

Technology Plus Service Bring High-Performance at Low Cost

Globecomm Connects Maritime Heavy-Lift Specialist Global Seatrade

When you need to move a piece of truly gigantic equipment long distances over water, how do you do it? From wind turbines to the mighty sea-gates that prevent tidal flooding on major rivers, the components are very large, very heavy, and usually come in odd shapes. Merely hauling them aboard can risk foundering a cargo vessel. They will not fit in conventional holds – but secure them too far above the waterline, and the ship may capsize in heavy seas.

Global Seatrade, a unit of the Hartman Maritime Group, operates vessels specifically designed to meet these challenges. The company's heavy-lift vessels move oil platforms, turbine blades and other cargo to challenging locations where cranes are seldom available to help with the on and off-loading.



Such specialized ships carry an equally specialized crew of technicians and engineers as well as mariners. The high-value cargo they handle also requires a great deal of coordination with customers, vendors and harbor authorities. This adds up to a major requirement for voice, email and Internet communications to keep specialists connected and crew satisfied.

The demand for communications had made Global Seatrade a long-time VSAT customer – but not a very satisfied one. In the company's experience, VSAT operators either provide a service that does everything at a very high cost, or an affordable service that does not live up to expectations. There had to be a solution that better fit the company's business model. But it was nowhere in sight – until the company found Globecomm Maritime.

High-Performance, Low-Cost

"Global Seatrade had very well-defined business requirements for the communications network," says Ton Klompmaker, manager of business development for Mach6, a unit of Globecomm Maritime in Emmeloord, Netherlands. "They wanted the best possible service and they wanted to pay as little as possible for it. That meant that we had to be very creative."

To meet these requirements, Globecomm mixed advanced technology with a customized approach to customer service. On the technical side, Globecomm installed maritime terminals, hardware and software aboard ship, with interconnection to shipboard data and voice systems. Connectivity was provided by se@FLEX, which provides automatic roaming between Ku-band beams on a global basis at a flat rate.

With se@FLEX, ship owners gain all of the tools needed to ensure global coverage, seamless service and full transparency of costs and service levels. As a VSAT-based service, it provides a Committed Information Rate (CIR) guarantee that delivers high performance at a fixed cost. With se@FLEX, automatic switching technology maintains the VSAT link as vessels move between satellite beams.



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The same technology detects loss of VSAT availability and auto-switches service to L-band backup on demand. Sophisticated QOS systems compress traffic to keep costs under control and prioritize more important traffic, such as voice, over less time-sensitive traffic like email.

"Global coverage is still a challenge in maritime VSAT," says Klompmaker. "Satellite operators typically focus Ku-band on land masses, so global coverage can only be assembled by stitching together the footprints of multiple beams and satellites. Today we are running 23 different beams out of 13 earth stations around the world, but the se@FLEX platform makes it look like one continuous pool of capacity for our customers."

Tailored Technical Support

The best technology, however, is only as good as the customer's experience of it. From the start, Globecomm was committed to getting that experience right for Global Seatrade. One important decision was to co-own the shipboard equipment. It was legally and commercially challenging, but it provided both parties with the same incentive to treat the equipment as though it were their own – because it was.



Globecomm and Global Seatrade also devoted time to setting expectations for technical support. “We explained that the quickest way to run up big bills is to call us with every problem, large or small, and demand an immediate solution,” says Klompmaker. “If you put fast response in the contract as a requirement, it can get really expensive. But if Global Seatrade was willing to take time to judge the severity of each issue, it could save a lot of money.”

That is precisely what the two companies agreed to do. The final maintenance contract defined a service area in which Globecomm Maritime would provide both regular and emergency service on demand. For service requests outside that zone, the companies agreed to discuss each issue, determine its impact on operations and decide how quickly it needed to be resolved. It was an arrangement that required trust and transparency on both sides – but one that has proved remarkably successful.

“Since our founding, Globecomm has focused on mission-critical communications for customers with specialized needs,” says chairman and CEO David Hershberg. “The demand for high performance at affordable cost is the same on land or at sea. We are proud to be providing the essential communications links for more than 3,000 vessels around the globe.” ■



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