

Digital Ship

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Shipping perspectives on performance and software

Shipping companies and providers gathered at the 9th Hull Performance & Insights (HULLPIC) Conference in Tullamore, Ireland, on March 27th 2024 to discuss better ways to manage hull performance.

- By Stuart Brewer, on behalf of Jotun Performance Coatings

The conference is a joint initiative of coatings company Jotun and VB Conferences, led by Volker Bertram of DNV.

Shipping company perspectives

Gerry Docherty, director of fleet management with Ardmore Shipping highlighted that charter parties can be

vague and that often they do not encourage ships to be operated economically and efficiently.

"Maybe we could talk just in time arrival. But unfortunately, you could

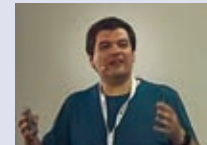
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HullPIC, the joint initiative by Jotun and VB Conferences established in 2016 to spur development and increase awareness of hull performance monitoring, held its 9th Annual conference recently in Tullamore, Ireland.

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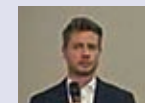
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How KVH is simplifying connectivity for shipping companies

- A Digital Ship interview with Brent Bruun, CEO and President of KVH

KVH's Commbox Edge Gateway supports communication services including legacy GEO solutions, Iridium, Starlink, LTE, and upcoming 5G services.

According to Bruun, the new system is more robust and user-friendly, "providing a number of solutions with our multi-orbit, multi-channel network to provide a multitude of services".

It supports services for both Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and Geostationary Orbit (GEO) satellites and integrates modern 5G technology. KVH continues to support historical GEO services, whilst new services such as Starlink and OneWeb have been introduced.

Bruun explained how the demand for multiple channels is expanding, and the Commbox Edge Gateway is designed to manage this increased demand.

"Our services are definitely expanding alongside the demand for multiple channels. That's why I continually bring it back to our Commbox Edge Gateway on board bandwidth management solution, that is capable of doing a multitude of things", he stated.

Bruun's journey with KVH began in 2008, initially in a corporate development role focused on building out broadband services.

Taking on various responsibilities, Bruun advanced from business development to overseeing global sales, eventually becoming the Chief Commercial Operating Officer, and finally, CEO of the company in 2022.

Integration of communication systems

Bruun emphasised the importance of having continuous connectivity onboard vessels. "If you're in the middle of the ocean you need to have assurance that you're going to have connectivity, that is the utmost element of priority".

Once constant connection is secured, companies should prioritise critical mission applications, followed by non-critical business applications, and crew welfare applications, he said.

Bruun noted that despite the advent of LEO services like Starlink, and companies enjoying high-speed connectivity at a lower cost, the integration of LEO with traditional GEO solutions remains essential.

GEO solutions help provide a reliable service with guaranteed service levels (SLAs).

Ensuring that backup systems are in place to maintain connectivity is central to the KVH business philosophy.

"We are able to provide the end user what they actually need, in terms of the integration of various communications systems", Bruun stated.

Multiple communication channels

Bruun discussed trends among KVH's customers regarding the use of multiple communication channels.

The type of vessels KVH services includes a range of vessels, such as, small tugboats, super yachts, and LNG carriers.

For smaller vessels, Bruun explained that a single communication pipe is often adequate, transitioning from GEO to LEO services for non-mission-critical uses. Uses include crew welfare, crew communication, and crew entertainment.

Larger commercial vessels often require multiple communication channels. Traditionally, these vessels have used GEO solutions alongside backup systems like Iridium.

This has changed with the introduction of LEO services, with many commercial vessels now using LEO as the main communication channel, with GEO as a backup.

"LEO is now the primary communication, with very high speeds. Our GEO solution is backup to that, and it protects not only if the service is down but protects from licensing constraints where you can't use a LEO service in certain countries around the world", stated Bruun.

This hybrid approach ensures constant connectivity, even in areas where services like Starlink experience blockages.

Simplifying installation

The installation of systems onboard vessels is an important part of the process offered by KVH, as the integration of communication systems on vessels can be complex.

