

question the build at key stages to ensure that they push for the quality that was contracted. However, it is questionable whether yards are happy to accept that the yacht captain or build representative is qualified to judge their weld or workmanship.

It's not just quality control that comes into question here; there is also the pertinent issue of transparent communication. These 'experts' are put in place to ensure that the end result is exactly what the owner contracted, and that it meets all of his specified needs, and there is a lesson to be learnt in communication and diplomacy if a problem arises or a decision needs to be signed off on by the principal.

Protecting an owner is one thing, but hiding decisions and stalling processes is a problem that yards are often faced with, and with varying consequences. If the so-called 'expert' is tasked with delivering answers to the yard's sticking points on a new build, then answers he should provide. Ideally, the answers should come from the end user and not what the owner's representative thinks he might get away with.

In this yard focused issue, I have a suggestion for all of those experts in the market who are either in the yards working on new builds now, or may be planning to sign a new build in the future, with you being tasked with the virgin territory of managing the build, ask yourself, are you an expert in all aspects of a new build? If the answer is 'yes', I would suggest you ask the yard you're working in if they agree, or ask yourself again and consider the answer more candidly, as there is so much detail to a new build and so many decisions and issues that need addressing that it should be impossible for one person to be a new build expert.

A new build should revolve around a team of multi-faceted disciplines with a variety of people offering their

expertise at various stages. It would be nice to see a new title entering the market: 'owner's new build team leader'. This person would operate on behalf of the owner, with the sole responsibility of ensuring that the right questions from the yard are directed to the right advisor in the team, and if a response is needed from the principal, then the team leader should get all of the facts straight and ask the owner for a decision.

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The process of employing a team for a new build beyond the yard's team may appear to be a more expensive exercise, but if the two teams sit together at the start of a project and decide how they are going to work together and then explore ways of signing off, mediating and getting decisions made, then with timing and planning, the owner will enter litigation less and may be even lucky enough to get what he/she asked for.

There are too many multi-disciplined 'experts' in the market today who claim they can act as the eyes and ears of the owner on site for the new build. If I were an owner about to invest £50 million or £100 million in a new build, I would ensure that I had a team of people that all had their specific expertise, and that they all worked together to explore better ways of doing things and ensure that the yard respects their knowledge and connects them with their in-house experts to see if they agree on how best to build the yacht.

During the process, a lawyer should take care of the contract, the banker should look after the finance, the

naval architect should make sure that the vessel floats, the broker should manage the buying and selling, the builder should build and the owner's representative should represent the owner so that ultimately, he enjoys the process of building. All of these stages are in place to ensure that when the yacht is ready to leave there are no unpleasant surprises that need litigating, and none of the headaches that usually follow such surprises.

The project should be managed by a team comprising individuals with specific and polished expertise, not solely by one person who has been anointed as an 'expert'. That's just my opinion - for what it's worth. ■