

The Crew

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CAREER • TRAINING • TECHNOLOGY • MONEY • OPERATIONS • ADVICE



REPORT

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PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING

WORDS: WILL MATHIESON



GLOBAL YACHTING GROUP

A paint job is invariably the single-most expensive element of a refit project, yet all too often tales of adversarial politics, warranty disputes and disappointing durability leave owners feeling underwhelmed. But it doesn't have to be this way. Will Mathieson spoke to the best of the application and surveying businesses to identify the steps captains can take to go from adversary to collaborator.

Paint jobs, like any work of art, are, by their very nature, subjective. They have a habit, therefore, of causing disputes between the application team and the owner's team (the captain and any third parties they are wise enough to appoint as intermediaries) about the end product's perceived quality.

As a result, a poorly planned paint job has more potential than most in a refit yard to turn nasty. But it doesn't have to be this way. Through careful planning, a

collaborative in-yard approach and well governed maintenance, a paint job can retain an impeccable lustre for the entirety of a superyacht's survey cycle.

In conversation with some of the coatings sector's most respected proponents, it becomes clear that planning is the fundamental consideration at every stage of the process, and, as the owner's key arbiter, the captain must bear the burden from the very beginning. »

BEFORE

“Captains should consider where they are going to carry out a paint job and whether the place they are going to choose is capable of creating the right environment for the best paint job,” says Alexander Swain, yachting concept project development manager at Jotun.

It is this meticulous planning process, which Swain says should also include research into, and appointment of, the appropriate applicator, that signals the beginning of a paint job for a captain. With the amount of refit work being conducted across the market at an all-time high, forward planning is imperative if one is to secure their yard and applicator team of choice.

Paintwork is an esoteric discipline and, as any accomplished CEO would do, captains should be looking to delegate to the specialists from the off. When tendering for the job itself, partner at Aqueous Marine Guard ceramic coatings Andy Williams recommends inviting a consultant from each of the bidders to evaluate the scope of the work in person and pitch accordingly. It is an all too common mistake, he explains, for captains to allow companies to proffer template pitches based on assumptions of the yacht’s size, age and so on, which are inevitably whittled down to one winner based on the bottom-line price. Instead, tenders should be based on the scope and complexity of the work, which vary hugely depending on the hull’s condition and the allotted time the company has to turn the job around. In consultation with an independent surveyor, acceptance criteria can be formulated, which will allow those tendering to pitch a best price against a set of pre-established standards.

“For a 50-metre boat, you’re looking at three months, minimum,” Williams explains. “That’s without scaffolding, tenting and fittings.” Williams’s qualification of the time a job will take

highlights how important it is for a yard slot to be booked well in advance of the job itself because, while yachting tradition dictates that a job may be agreed between captain and owner at the end of a busy charter season, today’s reality is that availability among the best companies will be thin on the ground. In short, the planning of a full repaint should begin a season ahead of the work itself, and initiating the conversation as early as possible with the owner is imperative.

Once the project is agreed, Manu Ayme, joint head of production for the Global Yachting Group (which includes both Pinmar and Rolling Stock paint brands), says his team will give information pertaining to the project to the captain/management in the weeks and months before it begins so that they can organise the vessel and the crew accordingly. This produces a core team, he adds, which ensures a collaborative approach from the very beginning. “It’s important for [captains/management] to know what we’re doing and why we’re doing it,” he says. “It instils confidence and clarity; the more we involve them, the smoother the project is.”

When a choice is made, it is only through the scrutiny of the contract that a captain can ensure that as much subjectivity as possible is removed from the finished product. The quality of paint jobs is won and lost on what is promised or caveated within the body of the terms and conditions, and this can vary enormously.

Williams says the terms and conditions will clarify exactly what is covered in the warranty agreement beyond the obvious defects, and this is why Ayme ‘dissects’ the contract with the captain at the initial meeting, highlighting any potential warranty issues and clarifying what the end result will be. Again, this is a proactive step that will aim to manage expectations.

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– Alexander Swain, yachting concept project development manager, Jotun



AZZURA



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DURING

The captain is the owner's primary on-site representative, and a key role during the course of the project is to hold the applicators' team to account. This is achieved through daily meetings, rather than weekly inspections. The former establishes a constructive rapport, while the latter means that, if there's an issue, it will cost both time and effort to rectify.

However, the cost of large paint jobs, and owners' expectations of the end results, mean there is little room for error. It is therefore increasingly common to appoint an experienced paint surveyor to represent the client. Paul Bournas is managing director of CCS Yacht Coating Services, one of the industry's most respected companies offering a superyacht-specific service of this kind.

Bournas explains that, typically, the cost of a surveyor equates to two to three per cent of the total cost of a paint job, yet he says, "I can earn your money back tenfold if the captain lets me assist him; there's no headache, you'll get the best job for the best price and you don't have to worry about the result."

Surprisingly, though, he adds that only three to four per cent of paint jobs include surveyors which, considering the sums Bournas mentions, seems curious. In fact, all of our contributors advocate the use of an independent surveyor as a means of demanding an objective standard for what is a nominal fee.

