



Lessons from the boat

Strategy and teamwork are critical to success

John Burnham

Sailboat racing is extraordinary. Successful sailors observe, process and prioritize more outcome-impacting variables than participants in any other sport. Their teamwork is a vital requirement to success on a slippery platform that rolls, pitches, heaves, yaws, surges and sways. Equally important is each crew member's ability to concentrate on his or her job and maintain a sense of humor despite rope burns, bruises and the occasional

period of flat calm.

Think about your business and team as a boat and crew, and you can understand why sailboat racing is a natural place to find lessons in collaborative leadership.

You don't have to take my word for it. When I asked Kevin Hutchinson, founder and CEO of MyTaskit, how he sets a confident strategy and balances it against the need to adjust to new conditions, he drew on lessons from his sailing days.

"What I learned in sailing Hobie 33s was number one, about teamwork, and number two, establishing a strategy before the race," he said. "We had to look at the variables and know when to tack by watching the shifting winds, the depth of the water, and by looking at the competition to see what they were doing. The lesson I take to business is to communicate where we are going and set a confident course with your team early, explain that we're going down this route and that along the way, we may elect to shift, based on what we learn."

Successful sailors always visualize the 10,000-foot view of where they are trying to sail — and then check that their water-level understanding of conditions and competitor performance is in sync with the big picture. I decided to ask some other marine business leaders how they view this challenge of establishing a firm plan while staying flexible enough to change course as needed.

Not only do we look at how do we replace the revenue, but also what led us to this moment. We rely on data and then try to think-tank a solution. It's more educational to do it that way because sometimes you start filling in information that you weren't thinking about. You may end up making a better go-forward decision, seeing how to build better relationships with other customers at the same time."

Notice the common threads: an established plan with goals, and constant learning once underway.

Only when we commit to a plan do we learn. In sailing, if we decide to tack to the west after the start for an expected shift, then sail into bigger waves than expected, we may decide that going east will be better on the second lap. In the meantime, we may observe a competitor using a different technique in the waves — and going faster. We're not winning the race yet, but we can learn and make

The best leaders are those who remain calm, realistic and encouraging when things aren't going so well. They also avoid becoming overconfident when leading the fleet.

Thom Dammich, president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association, said similar thinking defines how he establishes a firm, but flexible plan.

"Start with the end in mind and stay focused on the long term," he said. "It's easy to adjust course based on learnings if you know where it is you want to end up. ... In an association with a member board, we can wander, and that's OK — sometimes people need to wander to learn — as long as we stay focused on where we want to end up. There's never a straight line from point A to point B."

David Wollard, senior director of the leisure division at Webasto Thermo & Comfort North America, said his leadership team looks at targets and results weekly, monthly and quarterly.

"At the quarterly reviews, we may ask, 'Are we really going in the direction we thought?'" he said. "We'll challenge our assumptions and may make adjustments as needed."

"I look at these situations as a live environment that is rapidly changing," he continued. "Yesterday, we had a situation that radically changed how we went to market with one of our customers. What do we do?

a small but critical speed gain that helps us every time we sail in waves going forward.

Frank Peterson, president of the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation, described what his team learned when it committed to building a Spanish-language website to encourage Hispanic participation in fishing (vamosapescar.org). At first, the team worked with an agency to build the site and create content.

"People started communicating with us in Spanish," he said, "so we hired people who could speak with them."

See Management Perspective, Page 52

John Burnham is a leadership coach, independent writer and editor. He is former editor of Sailing World, Cruising World, boats.com, YachtWorld and Boat Trader. As a competitive sailor, he has led teams to world and national titles in the International One-Design, Shields and other classes — most recently winning the 2016 Shields Nationals. Email him at john@johnsburnham.com

Your One-Stop Shop For Marine Drive System Needs

SALES AND SERVICE
AQUAMET
BOAT SHAFTING

Premachined for Fast Service

C.N.C. Machined Propeller Shafts,
Custom Machined Shaft Couplings,
Strut Bearings, Struts, Rudders
Michigan Wheel Propellers



World's largest stocking
Aquamet Distributor

Worldwide Exporter

MARINE MACHINING & MFG.

