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Peters & May Case Study: Paul Elsom, P&M's Global Technical Director, talks about his role within the company and describes the challenges and rewards inherent in the field of maritime logistics

Paul Elsom recently marked the anniversary of 14 successful and rewarding years with Peters & May. Given his pivotal role as the firm's Global Technical Director, his desk essentially represents the intersection where tech teams, loadmasters and sales teams coordinate.

In his current capacity, Paul oversees P&M's technical department and a five-strong yard technical support team. This gives him ultimate responsibility for monitoring the design, manufacture and maintenance of lifting and cradling equipment and moving the assets to Peters & May's ports and global warehouses.

Tasked with helming P&M's BLS (Bespoke Load Solutions) initiative alongside Commercial Sales Manager Robert Blades, Paul supports the sales team in drawing up the most appropriate and cost-effective loading, lifting and cradling plans for each customer. This encompasses everything from devising stow plans to arranging loading and discharge times.

On top of this, Paul supervises the preparation of transport manuals and portfolios, supports the P&M legal team in the handling of insurance claims and oversees the company's health & safety policies. "There's a diversity of challenges to be faced daily," Paul comments, adding wryly: "It's very satisfying to resolve operational problems under the pressure of 'last-minute.com'!"

Plentiful experience

Having started with P&M as a loadmaster, Paul has plentiful experience he can draw upon of travelling around the world to manage numerous vessel loadings. Before joining the company, he spent 23 years in maritime logistics with the military, so his credentials are as impeccable as his stock of recollections is well replenished.

"Every boat lift is memorable in its own way," he reflects, "and if there are challenges to be dealt with, the lessons you learn by overcoming them are of course invaluable for optimizing future operations. To cite an example, I had to manage the single-point lift of a 40m Sunseeker off a vessel in Guangdong, China after it had been loaded with different-sized lifting rigs in tandem. Constructing a workable lifting rig with restricted assets while faced with the language barriers could have been daunting, but by working together with ingenuity, professionalism, goodwill and determination we were able to carry out the lift successfully.

"As another example, I also oversaw the shipment of 24 fishing boats over four sailings to Maputo in Mozambique from France and Romania," Paul continues. "That was a large, involved and intricate project, but again very

worthwhile, and it went off smoothly. I attended all the loadings and several of the discharge operations.”

Dig deep

With such a thorough grounding in maritime logistics, Paul is well placed to advise potential customers on what to look for when selecting a company to take care of transporting their precious vessels. “Pricing and timing are obviously key factors,” he observes, “but it can’t be stressed enough that people need to dig deep in comparing quotes and shipping methods. It’s vital to ascertain, for example, if the quotes they’re receiving are for an all-inclusive service or whether other charges are going to be added on top.”

Paul also advocates researching and comparing each company’s infrastructure to determine other decisive factors. “For obvious reasons in the realm of international yacht transportation, it pays to assess whether or not a global network of offices and agents is in place. Reputation is also a telling indicator of the quality of service you can expect. Check to see if the company has regular clients and verify how long the firm has been operating.

“We’re speaking from a position of strength in Peters & May,” Paul continues, “but nevertheless, it’s worth reiterating that in addition to the must-haves I outlined earlier, we also possess our own certified cradling and lifting equipment, our own specialised technical department and a team of comprehensively-trained loadmasters.”

Well informed

Paul is keen to emphasise P&M’s pledge to keep its customers well informed during every step of the transportation process – an operation which begins with clients supplying the firm with pictures and drawings of the yacht/s they wish to transport, as well as confirming the precise weight and dimensions of each vessel. This allows P&M to select the optimum cradling option and lifting method.

“Customers need to ensure that the measurements they pass on to us include any parts of their yacht which protrude,” he cautions, “such as davits, aerials, radar arches, pulpits and so on. Yachts are stowed very tightly on cargo ships,

so even a mere 10cm deviation in the declared length may create challenges on the day of loading. In the worst-case scenario, this could result in additional charges or shipping delays.”

Paul explains that your yacht should be prepared for transportation as if you were heading out to sea. “Basically, make her as light and as secure as possible,” he says. P&M will, as a matter of course, include detailed boat preparation instructions with its booking paperwork for customers to follow. “This is all part of the detailed lifting plan which we present to each client,” Paul says. “We know that many customers get a little nervous when they think about loading day, but our sales teams are more than happy to answer questions or explain any and all aspects of the lifting and shipping procedure in advance.”

Paul adds that the advance briefing will include advice on the correct safety gear to wear on the loading day itself, while the attending loadmaster will be on hand to guide customers through the process once they arrive alongside the cargo vessel. “Our highly-experienced loadmasters are intently focused on their job,” Paul concludes. “They will ensure that each customer’s yacht is loaded safely and securely, so they can simply look forward to receiving her at her new home.”

Attention to detail

“With every justification, we’re very proud of our technical set-up,” adds Simon Judson, Peters & May CEO. “The attention to detail we devote to every project, all the way from the planning stages to the actual load and discharge operations, in addition to the consistent professionalism and vigilance shown by our loadmasters... these are qualities which set us apart from our competition.

“It’s an invaluable asset to have Paul Elsom heading up that sector of our business. His extensive experience in maritime logistics combines with his enthusiasm, his personable nature and his drive to maintain the highest standards of service to make him the perfect man for the job.”

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Peters & May has over forty years' experience delivering world-class international logistics services. It specialises in the global shipping of commercial and private vessels, as well as offering transport solutions for a wide range of cargo by air, land, and sea. <https://www.petersandmay.com/en/>

Bluestone Group is a leading technical services company specialising in Marine, Offshore Renewables, and New Building Supervision. With a mission to solve marine challenges, Bluestone Group offers turnkey solutions, global presence, and third-party independence to ship owners and stakeholders worldwide.

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