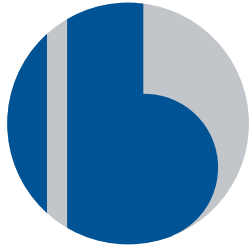


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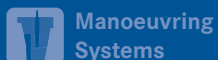


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ABS appoints a tanker tsar

ABS recently appointed Tom Blenk to the position of Vice President, Tankers & Bulk Carriers, ABS Global Marine.

In conversation with *Tanker Operator* he outlined his role within the class society's marine division and gave an insight into ABS today.

"My role is part of the ABS Global Marine team, which has been put in place to help provide a truly global perspective to our entire organisation. This team brings together the worldwide perspective of the global tanker sector with the local perspectives of our operating divisions and 220 offices worldwide.

"This wide knowledge base and market exposure will allow us to better understand key trends impacting our members and clients, thereby better informing the development of products and services needed to support the industry," he explained.

Blenk said that tankers had always been a core sector for ABS and will continue to be so well into the future. To enhance service delivery across all sectors, ABS has focused on three guiding principles: 1) provide great class service; 2) continue to be leaders in technology; and 3) work to be a trusted advisor.

"Fundamentally, this means we will proactively work with the industry and our clients to understand their challenges and opportunities for success. Doing so allows us to better identify practical solutions that work while delivering on our commitments safely and efficiently," he said.

This commitment is now being played out in various places around the world. For example, ABS has been a part of the Greek shipping community since the 'Liberty Ships' came over after World War II. ABS strives to understand the community's needs and have been committed to the success for decades.

"Focusing on that historic knowledge and our forward thinking approach to class services has led to continued growth in our operations within the country," Blenk explained.

A few years ago, ABS adopted a new

approach to its Greek operations. Areas of expertise were established in a country rather than relying solely on headquarters in say London or Houston. So as the Greek shipping community began to diversify, ABS has been ready to assist them with specialists in areas such as gas, energy efficiency, vessel performance, regulatory issues, and environmental solutions.

This allows ABS to have local specialists prepared to respond to clients' needs with the ability to leverage the global network of technical specialists, he said.

At the same time, ABS has made a concerted effort to build a strong team on the ground in Greece. This began with the leadership team, which includes Vassilios Kroustallis, Senior Vice President- Eastern Europe and Dimitrios Kostaras, Vice President of Engineering for ABS Europe, and Dimitrios Houliarakis, Assistant Chief Surveyor- Europe, all being based in Greece.

"This 'Global Greece' approach really has helped to further strengthen our position and meet the needs of our clients. The model has helped to drive the larger Global Marine approach we are adopting across the company," he explained.

Global reach

In today's market owners are global, so ABS needs to be global, which is why ABS has created the Global Marine team.

"While on the local level we will certainly concentrate on unique issues impacting tankers or any other sector, the real value is being able to tie it all together. How do we help a Greek owner that is building a ship in a Korean yard understand the operational and regulatory issues in the US Gulf coast? Taking that type of approach and improving the flow of information both internally and to our clients is making a positive impact," he claimed.

Talking of the UK operation and Brexit, he thought that at this point, it was



ABS' Tom Blenk.

premature to evaluate the impact of the referendum on the industry or on ABS operations. However, ABS in Europe has already taken steps to increase its presence in key locations.

Greece is a focal point for survey and engineering work for the entire continent. It also serves as a centre for ABS' technology and research programme, gas solutions team, and efficiency, performance, and environmental solutions professionals.

In addition, Hamburg is a major operational hub and also has local specialists in areas of energy efficiency and vessel performance. Copenhagen is home to the class society's global leaders in energy efficiency and vessel performance.

This approach is reproduced globally and allows ABS to have a 'global reach with a local touch', Blenk said.

Turning to the newbuilding downturn, Blenk said that as an organisation, ABS has been in existence for 154 years and has gone through many shipping cycles. "Our key to long term success is simple—no matter the market conditions, we will help

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support our clients in meeting their operational and regulatory needs. Despite the downturn, work still continues, as more than 12,000 ABS-classed vessels operate around the world,” he stressed.

“In addition to supporting our client’s day-to-day operations through traditional class service, ABS has developed a suite of technical offerings we believe adds significant value. We’re helping owners and operators conduct technical evaluations in areas such as ballast water treatment, hull form optimisation, energy savings devices, and emissions control technologies, just to name a few. Tanker owners need to have a trusted advisor that can help them safely and effectively address their challenges and ABS is committed to being that partner,” Blenk added.

Technology evaluation

The role of class is to understand the impact of both new regulations and operational needs of the industry. A key part is helping to not only evaluate the safety of new technologies but also help clients evaluate the technology options available to them.

With this in mind, ABS regularly participates in a number of joint industry and joint development projects to help address regulatory and operational issues.

Last year alone, ABS participated in 43 projects with industry and an additional 37 research projects with leading academic institutions. These efforts led to 64 new Rules, Guides, Guidance Notes, and Advisories along with 29 new or updated software applications to assist the industry.

These efforts also laid the groundwork for future projects in areas, such as cyber security, new survey technologies, shaft alignment, emissions controls, noise reduction, and human factors, plus others, Blenk said.

For the tanker sector, one area of recent development is the publication of the ‘Guide for Enhanced Cargo Cleaning’. This Guide helps set out requirements for tank cleaning systems that are able to clean cargo tanks without needing confined space entry. Compliance with the Guide can lead to the ECTC(C) or ECTC(SC) (vessels with slop tanks) notation.

He further explained that another area of growing interest in the tanker sector has been the use of LNG as a fuel. ABS is working with a number of industry stakeholders on the potential for gas fuel tankers, as well as assisting in the development of new vessel designs that are ‘LNG Ready’, preparing for the future adoption of gas fuel during initial design and construction.

As for the use of drones for surveys, he said that a key area of research for ABS is how to make the class survey process more efficient and less intrusive to the owners and operators. This includes using technologies, such as drones and identifying how to better leverage ‘smart technology’.

“In the near future, we will be able to begin discussing more in-depth cutting-edge advancements that we believe will help redefine the future of classification.

“At ABS our role is to help the industry understand current and future requirements, including the impact of regulatory changes on assets throughout their lifecycles, by providing practical guidance on potential solutions.

“We combine our understanding of the regulatory environment, technology leadership, and the industry’s needs to help identify solutions unique to the needs of each sector based on the current and prospective regulatory trends,” he concluded.