

Do engineers like messing about in boats?

Most boat owners will admit that they have to do a lot of work to keep their yachts, narrow boats, motor cruisers or ski boats safe and water-worthy. Many go so far as to argue that the constant maintenance is part of the charm of ownership. However, while all boat owners – from the ardent hobbyist to rarefied superyacht owner and their fleet of engineers – agree that no expense must be spared, they also expect enthusiastic and efficient support from their suppliers. For many, WDS Component Parts Ltd. is the supplier of choice for their engineering components.

In the UK there are around 1.2 million boats and leisure craft in private ownership; nearly all Scandinavians seem to like to spend their holidays on or near water; while the Dutch are never far from a canal or other water way. Around Europe's warmer regions sailing and river cruising are increasingly popular. Looking to the other side of the Atlantic, 86 million Americans participate in some form of recreational boating.

All of these boat lovers - amateur or professional - need a reliable source for engineering components as they build, maintain and adapt their crafts.

John Marshall, a customer support specialist at WDS, says: "We get many enquiries from boat owners, marinas and chandlers. Naturally there is a bit of a 'new season rush' in the spring, as people get their crafts ready for the longer warmer days. However, there is also steady demand throughout the year, some of which will be for repair work and some for general ongoing maintenance."

Boatbuilders are likely to order a wide range of WDS products from fastenings, hinges and handles used in cabin fittings; nuts, screws and springs for the engine compartment; mounts and vibration dampers for the transmission; and pins, catches, latches and gas struts to hold everything safely and securely in rough water.

When specifying components for use on boats and ships WDS generally promotes the use of stainless steel parts, 303 or 304 grade for rivers and lakes, 316 for saltwater application, or, where appropriate, engineering polymers, aluminium or brass.

Service and delivery

However, the vast array of products is only part of the reason yacht and boat customers regularly turn to WDS. Yachtsmen are often 'jacks of all trades' and able to turn their hand to virtually any repair or maintenance project throughout the vessel. While they have commendable willingness to take on any job, they will not be expert at everything, so often help and guidance is needed.

The WDS website has been designed to be the first line of assistance for anyone who needs support in finding the perfect component. Each product page is clearly laid out with sizes, styles material choices etc. Key dimensions are given, 2D and 3D CAD drawings are free to download and there are notes and tips on how to help with selection and installation.

"Increasingly, we also have little videos showing how to fit the parts and how to make sure you get the most out them," says John. "These are proving very popular especially for people like boat owners who have to master so many jobs.

"And, if more assistance is needed, WDS technicians and engineers are freely available on the helpline.

"The boating community particularly appreciates the speed and reliability of WDS's delivery, as their orders are generally time-critical. Most orders are dispatched on the day the order is placed and arrive at their destination by next morning.

"Yachtsmen tend to want delivery to a coastal harbour, and we generally have good links with the local chandlers and boat yards, so that is straightforward. Similarly with the inland water ways, we have made a point of setting up good communication links with the marinas and businesses that support the boat owners and operators.

Superyachts are a special case

WDS has a proud history of supplying to some of the most luxurious superyachts afloat, generally for repair and maintenance jobs rather than for the initial building. Whether owner-operated or chartered, superyacht clientele do not expect to be bothered by little things like the inevitable wear and tear of parts at sea, so the crew make every effort to keep on top of maintenance and repairs. When they need a part they know they can rely on WDS to have it delivered to the next port of call, no matter where they are.

John explains: "Superyachts tend to inhabit warm waters, the Mediterranean, Caribbean and the tropical areas of the Pacific and they also tend towards the grander ports, such as Monaco, St Tropez and Honolulu. We have made a point of establishing good communications links with these destinations.

"After all we may only be sending two items worth a tenner each, but they will be vital for the smooth running of a multi-million pound superyacht and thus ensuring their passengers enjoy the luxury they are paying for!"

Image 1: Boatbuilders are likely to order a wide range of WDS products.

About WDS

WDS are the UK's leading manufacturer of standard parts for use in machine build components, standard parts, jigs & fixtures, and consumer products. The range of products available from WDS grows daily and so has the methods available to designers and engineers for identifying, specifying and purchasing any of the 20,000+ parts currently held in stock. For example, WDS has made ordering workholding solutions cheaper and quicker by removing small order surcharges.

The WDS range covers five main divisions, Standard Parts, Machine Accessories, Spencer Franklin Hydraulic Workholding, Broaching and General & Modular Workholding.

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