

Great British People in Business

Capital Letter interviews BBG members every issue to help us get to know them. This time we speak to Cris Partridge, Managing Director at Myrcator Marine & Cargo Solutions FZE.

What is your current role and responsibilities?

I am the sole shareholder and employee of Myrcator Marine & Cargo Solutions FZE, an SME that I set up post redundancy. Myrcator MCS provides specialist independent inspection and consultancy services to marine and project cargo sectors.

As a one-man band I am responsible for all day-to-day operating functions of the new company. This includes ensuring compliance with all UAE regulatory requirements relating to my line of business; marketing and developing a client base; existing client management; completing inspections and attendances for clients.

What brought you to Abu Dhabi?

In late 2008, following more than 25 years of sailing on vessels and a couple of short periods working ashore, I was offered the opportunity to join one of the world's leading Marine & Engineering Consultancies and was asked to relocate to the UAE. Based on a previous experience of Dubai, I declined the option to move there and chose instead to join the Abu Dhabi office. This is a decision I have never once regretted.

I joined the company as a Senior Surveyor and during the following decade moved through the management structure to become Regional Director for the Middle East, India and the Caspian.

My wife followed 18 months after me and secured a position as a Clinical Psychologist at a clinic in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi very quickly began the place we considered as home.

What impact has COVID-19 had on your business?

Like most sectors, the marine, O&G and shipping industries and their service providers, saw a significant downturn in business in H1/2020. This led to rationalisation of staff and with remaining staff firmly adjusting to home/remote working, a move away from renting office spaces.

In Q3 shipping and O&G is beginning to show signs of a gentle recovery and that is filtering down to the service sector. As would be expected there is even more focus on the value proposition that each vendor provides.

This where I think that my new business is able to compete and

succeed in a competitive sector. Our operational overheads are a fraction of larger multinational competitors and by embracing new technologies and smarter working methodologies, we offer reactive, dynamic cost-effective services.

What challenges do you face?

Setting up any new business and ensuring it develops in a sustainable manner is challenging, full stop. The fear of failure, of letting down those who are supporting me in my endeavours keeps me focused and target driven.

Although I have significant experience and many valuable existing client relationships both in the Middle East and further afield, it is a significant challenge to persuade clients to consider utilising new or alternative service providers.

Can you describe a typical local client in terms of their needs from you?

Local clients can vary between insurers, lawyers, EPCI Companies, cargo owners/shippers and receivers, oil companies and vessel operators/charterers. One of the best parts of my job is that no day or request is ever the same. On every job we meet people of differing nationalities often with interesting stories to tell; an initially minor incident may turn into a case involving claims worth many tens of millions of dollars and lasting several years before a settlement is made.

One of my core skill sets is investigating incidents involving loss of life. These situations pose particular challenges requiring sensitivity towards those directly affected, mindfulness of political influences and awareness of the potential media and public interest.

What has been your best client solution?

Some years ago, I was asked by an insurer to attend on site to approve a vessel and its tow. During my assessment I raised some serious concerns about the state of some of the critical equipment proposed for use and advised corrective actions to be taken by the vessel owners. The owners chose not to accept the recommendations and I subsequently recommended to the insurers that they decline to insure the tow.

My clients did step back and a couple of weeks later during the tow, one of the critical items I had identified as potentially defective, failed. The towed vessel went hard aground and the resulting salvage bill ran into many millions.

A good solution for my client and for reinforcing the integrity and value of independent competent surveyors.

What makes you a leader?

Tough question with no easy answer. I believe leadership means showing humility and integrity towards your team, acknowledging individuals' contributions and efforts and taking the time to encourage and develop team members. Never berate or chastise someone in front of others.

Just as important, support the decisions of your team as long as they are reasonable and justified. It is imperative that as a manager you demonstrate loyalty to your team members.

What would be your advice for a company thinking about entering this market?

Do your research and due diligence meticulously. Talk to people already operating in the market and seek advice from professional bodies such as the BBG, Chambers of Commerce and DIT.

Being here presents many opportunities to engage in the future prosperity of the UAE and despite the frustrations often encountered, it is an amazing country that I am proud to call home.

What do very few people know about you?

That I once worked a winter season as a barman at a Butlin's holiday camp in the UK.

