



► STOCKHOLM: Ericsson's headquarters.

Photo: ERICSSON

LINK-UP WITH ERICSSON TARGETS DATA SHARING

Maritime satellite communications group Inmarsat is teaming up with telecoms service supplier Ericsson to facilitate the sharing of cargo, logistics and vessel operational data. The two companies will jointly develop services and applications for satellite connectivity and application integration in the maritime industry.

As a first step, Ericsson has signed a distribution contract for XpressLink, Inmarsat's combined L-band and Ku-band VSAT network that will be upgradable to the FleetXpress service when it becomes available early next year. FleetXpress will provide a global network with much greater broadband connectivity (*see facing page*).

The partnership will also pave the way for the delivery of Ericsson's Maritime ICT Cloud over Inmarsat's satellite network in order to connect vessels to shore-based operations, including maintenance service providers, fleet partners and port operations and authorities.

Ericsson recently signed a deal with dry commodities and industrial raw materials shipping group U-Ming Marine to provide connected voyage optimisation solutions via Inmarsat.

Inmarsat Maritime president Ronald Spithout said: "Everyone is talking about 'big data' but eventually it is the deployment of applications onboard and the end-to-end management of integrated intelligence that will ultimately change the way the maritime industry operates; making it more efficient, greener and unlocking greater value."

Inmarsat has signed agreements with other hi-tech providers this year, including an EUR 6.6m (\$7.03m) project with Rolls-Royce to pave the way for autonomous ships and an EUR 4.2m study with the European Space Agency into technologies needed for the next generation of communications services.

MARITIME TECHNOLOGY

Software developer focuses on industry-wide standards

Shipping needs more automation, not increased consolidation, in pursuit of greater efficiency, says Q88 founder Fritz Heidenreich

Paul Berrill **London**

Q88, the online shipping software provider that grew out of an in-house system for tanker pool operator Heidmar, is looking to develop industry standards with like-minded developers that can help improve efficiency.

Founder of the Stamford-based firm, which has grown from its origins with web-based tanker questionnaires and steadily expanded into dry bulk, chemical and voyage management systems, Fritz Heidenreich thinks the time is ripe to co-operate.

"It is not necessarily more consolidation that the shipping industry needs but more automation," he told TradeWinds in an interview.

"I am hoping we can form some kind of user group to create industry standards. Chartering departments are overwhelmed by the number of e-mails they receive — we need some standards to work with the industry and software vendors."

Heidenreich says standards to make online applications and systems compatible with each other should be transparent and available free to everybody — in a similar way to Google Apps. "The most successful [technology] companies are those with the most user-friendly products," he said.

He is aware that it is a big task but has talked to other software vendors and believes a user group would just have to tackle one area at a time. He cites the standardisa-

tion of port logs as a possible starting point in order to do away with the time-consuming work of masters filling out multiple reports for all the different players involved in a shipping chain.

"We need to start with something simple. We are not going to build Rome in a day," Heidenreich said.

The idea of developing industry-wide online trading standards for shipping applications has been around since the dotcom era but has risen its head again as owners, operators and charterers seek to combine systems they use regularly to cut down the massive duplication often involved. Some software developers support the idea but others do not see a commercial advantage.

Q88 has evolved from its early days putting tanker questionnaires online for Heidmar pool partners to its emergence as a standalone firm in 2008, two years after Heidmar was acquired by Morgan Stanley. The tanker site is now used by about 75% of the industry and the firm has developed dry bulk, chemical parcel and voyage management systems (VMS).

In 2013, Q88 revamped its dry bulk system and it is now used by 90 companies operating some 1,500 bulkers. Customers include commodities trading giant Cargill — and recently signed up Glencore.

Last year, Penfield Marine asked Q88 to develop a new VMS — and Heidenreich says it has created a flexible system that allows information to be added in whatever



► FRITZ HEIDENREICH: Also looking to develop a system for offshore shipping, where the downturn he says is making access to timely and accurate information even more important. Photo: Q88

way the user chooses and immediately shows any changes. All e-mails are automatically tied to the correct voyage.

"We rely on the premise that the user knows what they are doing," Heidenreich said. Q88 has signed up a couple more users to the VMS and up to a dozen other

companies are seriously considering it.

Q88 is also looking at developing a system for offshore shipping. Like dry bulk, offshore is going through a difficult time — but Heidenreich says that means access to timely and accurate information is even more important.

“Fritz Heidenreich: I am hoping we can form some kind of user group to create industry standards. Chartering departments are overwhelmed by the number of e-mails they receive — we need some standards to work with the industry and software vendors.”

DRY CARGO

Brave Royal reboots supramax bulker buying plan



► BANGLADESH: Owner is looking to take advantage of low bulker values to expand its fleet. Photo: SCANPIX

Pinaki Routray **New Delhi**

Chittagong-based dry bulk operator Brave Royal Ship Management has renewed its efforts to acquire supramaxes after failing in its last attempt.

Company officials confirm it is scouting for fresh purchases after it failed to buy the 50,800-dwt *Jin Hui* and *Jin An* (both built 2000) from Oslo-listed Jinhui Shipping & Transportation.

The Bangladeshi owner is seeking to raise its presence in the coal trade.

Officials tell TradeWinds that

domestic coal imports are expected to rise to as much as 20 million tonnes annually over the next five years from the present level of three million tonnes, and that the company is looking to take a share of that business by targeting long-term contracts with state-owned utilities and domestic traders.

Brave Royal is expected to buy Japanese-built ships of between 10 and 15 years of age.

In the past year, the company has spent nearly \$32m on three bulkers. The 46,000-dwt *Shahriar Jahan* (built 2002) was snapped up for \$11.75m, the 50,000-dwt *Sarwar*

Jahan (built 2001) for \$10.7m and it paid \$10m for the 52,000-dwt *Bikan* (renamed *Maa Saleha Begum*, built 2001).

This year, Brave Royal sold the 44,000-dwt *Borak 1* (built 1994) and last year disposed of the 37,000-dwt *Khadiza Jahan* (built 1985) and 41,300-dwt *Maa Saleha Begum* (built 1987).

Dhaka-based brokers say Bangladeshi owners are looking to take advantage of low bulker prices to modernise their fleets at a time when the burgeoning domestic coal trade is tipped to provide steady employment opportunities.