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SINOT YACHT ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

# How to get the Best Technology on Board

For the owners of 2020, getting the latest and greatest technology on board is key. Here we hear from the experts who make it happen BY GEORGIA TINDALE

**W**hen thinking about a new-build superyacht project, the consideration of AV/IT systems might not be the first thing that comes to mind. Indeed, for those of us not in the know, the day-to-day technology responsible for ensuring things run smoothly only ever impinges into our thoughts when it goes wrong. Nothing can spell the end of a relaxing holiday faster than Netflix packing up or all the lights going off.

Logistically, however, there is more to this than meets the eye. With the rise of technology management companies – or technology consultancy companies as they sometimes prefer to be called – in recent years, the



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process of developing the specifications for the AV/IT systems on board superyachts has become increasingly professionalised.

Working closely with the owner, there are several key factors for success for companies working in this field. The most important of these is keeping abreast of the latest technological developments to compensate for the inevitable changes which will occur between the time the specifications are created and the actual delivery of a project. Steve Puckering, CEO of Smart Technology Advisers, explains: "In a simple one-word answer, 'capacity' is how you allow for changes at the lowest possible cost. In a four-year build, we design a system with as much capacity planning as possible. At key stages we loop back and check again. A good recent example was the marked shift from multimode fiber optic to single-mode fiber optic cables. This was a simple change which caused no disruption to the build program, but was a huge benefit to the project itself as single-mode fiber offers much faster data transfer."

Once these specifications are completed, it's over to the system integrators to find the most suitable technologies to transform them into reality. No mean feat – as Maurizio Minossi, CEO of Italian company Videoworks explains: "Yacht owners are really demanding customers and they always ask for the latest technology. The installation has to be done in a way to ensure that maintenance and services are easy and non-invasive. A good system integrator has to combine the best technology with ease of use." Plus, there's also the service aspect to factor in: the dreaded white screen or 'spinning wheel of death' can be dealt with thanks to Videoworks' dedicated department which provides round-the-clock support for yachts.



And what does the AV/IT look like on today's superyachts? Surprisingly, it is less about anything too space-age and more about replicating the experience which owners would expect from their own homes. As Rex Barrett, Projects Director at Ideaworks explains, it can be something as quotidian as the speed of the internet on board. "Higher speed/lower cost internet will have a significant impact as this will allow owners' onboard experience to become closer to what they have at home, with access to a virtually unlimited supply of content."

Indeed, thanks to upcoming developments in low-medium-earth-orbit communications systems (LEO/MEO), data streaming and software-as-a-service (SaaS) options such as Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps, Amazon Web Services and Slack will become ever-more accessible, allowing owners to operate from their

yachts as 'business as usual.'

It would, however, be remiss to exclude some of most exciting tech developments in the pipeline for superyacht AV/IT which would have seemed straight out of a science fiction novel only a few years ago. Whether it's voice recognition or virtual/augmented reality, these technologies are already being requested by owners, Minossi tells us, as they're already accessible to everyone on smartphones and games consoles. "We are currently developing a voice recognition system to install on an 120-metre superyacht which we will deliver in three years," he reveals. "Also a special software for light engineering renderings that allows the client to use a VR visor and haptic gloves to explore the cabins/saloons of the vessel. They can experience the effects of the different light scenarios and control them using a virtual tablet."

Of course, the development of some of these technologies is still ongoing, as Jeroen van den Hurk, CEO of VBH, highlights: "Voice control has massive potential but it will take some years to become really intelligent so that it can interact the way humans expect and it is also still greatly dependent on the IT system present on the yacht. In the future, we will see a greater integration of technologies on board and IT will become ever more important."

For Will Faimatea, Founder & Director of Bond Technology Management, the future of AV/IT on board superyachts will include "more cloud-based services, thinner and higher-resolution video walls, higher levels of integration of these video walls with the design and form of the yacht and neural interfaces for control of systems." And, as Faimatea sees it, these changes are very much on the horizon: "This is just over three generations of new-builds away – so it's really not that far off!"

Finally, although it is easy to get swept up in the excitement of new developments, for many owners, getting the best technology onto their yachts is less about trying out the latest wacky toys and more about ensuring a smooth onboard experience so that their time on their yachts can be as enjoyable and relaxing as possible. As Faimatea highlights: "Some owners we are working with are very interested in trying out new technologies, but others want it proven and simple. This nuance is managed in an open conversation and not with a broad brush approach."

So, how do you get the best technology on board a superyacht? Ideaworks' Rex Barrett has a simple solution: "We start by listening." ♦

