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WHEN TECHNOLOGY BECOMES TOO TECHNICAL, IT'S TIME FOR A HYBRID APPROACH



"Technology should improve your life... not become your life," states well-known business author Billy Cox.

And technology certainly has made life better in many ways, both on land and on the water. Modern leisure boats have seen materials, propulsion, fuel, navigation, entertainment, and connectivity advancements. How can a boat owner keep up with the latest advances, ensuring the complexity of new tech enhances the boating experience – not overwhelming it?

Let's focus on connectivity technology for a moment. Today's boaters can choose from many options, including GEO, MEO, and LEO satellites, onshore Wi-Fi, and cellular options like LTE and 5G. There are many high-tech tools for keeping in touch with friends and family onshore and ensuring the flow of vital weather and mechanical data. How can you choose the suitable options for your boat and ensure this technology is improving your life, not becoming your life?

Consider the cell phone. What was once a device used to make calls is now a staple for so much more in our everyday lives. Phone calls, video calls, texts, social media posts, online shopping, driving directions, weather, banking, and calendar entries are all essential functions on a cell phone. There are multiple ways for a cell phone to connect and provide access to these vital functions, and truthfully, we really don't care how it connects – we simply want it to work. We want calls to go through, videos to post, calendars to sync, and websites to load.

Cell phones utilize a hybrid approach to connectivity. Your cell phone can connect to other people or devices through a cellular network, Wi-Fi, or Bluetooth. It will typically roam and find the best connection for the task at hand. It will automatically connect to your car when you turn the key. It will find a wireless network in the coffee shop so you can browse online. And it performs these actions behind the scenes without any intervention on your part. It's actually a very complex device, but it improves our everyday lives in simple, seamless ways, and the technology is in the background.

It's time we brought this convenience out on the water! This hybrid approach is the future of connectivity for today's boats and yachts as well. Why are forward-thinking boat owners using a hybrid communications solution?

- Convenience: A hybrid solution will intelligently and automatically switch to the best communication option, keeping you always connected for a seamless experience on your boat. No action is needed on your part – it just works.
- Cost-savings: A hybrid solution's algorithm will start with the lowest cost option, like marina Wi-Fi, and will analyze



multiple performance and connection quality factors like signal strength, jitter, etc., to choose the best – and lowest cost – option automatically.

- Reliability: Different voyages call for different communication options, and while cellular, Wi-Fi or a LEO connection might be the lowest cost solution, they are not necessarily available everywhere you sail. GEO networks offer global, proven services that can fill gaps in coverage or take over if the other services are contended. A hybrid solution will provide multiple options that keep you connected, from Bowers Harbor to Beaver Island, no matter the sea state.

Boats have done this for years with separate antennas but at the cost of multiple installations, complicated switching, higher expenses, and multiple providers. An integrated hybrid system, such as KVH's TracNet, offers a more elegant solution – multiple connection channels seamlessly integrated into a single system with intelligent channel switching and the option to connect and intelligently manage as many as two other services (like Starlink). It's connectivity without complication!

The world is changing rapidly, and marine communications is no exception. Make sure your connectivity technology is improving your life, not complicating it. A hybrid approach to your boat's communication needs will ensure you are always connected as you explore all the beautiful destinations the Great Lakes have to offer.

To learn more about hybrid connectivity and KVH TracNet, visit kvh.com/one.