

The shipping forecast

Shipbuilders are looking ever further afield for new business opportunities in the defence and security field. Bo Axelsson, president of **Swede Ship Marine**, explains how establishing partnerships in new markets can offer customers the best combination of expertise and local knowledge.

Although Swede Ship Marine has only existed since the 1990s, it has a history stretching back more than 100 years. Its president, Bo Axelsson, discusses the company's past, current projects and what the future holds for shipbuilders in an increasingly globalised industry.

Can you tell us a bit about Swede Ship Marine and your involvement in the defence industry?

Bo Axelsson: Swede Ship Marine is a privately owned shipbuilding group consisting of three affiliated shipyards across the west coast of Sweden: Djupvik Shipyard, Swede Ship Composite and Swede Ship Yachtservice. Each of these shipyards specialises in a different area of the shipbuilding market, which gives us a wide scope of industry operations.

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Although the history of the Djupvik Shipyard dates back to 1894, the Swede Ship Marine Group wasn't founded until the 1990s. This was a result of the buyout of three yards by the current owners of Swede Ship Marine from Swede Ship, a major shipyard that was undergoing financial difficulties. One of these yards was sold off in 2005 when the company bought the smaller service and repair yard Swede Ship Yachtservice. This facility, together with the other two yards, forms the Swede Ship Marine Group as it stands today.

Can you discuss in more detail the specialist functions of each shipyard?

The Djupvik yard is focused on aluminium and steel production, while Swede Ship Composite builds vessels from composite materials. Swede Ship Yachtservice provides vessel repair and service solutions, with a particular focus on engine maintenance. Today, we build vessels ranging from 10-30m, although we have the capacity to build vessels up to 50m and have done so in the past.

We employ approximately 75 highly skilled permanent personnel, and are able to bring in up to 25 additional contractors if necessary.

What is the nature of your customer base? What do they demand of you?

Djupvik Shipyard has been producing vessels for coastguard and naval customers since 1937, and this remains our core market. Our major customers include the Swedish Sea Rescue Society, the Norwegian Sea Rescue Society, the Swedish Navy and the United Arab Emirates Navy.

Vessels produced for this market include fast patrol boats, sea rescue vessels and trooper carriers. Specifications vary from 90t offshore rescue vessels with huge towage capabilities to smaller boats capable of reaching speeds in excess of 40kt. We are very strongly placed in this market and are capable of producing vessels that can perform in often challenging environments, such as on the rough seas and long coastline of Norway.

One of the advantages of being a relatively small yard is that we can be very flexible in terms of meeting customer expectations and individual specifications. Customisation plays a large part in what we do because different customers have diverse requirements. We don't produce any vessels that haven't been certified by ourselves, which means that vessel quality is consistently high and every boat is built using our in-house experience.

Are there any projects that you think will be of particular interest to our readers?

Swede Ship has a long tradition in building different types of patrol boats and troop carriers for navies and coastguards. Among these are 24m transport boat *Ghannatha*, 16m combat boat *90H*, a 22m patrol boat and a 45ft high-speed patrol craft. We have also delivered a 24m ship for the Norwegian Sea Rescue Society. This state-of-the-art vessel, which boasts new machinery and an upgraded design, is the biggest vessel in their fleet.

There is a high-profile project under way at the moment with the United Arab Emirates Navy, which is very complex in terms of the amount of equipment that has to be incorporated. Stage one of the programme was the construction of three vessels, the first of which was a 26.5m patrol boat delivered earlier this year. The second stage is for another nine vessels, which will be built in Abu Dhabi.

In the second step, Swede Ship will provide material kits containing everything required to build the vessel and send them to the local shipyard to undergo construction. We see a lot of potential in this. We undertake all the necessary engineering and design work, package it and send it to the yard. This lets us broaden our business, but also allows the

shipyard to benefit from our expertise and offer their clients a domestic service.

What can Swede Ship Marine offer in the way of repair services?

This is a substantial aspect of our business; we offer extensive service and repair provisions. Our clients in this area range from a vessel owner with a single boat to major providers of large vessels. Djupvik Shipyard has a long tradition in ship repairs and conversions of vessels up to 40m in length. It can handle plate works and welding, machinery and ship systems work, electrical installations and many other tasks.

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Swede Ship Yachtservice has a close relationship with a number of ship owners and organisations such as the Swedish Navy and the Swedish Maritime Administration.

We carry out all kinds of repairs and overhauls, and also offer a mobile service for the ferries of the Swedish Road Administration and the Telia/Relacom emergency power units.

Looking ahead, do you see any trends that Swede Ship Marine will look to take advantage of?

Despite competition being fierce, there are certainly companies out there that don’t have the capabilities we do. This is particularly true when it comes to building vessels that meet international shipping regulations.

I would like to examine the opportunity of building more partnerships like the one we have with Abu Dhabi. I believe that in order to operate on a global scale, you need to build a strong local presence either through a partnership or a facility. We have a strong portfolio with a number of newly designed ships in a range of sizes, capabilities and types and I think it will benefit us greatly going forward. ■

Further information

Swede Ship Marine
www.swedeship.se



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