Machinists and Straightening Specialists

33475 Giftos • Clinton Township, MI 48035 • Phone: 586-791-8800
www.aquamet.com • www.marinemachining.com

**VOLVO
PENTA®**

MARINE ENGINES

Certified Gasoline Propulsion Partner

Engine Sales • Parts & Accessories • Service

In Stock Inventory • Same Day Shipping

Call Our Knowledgeable Staff



*Serving
The Marine Industry
Worldwide*

480 Reina Road • Oceanside, NY 11572
Phone: (516) 764-3300 • Fax: (516) 764-3550
www.aimpowercenter.com

Marketing Insight

While it is unknown how many advertising dollars are going into boating podcasts, it does appear that advertisers have discovered the value of podcasts of late as ad revenue has skyrocketed from \$69 million in 2015 to a projected \$220 million in 2017. That may be a drop in the proverbial bucket as far as the advertising industry is concerned, but the trend is, as they say, on a decidedly upward slope.

O'Hara launched his first podcast in November 2016 and now has a roster of 24 episodes that are generally 30 minutes in length. Each episode features an in-depth conversation with a boating expert or industry leader and covers things like boating tips, tricks, and essential gear. He hopes that his listeners will find these conversations enjoyable and informational and be inspired to get on the water, stay on the water and bring other people to the water.

Some of his more popular podcasts have titles like: "From Training Special For-

es "to "Training the Next Generation of Marine Technicians," "Work Hard, Play Hard," "Designing a Boating Lifestyle," "Our Big Adventure, Living Aboard," and a five-part episode entitled "Learning from the Pros."

O'Hara's also used his podcasts to tap into an array of well-known industry experts including David Karpinski of Taylor Made Products, Diane Seltzer of SureShade, Reagan Haynes of Soundings Trade Only, Scott Croft of BoatU.S., Kristin Frohnhoefer of Sea Two and Betty Bauman of Ladies Let's Go Fishing.

These individuals not only bring solid content, they come with a larger platform to promote their podcasts to their respective audiences. O'Hara is also a strong believer in using social media including Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter and Instagram to grow the reach of his podcast audience.

It also goes without saying that

O'Hara's Freedom Boat Club colleagues including President John Giglio, Wanda Kenton Smith and Lisa Almeida have gotten ample airtime in support of O'Hara's burgeoning career and pet marketing project.

While you are on the "Anchors Aweigh" iTunes podcast site make sure to check out the links to a number of other boating podcasts worth exploring including "World of Boating," "Boat Radio," "Pod-Castaway," "It's My Boat" and the granddaddy of marine podcasts, the groundbreaking but dearly-departed, "Mad Mariner," whose first episode aired way back in December 2008.

In short, if you want to create a community to attract more customers in this brave new world where tribal loyalties are so pronounced, but you only have a modest marketing budget, then creating your own podcast or allocating some of your ad dollars to this medium may well be worth it. ■

Management Perspective

In the process, he realized that hiring an agency was not enough to understand the customer. The RBFF also needed in-house experts, which it added. Peterson added: "We realized hiring an agency alone was not sufficient to understand the customer. We needed in-house expertise to expand upon the agency work and develop insights into the customer so we could better execute our creative campaign to engage the audience."

"It's working," Peterson said, "and participation numbers are going in the right direction." During the past four years, Hispanic fishing participation is up 11 percent, he said, to 3.8 million.

There are hundreds of ways to reach a goal a little faster, but while we focus on trimming the sail an inch or improving a process to save a few cents, sometimes we forget to look outside of the boat to track the competition or notice the better winds they have on the course they've picked. When we look, we remember to check the view from 10,000 feet, too, and we realize we should tack toward the favorable conditions.

Chris Baird, managing director of Fusion Entertainment, told me that he focuses on two things in this circumstance.