Bournas recalls an occasion when he was approached by a delighted owner claiming to have a 10-year guarantee on his paint job. "I asked him what the guarantee was for and he said 'RE6'. I asked him if he knew what RE6 was, and he said no. I explained RE6 meant 50 per cent of his tank had rotted away and the coating was gone. Is that the sort of guarantee you want?"

During the course of a project, Bournas will provide the captain with reports based on hull points, that will highlight any issues and propose solutions. For a two-year project, for example, he may inspect the yacht 15 or 16 times.

Even with the expertise of a paint surveyor in place, a diligent captain is still a vital component of a successful project. "You can get the surveyor to inspect the key holding points – the beginning, the end of the priming stage and prior to the top-coating stage – but between those holding points you still need a designated individual to liaise with the paint company on a daily basis," adds Williams.

"When decisions need to be made, they need to be made pretty quickly, and the more [captains/management] interact with us, the better." Ayme agrees. "If we have a client who is present and participating, these projects will stand out and they're successful."

AFTER

Sadly, a paint job doesn't end when the last panel dries; in order to see the paint through a five-year cycle, it needs to be looked after. And unfortunately, thanks to increasingly stringent environmental legislation, Williams explains, paint products may not exhibit the same durability as they once did. For that reason, Ayme says his team can offer recommendations beyond the original scope of work that may extend the lifecycle of the paint job.

Even so, the education of the crew and introduction of a thorough maintenance programme are, therefore, more important than ever before. "It's common sense," says Bournas. "If you take pride in your work and apply best practice you can extend the life [of the paint]." This involves frequent cleaning to minimise the collection of debris that could bind to the surface and scratch it. "And if you use the wrong brushes during cleaning," Bournas continues, "or not enough water, it immediately scratches." It might sound like an obvious mistake, but it's an expensive one.

Whichever paint is used, it will have a specific complementary detergent and cleaning utensil, but its optimal maintenance manifests itself at the very beginning. By working in tandem with the applicator, a captain should be able to brief crew effectively enough to understand the idiosyncrasies of the paint job, and this is why involvement from the germination of the project is key. »

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– Paul Bournas,
managing director,
CCS Yacht Coating
Services



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IDYNASTY

CAPTAIN BORIS SORE, OF BENETTI CLASSIC 115 M/Y *PIDA*, RECENTLY OVERSAW A FULL REPAINT OF THE VESSEL AND TELLS US ABOUT THE LESSONS THE PROJECT HAS TAUGHT HIM.

You really need to prepare everything in advance because nobody will push you to achieve the level of quality you are looking for as you would yourself. You have to think about everything and prepare accordingly.

We are now under the management of OCEAN Independence, and they have their own inspector. Due to distance between offices and shipyards, the captain needs to be in close collaboration with the inspector constantly in order to prevent any issues. Between regular inspections and checks from the inspector, it is necessary for the captain to keep continuous control over the project. As the captain, you are the manager – checking, monitoring, writing, taking photos – but you are not a paint expert so when they send you [information] you must read it because it means you can check with [the experts].

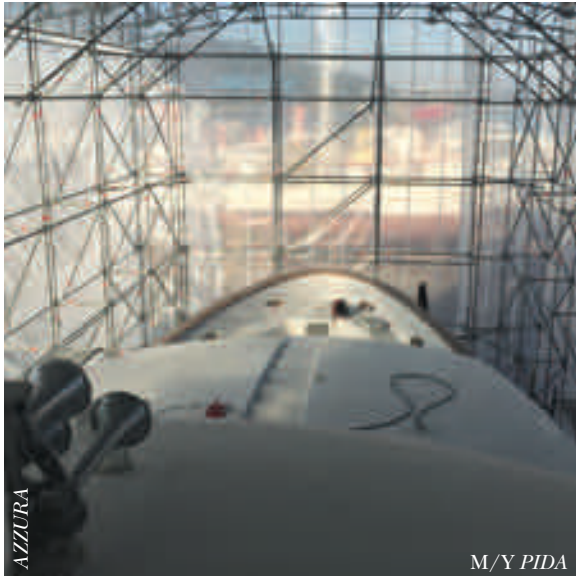
You then learn about not having dust in the shed, how to remove the dust, the ideal temperature – the many things you need to check and do yourself. Preparation is important.

You need to be sure that the quality of the paint is good, and you do this by checking a high-gloss area to see whether it really is ‘high gloss’. And then you need to check the amount of dust on the paint because you are the only one who is there every day, and the first point of contact if there is something wrong with the progress of the project, both inside or outside the shed.

Whatever we decide is done in discussion with Azzurra Yacht Painting [the appointed applicator] which has advised on the best possible option for maintaining the paint. When we take back all of the [covers] I don’t

want to have any problems with the product – I want to maintain it perfectly. So I’m always asking Azzurra for suggestions and advice. We will have completely new paint and I want to wash it with the right detergent so that it’s absolutely perfect. A lot of time and money have been invested in the paint. The steel work is all brand new and I don’t want to see any spots on the paint or steel. It’s got to be perfect. ■

TO COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE, EMAIL LULU@THESUPERYACHTGROUP.COM WITH SUBJECT: TCR 78 PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING

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