

What is a not disruption? Faster horses.

Dr Paul Stott, Strategic Maritime (UK), 29th September 2026



Hello and thanks to those following.

Henry Ford is widely quoted as having said that if he had asked transport users what they wanted, prior to his bringing motoring to the masses through the Model 'T', they would have asked for **FASTER HORSES**. This is a really useful concept referring to the difficulty of seeing what has never existed. 'Faster Horses' are developments that improve the existing paradigm, rather than disrupting it.

What might 'faster horses' look like today in shipbuilding? How about developments that seek to adapt automation to shipbuilding's distortion and relatively poor accuracy, using novel processes, machinery and systems. This is not to say that these developments are not extremely useful, but they are 'faster horses' rather than disruption. A disruption would be to eliminate the problem: perfect accuracy and zero distortion. I will be coming back to this in a later blog.

Before we move on to ask the question where we might look for inspiration for disruption in shipbuilding, a few more words about Henry Ford and his Model 'T'.

Firstly, Henry Ford's inspiration for the production line came from the meat packing industry, which was already using a moving line and

workstations. As with the introduction of welding in shipbuilding, the technology came from outside. Secondly, the disruption was not inherent in a single change. It included the adoption of the production line coupled to standardisation of the product, simplification through production design and the development of the supply chain.

In other words, a disruption is not necessarily a singular concept. It may involve a cluster of changes that together lead to the new paradigm.

More next week, where I will develop this theme with the question: where might we look for inspiration in shipbuilding?