

On the Move

By Audrey Leon



Christopher Wiernicki, new chairman of ABS and ABS Group, celebrates 20 years this year

Last month, **Christopher J. Wiernicki**, President and CEO of ABS added the title of chairman to his credentials after the boards of both ABS and ABS Group of Companies announced the dual appointments. He replaces former chairman Robert D. Somerville who retired on April 30 following 43 years with ABS.

The new roles come as Wiernicki celebrates 20 years with the company. He joined ABS in 1993 as vice president of engineering within ABS Americas Division. He eventually served as president and COO of ABS Europe Ltd., chief technology officer, and

president and COO of ABS Group of Companies, Inc.

Wiernicki says that ABS first popped up on his radar screen in college, and eventually he earned an ABS scholarship. He holds a BS in Civil Engineering from Vanderbilt University, an MS in Structural Engineering from George Washington University and an MS in Ocean Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Wiernicki is also a graduate of the Harvard Business School Advanced Management Program.

“I knew that as a naval architect, I wouldn’t find another organization in this country with the

same exposure to offshore, marine, and government,” he says. “When I joined the company, I realized how much it had changed during its 150 years and had improved through its ability to adapt and thrive.”

While job hopping is common in the industry, Wiernicki found ABS’ commitment to preserving safety, property, and the environment reasons to stay put for the long-haul.

“It is an organization that has shown technology leadership and innovation on a grand scale. That excites me and energizes me every day,” he says.

What currently excites Wiernicki are ABS’ global technology centers, which he calls a ‘cornerstone of our global ecosystem for innovation.’

“The changing offshore environment guarantees that demands on technology will increase. A key focus will be to enhance and expand our global network of technology centers because they facilitate partnering with industry, academia, and government in vital R&D work that will help the industry move safely

into new and challenging areas,” he says.

Wiernicki says ABS aims to grow its international presence with these investments, and he is enthusiastic about markets in Brazil, Singapore, China, Africa and Mexico.

“I am convinced that the future of offshore safety will be equally technical above and below the waterline; so ABS will be investing in a broad range of R&D projects. We are developing next-generation safety systems related to automation and control and are developing in a number of products that facilitate software integration,” he says.

After two decades in ABS’ management, Wiernicki says he has learned that while markets and business drivers may change, people do not.

“It is important to invest in them, to provide growth opportunities, and to continually look ahead in terms of defining and grooming the next generation of leaders,” he says. “Succession planning is critical and talent management is more important today than ever before.” **OE**

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