"Companies need a quality installation. There needs to be a collaborative effort between the decision makers, whether conducted on board the vessel or an IT department, to ensure the installation is performed and all the requirements are understood", he said.

Regardless of the quality of equipment, an inadequate installation can affect its effectiveness. With cables being run in challenging conditions, co-operation between the decision-makers on the vessel and the IT department is required.

KVH "take charge of the complete installation including the cost. Equipment is provided free of charge, with an ongoing monthly fee for the equipment along with the services".

Installation times vary from a few hours to a couple of days depending on whether cables need to be rerun or not. With KVH servicing a range of vessels, each installation is a vessel specific process.

Bruun explained how the vessel specific KVH approach to Installation simplifies the process for shipping companies, meaning integration is more accessible and cost-effective.

Experience provider

Bruun spoke on how selecting a satcom provider with maritime experience is important for shipping companies.

"It is a matter of understanding the complexity of vessel installations. Once you get it installed there's a complexity of troubleshooting issues".

Drawing comparisons with other industries, Bruun stated, "you are not going to ask a technician with no aviation experience to work on your corporate jet, it is a very unique solution which requires a unique skill set. It is the same in maritime".

KVH offers experienced providers with 24/7 support, robust field service networks, and the ability to respond quickly to service needs in ports worldwide.

KVH has significant experience in the maritime industry which ensures they can provide reliable, high-quality services specific to the needs of maritime customers.

Vessel issues such as "a problem with an antenna being too close to radar" could result in significant interference. Having a maritime specific communications provider that you are able to contact via a phone on a 24/7, 365 basis is incredibly important", he said.

Customer experiences

Of KVH's Starlink installations, approximately 50% of are hybrid solutions, combining LEO and GEO services.



Brent Bruun, CEO and President, KVH

This hybrid approach has been well-received by customers of KVH, particularly among commercial customers who require reliable connectivity.

With shipping companies facing challenges when integrating multiple communication channels, KVH also offer financial flexibility, easing the burden of large initial installation costs.

"We provide users with the equipment at no charge. They pay for it over time monthly, and they can discontinue the service at any time with 30 days' notice. Then they ship equipment back to us and we stop charging for the equipment and the service", explained Bruun.

This provides users with flexibility and time to discover if the service is suited to their needs. "We are trying to equip our customers with the tools that are necessary to take full advantage of all the channels that available onboard a vessel".

KVH "has the tools, the personnel, the skill sets, the broader network for field service, and installation in place to make the integration as seamless as possible for the end user", he said.

DS



Commbox Edge Gateway



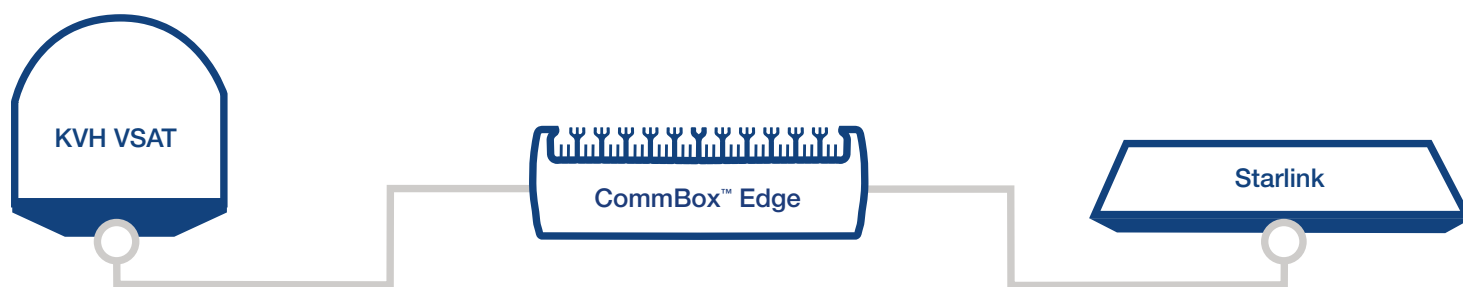
Viewing data about communications sent via Commbox



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