

Talking the talk

The word 'expert' has often been ridiculed in our industry and the definition of 'expert' itself demands scrutiny. I would never claim I'm an 'expert' at anything, as there is always more to learn or understand in the world. To be an expert means – in my book – to know what you're talking about in a way that commands respect and reverence from your peers.

In yachting, the word 'expert' is routinely overused on websites, in brochures, and even on business cards. If we all take a trip to Realityville and admit that no one is really an 'expert' and all stand up and say, 'I am not sure' or 'Let's discuss this and work out how to solve the problem', then the shipyard may actually be a more harmonious place in which to operate. A common complaint of senior management

It's not uncommon to hear of a build representative turning up at a yard and making a dictatorial name for themselves, only for the yard to find out that this is their first new build. Perhaps even more scarily, it might transpire that it is their first project management experience. Who bestows this right and responsibility on their shoulders? Yes, it is perhaps the owner or his advisors, or it may be the master of the previous yacht, who sees it as a route to bigger and better things, or at least keeping his job for the next three years. The fact is, however, a need exists to openly discuss a better way of managing a project.

In my opinion, a yard should try to prevent an owner assigning a project manager with limited or no experience, and perform their own due diligence on the so-called 'build

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within the yards today is that too many 'experts' are employed to advise or control a project on behalf of the owner without any real proof of how in-depth their knowledge in fact is, or how much experience they truly have.

For an owner to commission a 60m-plus full displacement steel hulled new build and then assign the role of project manager or build representative to a yacht captain who had run his previous toy, the 35m GRP fast-planing yacht, is astounding. To provide a level of power and decision making that affords the build captain full rights to reject or sign off all key aspects of the process and progress is somewhere short of madness.

expert' and 'advisor to the buyer' by asking for references. The owner is obviously 'king' in most of these cases, and as we have often seen in the industry, it is hard to say 'no' to him, opting instead to take his demands on the chin.

The fundamental truth is that no shipyard wants to build a yacht, drawing from all of their skills and expertise in-house, under the patronage of some new kid on the building block who rejects or questions whether they should accept the pipework, wiring or coating systems just to make themselves feel like they are playing a quality-control role. Yes, if they know what they are talking about, then arguably, they have a right to >>

'Experts' rule in the shipyard, but can any one person really be qualified to call the shots on what is a very intricate process in the build yard? It might be time to consider an entirely new role – that of an 'owner's new build team leader' who has the responsibility of ensuring that the right questions from the yard are directed to the right advisor in the team.