"When something big happens, whatever the shift — a competitor coming in, the marketplace is down — you need to work with great urgency with staff and customers," he said. "You need to make quick decisions, but also be prepared to make changes. That's not easy for some people. Lots of CEOs stick to a decision stubbornly."

Hutchinson, with MyTaskit, put it this way: "When the captain on a sailboat calls for a tack, you go. It's the same here. We call it a pivot. We launched our work coordination software as The Boat Village initially — a system in which customers could assign work to service providers. As we got into the market, service people said, 'We love it, but we want to coordinate more effectively between supervisors, techs and subcontractors first.' So even before coordinating with customers, we pivoted and began rolling out tech and subcontractor coordination aggressively, and our growth has gone way up since making that pivot."

As MyTaskit moves toward its original goal of serving boat-owning customers, he is confident the platform will be riding a strong, favorable breeze.

Matt Gruhn, president of the Marine Retailers Association of America, described one other key aspect of leadership that applies to industry and sailboat captains alike.

"We've had ups and downs with programs," he said. "We've grown them, then they slowed down, and we realized we had to make changes — then boom, they took off again. Emotionally, I have to lead by example. If my emotions go high and low, we're in trouble."

From a racing skipper's perspective, my view matches Gruhn's. The best leaders are those who remain calm, realistic and encouraging when things aren't going so well. They also avoid becoming overconfident when leading the fleet. They remain focused, leading by example and demanding good execution by the team, all the while keeping an eye on the 10,000-foot view. ■



MATERIALS FOR NOISE & VIBRATION CONTROL A Worldwide Leader In Noise Control Engineering Ready To Assist You With Your Next Project

Barrier Foam Composites Acoustical Carpet Pads Custom Insulation Kits
Vibration Damping Materials Sylomer Isolation Foams Engineering Services
Custom Exhaust Silencers Engine Isolation Mounts Flexible Shaft Couplings

Soundown Corporation

16 Broadway Salem, MA 01970 USA

Phone: 800-359-1036 • 978-745-7000 • Fax: 978-745-0900

www.soundown.com email: sales@soundown.com

List your Events in our Calendar Available in Print and Online

Trade Only welcomes event notices.

Entries must be received by the 15th of the month,
two months prior to the event.

Mail to: Calendar,

Trade Only, 10 Bokum Road, Essex, CT 06426

Fax to: Calendar, 860-767-0642

E-mail: editorial@tradeonlytoday.com

Subject: Calendar Item

The events are also listed at no charge on the Internet:
www.tradeonlytoday.com

Be sure to include: event name, date, location, sponsor, contact name and telephone number, and Web site URL if applicable.



2013 90' New World Yacht Builders CAT C18 600hp
Saltwater damage. - WA



2016 34' Jupiter HFS 2-Seven Marine 557s.
Saltwater damage. - FL



2017 33' Monterey 335SY Volvo CE-G EVC's 300hp
Minor Fiberglass damage. - NY



2004 46' Cigarette 46XP Ryder w/trailer Triple Mercury's 650hp.
Saltwater damage. - FL



The Complete Salvage Management Company



2005 32' Intrepid 32CC Yamaha 300's
Saltwater damage. - FL



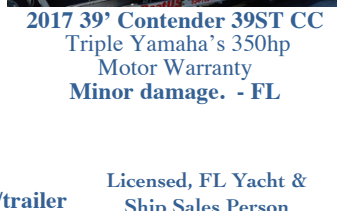
2016 50' Prestige 500 Volvos 435hp.
Saltwater damage. -PR



2016 27' Boston Whaler Verado XLVW's 300hp
Saltwater damage. - FL



2017 39' Contender 39ST CC Triple Yamaha's 350hp
Motor Warranty
Minor damage. - FL



2007 28' Boston Whaler Conquest Twin 2016 Yamaha's 300hp
Warranty/Runs/100 hours.
New electronics.
No damage. -RI



2012 72' Princess Yacht CAT C32s 1625hp.
Smoke damage. -FL



2015 24' Intrepid 245 Yamaha 250s 200hp
Minor saltwater damage. - FL



Licensed, FL Yacht & Ship Sales Person