

Breaking the Barrier Between Ships and IT Staff

Globecomm Maritime Provides se@REMOTE Service to Crowley Maritime

As a provider of specialist marine transportation and logistics services, Crowley Maritime Corporation is well-known for its innovative approach to vessel operations. In addition to conventional cargo operations, Crowley provides niche services to shipping, port and energy companies, government and military agencies and the fishing sector.

Crowley owns and operates one of the world's most advanced ship assist and escort tug fleets and has an unmatched reputation in project cargoes and towing. Its mission: to carry "the huge, extraordinary and complex" for delivery offshore, into ports or to remote locations.

Crowley's tug and barge fleet is diverse and technologically advanced. And in addition to a lot of horsepower and highly skilled seafarers, its ships rely on advanced shipboard IT systems to support operations and communications tasks. But as the number and complexity of shipboard IT systems have grown, so have the challenges of keeping them running at peak performance.

Sending IT Techs Around the World

The job of maintenance and repair would traditionally require an IT engineer to be present on the ship, creating logistical headaches, according to Matthew Gullickson, Manager, Engineering Systems, Crowley Marine Services.

"Often network issues arise while the vessel is underway and not readily accessible. That would traditionally mean sending IT technicians to physically attend vessels that were experiencing PC issues and required support."

For an IT engineer to attend the ship in person means unbudgeted travel and accommodation costs as well as lost time away from the office. The visit must also be coordinated with the ship's schedule, which may be subject to change.

Crowley wanted a better way to manage and maintain the IT systems onboard its fleet of tug articulated tug barges. It turned to Globecomm Maritime for an answer.

Already a customer of Globecomm Maritime's se@COMM message management software, Crowley's tug and barge fleet has since 2010 been using se@REMOTE, which was developed in response to feedback from customers who wanted

a means of fixing IT issues even when the ship was at sea.

Remote Access to Shipboard Systems

Globecomm se@REMOTE gives Crowley's IT department remote access to onboard computer systems without the need for travel or intervention from the crew, saving time and money for owner and operator alike.



The heart of se@REMOTE is Globecomm web-based Ship Management Tool (SMT), which enables users to connect to the ship's network and see a list of available IP-enabled devices.

The IT engineer simply clicks on the device to gain access to it and can change configurations, update operating systems, install applications or

make repairs – all the sorts of IT maintenance that an engineer would previously do in person.

Globecomm Maritime Product Manager, Value Added Services, Geoff Davison says se@REMOTE provides a complete solution for shipowners who want to save on maintenance costs without compromising on quality.

“se@REMOTE means shore-based IT managers can solve problems without sending out an engineer to the ship, so shipowners and managers can control their costs much more effectively. Any IP-enabled device can be accessed so the engineer can troubleshoot not just the ship’s PCs, but also printers, scanners or other IP devices. We will see this kind of functionality employed more and more widely as shipowners come to view their ships as remote offices at sea.”

se@REMOTE works over any Inmarsat Fleet-Broadband or Iridium OpenPort terminal, and so requires no additional outlay on hardware or software.

Secure remote access from any Internet connection to shipboard systems via Ship Management Tool software, with costs displayed in real time.

And while se@REMOTE saves on travel and accommodation costs, it also provides price transparency for the engineer and shipping company, as the SMT screen displays the volume of data sent or received and therefore the cost of the time spent connected to the ship.

As a company with operations in diverse locations, Crowley estimates that travel costs for an engineer attending a vessel could be around \$1,000 on average. A se@REMOTE session by contrast can usually be carried out in a relatively short time, at an average cost of around \$10.

Proven On Board

“Crowley has used se@REMOTE in place of an IT technician on numerous occasions,” continues Mr Gullickson. “Often times, initial troubleshooting is conducted from shore using se@REMOTE and if a solution can be accomplished through the application, the repairs are completed quickly, allowing the vessel to return to normal operation and avoid downtime. Troubleshooting and repairs have been made to PC hardware, applications, script modification and scheduled task creation.”

Mr Gullickson says the company’s usage of se@REMOTE continues to grow as the functionality proves itself, moving from being a tool used for troubleshooting and repair towards proactive IT systems management.

“Historically, we used se@REMOTE once or twice a week to access the vessel computer networks onboard our tugs and ATBs operating along the US West and East Coasts, the Gulf Coast and Alaska. But as its functionality has improved through software updates, we have begun to explore additional uses for the application that is resulting in an increase in usage.”

se@REMOTE has allowed Crowley’s IT personnel to troubleshoot vessel network issues and complete repairs no matter where a vessel is in the world and Mr Gullickson says it has changed the game for its IT department.

“se@REMOTE has removed the barrier that typically stands between ships and IT technicians working shoreside. Issues that require immediate attention can be addressed at any time from shore reducing potential downtime and travel expenses.”

With its IT department able to connect to computer systems onboard its tug and barge fleets wherever they are in the world, Crowley has cut costs while at the same time improving the power and efficiency of onboard networks, so sharpening its competitive edge.

It’s a solution typical of Globecomm’s value-added approach to maritime communications; driven by customer feedback and leveraging existing channels to deliver solutions that help its customers improve their operations and save costs. More information, including a datasheet, is available at the Globecomm Web site. ■



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