

LAST PIECE IN THE GLOBAL BRAND

Following the arrival of chief executive Denis Welch Drydocks World - Southeast Asia has taken its well earned place in the Drydocks World pantheon

DRYDOCKS WORLD - SOUTHEAST Asia's chief executive Denis Welch would have had a hell of a task on his hands running the four shipyards and a fleet of coastal barges, under any circumstances. But when he took over at the company, three of the yards (based on Indonesia's Batam island, a stone's throw from Singapore) had only recently been acquired from competing companies Labroy and Pan United Marine.

DDW-SEA employs 6,000 direct workers and 27,000 sub-contractors including staff at the Singapore yard. Apart from taking a hands-on role in keeping the archipelago of shipyards fully employed in the face of a shortly-to-arrive financial tsunami, Mr Welch was charged with replacing a spirit of competition and suspicion with a sense of a common purpose. With that achieved, the Southeast Asian part of the Drydocks World jigsaw now fits neatly into the group's global brand.

Although some senior members of staff belonging to Labroy and Pan United Marine decided to move on after the merger, Mr Welch says nobody was asked to leave, which reduced the chances of lingering resentment.

Investing in people's needs

Initially, there was some resistance to the incoming methodology of DDW-SEA, which was largely apparent to the workforce through major investments in training, occupational health and safety, and quality management systems.

"All of this takes time but by stepping up our communications internally and externally we have been getting the message across with some considerable success," says Mr Welch.

Just as the four yards are spread over a wide area, so too is the range of products constructed, as is witnessed by vessels and plant currently under production at the three in Batam. Graha shipyard is in the throes of completing four CJ46 Jack-Up drilling rigs for UMW Standard Drilling and Saipem.

Down the road at Nanindah, work continues a run of offshore supply vessels, a jack-up barge and a livestock carrier, while third yard Pertama builds two of the world's largest offshore construction vessels.

In addition the yards are capable of building cement carriers and offer a range of shiprepair and conversion services.

Project management

In order to increase efficiency at all the yards under DDW-SEA,



Getting the corporate message across

Mr Welch has introduced project managers under each of the capabilities of shipbuilding/shiprepair and conversion. And while there may be room for expansion on Batam (although this option has been put on ice for now) In crowded Singapore Mr Welch has managed to squeeze out yet more efficiencies at its only facility with the purchase of a new factory linked by road-bridge to the yard. The new factory now houses non-essential facilities freeing up vital space for production

At the risk of overusing the phrase wide-ranging, this also applies to what Mr Welch calls the net he has had to cast in order to bring in new orders during a period of austerity in the shipping sector.

Surviving the storm

"What we have witnessed since the third quarter of 2008 was never an example of the usual boom-bust cycle," he says. "Rather it was an external event that none of us could predict. Fortunately, we were protected by having a strong position in the offshore sector."

Mr Welch concedes that while repeat business is the best business, "we need always to be on the hunt for new opportunities." Just days before this interview Mr Welch had been on the road for weeks flying between Europe and Mexico as he endeavoured to tie up new deals. "We continue to get many enquiries for newbuildings but one result of the economic crisis has been that it takes a lot longer to get the pen to paper," he says.

Still, Mr Welch expects the orders to continue to flow. "We have widened our product range and we have a good story to tell," he says. ❁