Choosing a Software Solution

A discussion about the benefits of Standardized Marine Software Solutions for Global Shipping Companies

Gerry Nielsen – Global Director of Operations

Who am I?

Gerry Nielsen - An Introduction

- Global Director of Operations since 2002
- Shipboard Engineer – Chief Engineers License
- Marine Surveyor, ISM/ISO Auditor
- Developer, User, Manager of Software Systems

Who are we?

ABS Nautical Systems - An Introduction

- Founded 1983 as Nautical Technologies Corporation
- Purchased in 1999 – became ABS Nautical Systems
- Global Company
- 10x growth in # of clients since 1999

Why this topic?

A decision process all shipping companies go through

- When installing their first system
- When upgrading or replacing an existing system

An expensive exercise

- Can make or break a career
- Can cause significant impact to bottom line

What Options are Available?

- Generic “Office” Software
- Niche Software
- Big-Name non-Marine Specific Software
- Custom Built Software
- Standardized Marine Software Solutions

What Differentiates these Options?

Generic “Office” Software – COTS, provides basic tools to perform a variety of functions (Excel, ACCESS)

Positives

- Commonly available, well documented
- Inexpensive, easy to use

Negatives

- Blank Slate – develop tools as you see fit
- Does not readily synchronize or replicate
- Difficult to roll-up or share common information

What Differentiates these Options?

Niche Software – Commercially available, specific to a task, workflow or geographic area

Positives

- Specific to a task or workflow
- Cost is lower than full-function solutions

Negatives

- Creates “silos” of information, hard to consolidate
- Multiple systems to install and maintain
- Lifespan of vendors historically short

What Differentiates these Options?

Big Name Software – Commercially available, not specific to shipping companies

Positives

- Well known and funded companies
- Might minimize need for internal interfaces

Negatives

- Typically a high-cost solution
- Marine is not their core business
- Replication is not designed for the Marine Environment

What Differentiates these Options?

Custom Built Software – Developed in house or by commercial company to meet specific needs

Positives

- Matches workflows exactly
- Does not contain unwanted functionality

Negatives

- Development cost can be very high
- Supportability may be questionable
- Not enough clients to share support and upgrade costs

What Differentiates these Options?

Standardized Marine Software Solution – Commercially available, large client base, support and upgrades

Positives

- Large client base to share support and upgrade cost
- Upgrades and improvements provided on regular basis
- Designed for distributed nature of Shipping Companies

Negatives

- Not specifically designed to your workflow
- Might include extra (unnecessary) functionality

Which Option is Best?

For most Companies, Standardized Software Solutions are the way to go

- Supportable
- Client Driven Development and Upgrades
- Cost Effective Solution

Why Standardized Solutions?

Supportability

- Global Support Structure
- Standardized Training and Documentation
- Centralized Support Structure and Tools
- Dedicated Support Staff – available to all clients

Why Standardized Solutions?

Client Driven Development and Upgrades

- Clients have input in direction and priority
- Upgrades provided on a regular basis
- Annual User Conference
- Formal and ad-hoc User Groups

Why Standardized Solutions?

Cost Effective Solution

- Development cost shared by large client base
- Upgrades included in maintenance fee
- Ability to increase modules or licenses at any time
- Smaller, mobile, dedicated staff

Does Standardized = Inflexible?

Not at all, because of……

- User-specific information filters
- Client-controlled configuration
- User defined language and terminology
- Ability to Interface to Purchasing / Financial Systems

User Specific Filtration

- See only the vessels you are responsible for
- See only documents pertaining to your department
- See only the jobs pertaining to your department
- See only the screens/options you need to see
- See only appropriate crewing and financial information

Client takes control

100+ System/User Preferences including…

- Date Format
- Required fields (e.g. acct required to approve SR)
- Security requirements
- Specialized functionality e.g. inventory seals
- Policy Settings – invoice approval tolerance
- Document ranges/document number type

Language & Terminology

- User-defined index terms
- Tailor captions and terminology to the needs of various geographical locations or business units
- Multi-lingual data support via UNICODE

What to look for in a Solutions Provider

- Stability and History
- Subject Matter Expertise and Dedication
- Globally Based Employees
- A plan for the future

Global Presence

Clients supported by employee staffed ABS NS Offices around the world

What Does the Future Hold?

- Affordable Broadband Capability is coming
  - Web Enabled Applications
  - Much easier/cheaper data flow between ship and shore

- Software as a Service (SAAS)
  - Hosting by Software Supplier
  - Vendor takes over administration of system
  - Allows Shipping companies to focus on their core business

What Does the Future Hold?

- Further Development and Integration
  - Development
    - Reliability Centered Maintenance
    - Root Cause Analysis
    - Electronic Logs
  - Integration
    - VDR's
    - GMDSS
    - ECDIS
    - Automation Systems

Any Questions?

Gerry Nielsen
Global Director of Operations
E-mail: gnielsen@abs-ns.com
Houston (USA)

Ka-Lok Ooi
Regional Director - Pacific
E-mail: kooi@abs-ns.com
Kuala Lumpur / Singapore