor training with over-complicated technology.

ANALOGY

A good analogy of why O&M technology should be straightforward and goal-orientated is found in popular technology itself, Richard points out.

"We quite deliberately don't set out to provide the equivalent of a mobile phone overloaded with unneeded apps. Instead, we give highly-skilled operators the equivalent of a very good basic smart phone loaded with purpose-built solutions for very specific O&M tasks – with no distractions. We know how annoying complex IT systems can be, even when they are meant to help."

The strategy is part of GMS' drive for excellence through simplicity in challenging environments where the asset matrix is already complicated and failures and breakdowns are costly.

SOLUTIONS – A CLIENT'S FIRST PRIORITY

"We've looked closely at what operators and utilities want us to achieve. It means that we are now putting the horse very firmly before the cart," Richard adds.

"Our focus is delivering solutions, not software. Technology has a job to do. Hence, we don't sell complex software systems but do ensure excellent O&M results."

"Because the technology component of our solutions is streamlined to the job in hand, software costs are marginal. It becomes a virtuous circle. Software costs are no longer an issue for us."

"If you pay a builder to build your house, you don't expect to pay for his JCB or forklift. So why pay for our tools/ software system?"

INTEGRATION

"GMS integrates the three key functions on to its software service platforms that are vital to good O&M – asset management, marine co-ordination and marine assurance. If these are delivered to high performance standards every time, the software has done its job successfully," Richard continues.

"The result is lower costs, faster response times and easier procurement for clients. It also means that lessons learned project-by-project can be incorporated continuously into software development. Frustrations and temper levels benefit too!"

"IT malfunctions are few and far between."

"We avoid the temptation to over-engineer software for its own sake. Our approach is to sell clarity, rather than bells and whistles," he adds. *"The main aim is to get the basic job done well without fail, but with an overwhelming emphasis on health and safety."*

HEALTH & SAFETY ALWAYS COME FIRST

What is the basic job in hand? It falls into three main parts, Richard explains.

- 1 The first is to provide certification management for people, vessels, equipment and assets that is always bang up-to-date – including an effective permit to work system
- 2 The second is ensuring ultra-reliable planned maintenance where nothing is overlooked, even in stormy weather or vicious winter conditions
- 3 The third is an accurate track and trace system for high-cost vessels, skilled employees and valuable equipment

Technology that combines these three priorities successfully is now a pre-requisite for effective marine assurance – the ultimate O&M backstop and essentially a company's quality and risk control system.

"The reason why we can bring this together so effectively is because GMS understands the O&M business from top to bottom. Everything is in-house at GMS. We don't need to bring lots of different people together." Richard concludes.

WHEN LESS IS FAR MORE

Mark Swift agrees. He has more than 14 years of international marine and IT sector software development experience, working on major projects as Operations Manager for the world's largest marine software provider in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He now brings that accumulated expertise to Green Marine Solutions as senior technology lead.

"Instead of using complex off-the-shelf software packages with functions that are never used on pragmatic O&M programmes, our development model concentrates on high-end solutions tailored to specific projects."

"As Richard mentions, the core functions needed to optimise wind industry performance are asset maintenance and compliance, advanced marine co-ordination systems that can handle the very complex operations now common on deep water projects, plus marine assurance which we provide through comprehensive warranty audits. All require first-class data control."

SPARE THE ROD AND IMPROVE THE SOFTWARE

Mark adds, *"We appreciate that historically many energy companies have invested heavily into comprehensive corporate technology systems over a long period and at high cost."*

"However, we also know that in many cases managers say they are finding themselves tied to an unwieldy 'beast' that becomes master rather than servant. This is a moot issue and we aim to provide a new balance point."

SOFTWARE DESIGN

It is a mistake to try to design software to act like a Swiss Army knife, he feels. *"There is a tendency in large organisations to invite department heads to throw every requirement they can think of into a central wish-list pot that then gets translated into a software development project brief."*

"Although, this is well-intended, it often becomes a burden on site where tasks are very practical in adverse conditions. We avoid this trap. Instead of companies developing rods for their own backs, we view software as just part of a wider solution to a specific project need."

UNACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE

"The alternative to this is to rely on a failure mode. When things fail you fix them. That's not the way we work. GMS has a different development cycle. We provide management solutions, not reactive solutions."

"Many years of practical offshore experience goes straight into our software design. We know where things go right and wrong. We're ready for your crisis before it happens. Our job is to ensure that that crisis never happens. And still we are able to keep technology simple."

"It's an approach that is now paying dividends for everyone – with the important caveat that GMS will always add anything specific that customers feel they need as a priority."



ROAM – REAL-TIME OPERATIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

GMS' own software innovation is the ROAM platform.

Designed initially as an affordable and accessible answer for operators looking for an alternative to large corporate technology, GMS' Real-time Operational Asset Management system continues to evolve into an extremely flexible but specifically goal-orientated platform.

OPERATOR CONTROL

"The key point about ROAM development is that the operator is in charge of the system, not the other way around," says Mark.

"We are moving away from mixed off-the-shelf systems towards streamlined integration."

"It really is the way of the future."

Green Marine Solutions (GMS)

