



INTEGRATED MARITIME PROCUREMENT

IN AN AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION AND RAMPANT PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, STANDING OUT IN THE PROCUREMENT SOFTWARE MARKET IS NO MEAN FEAT. DOMINIC SEILER EXPLAINS HOW MESPAS AIMS TO DO SO WITH ITS INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The major advantage of industry 4.0 is that we are never quite done with technological advances, and so it should come as little surprise that it's now possible to access vast data libraries while at the same time integrating with suppliers. Fast, cost-efficient

workflows are a reality.

To be precise, that reality comes in the shape of MESPAS, the Swiss-based, independent engineering and software development company that has its HQ in Zurich. The company's typical offering is software components that



MESPAS

THE SHORT READ

MESPAS takes a unique approach to data management

Supplier information is integrated and auto-updated

“Software is a living entity. It's constantly evolving”

ensure the smooth running of operations – technical ship management, machinery and maintenance.

Recently – and more pertinently to the procurement fraternity – it launched an integrated procurement platform that gives users access to spare part price lists of 67,000 machinery types, while allowing seamless integration with suppliers.

Dominic Seiler, the company's Sales & Marketing Director, unveiled the product at IMPA Greece and spoke extensively about it at IMPA Singapore. We caught up with Dominic to get the deep dive on how MESPAS Procurement works, why data is a mess that is holding tech back and what the future looks like for MESPAS.

Your procurement module is fairly unique isn't it?

Yes, it is. Think about the situation. Maritime suppliers and the ships they deliver to are situated in different places all over the world. Purchasers and buyers are also in totally different places. So that means a lot of information exchange is required. Over the last 15 years MESPAS has collected a huge amount of data on spare parts. So, if you have the same brand of engine on more than one of your ships, our systems have this information.

That's just one company, but perhaps on the macro



THE MESPAS GLOBAL MASTER DATABASE IS A UNIQUE MARITIME SOFTWARE SOLUTION. IT INCLUDES EVERY PART NEEDED FOR SHIPBOARD EQUIPMENT INCLUDING ENGINES, PUMPS, NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT AND MUCH MORE. IT MEANS ALL VESSELS IN A FLEET ARE SUPPORTED BY ONE DATASET. IT ENSURES COMPLETE DATA CONSISTENCY AND NO MANUAL ENTRY IS REQUIRED ”

DOMINIC SEILER
Sales and Marketing Director
at MESPAS



level all our customers have exactly the same part on their ships. They will all be working with the same master data, no matter how many ships they have. MESPAS has stored in the cloud a huge library of master data for all manufacturers, containing brand and spare part information and related documents.

They can direct the data to suppliers and those suppliers, who are also using our software, receive it, for example a request for quotation, in exactly the same format. The system ensures that all necessary information is available to them.

The MESPAS global master database is a unique maritime software solution. It includes every part and component needed for shipboard equipment including engines, pumps, navigation equipment and much more. The MESPAS functionality means all vessels in a fleet are supported by one dataset to enable purchasing economies of scale and reduce data entry effort. Unlike other systems, the MESPAS method ensures complete data consistency and no manual data entry is required.

This must create quite significant efficiencies and improve the way that these organisations that use your software operate.

It increases efficiency on both sides. On the ship manager side, when they get our software they don't have to sit in front of a computer for the first two or three months just typing in spare parts, because they will receive all of that automatically from our master database. On the supplier side, efficiency is increased



WE WERE THE VERY FIRST PLAYER IN THE MARITIME INDUSTRY TO USE CLOUD SOFTWARE AND SHARED DATA. WE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL THE INDUSTRY WAS DIGITALLY ADVANCED ENOUGH TO INTRODUCE IT. IT TOOK SOME TIME TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE ”

because the data is structured correctly with the required information. We have recently integrated with MAN. That means that one of the biggest engine manufacturers in the world is now also using our procurement system. What we did there was to connect their internal ERP system with our software. Thus they just have to provide the offer. If they receive a request in their own ERP system, they send the offer in their own ERP system. They don't have to go to their system and our system and add the information twice. This is only possible because the data set always contains the same important information. Usually you cannot send data from one system to another as the two systems don't speak the same language.

And that's a big issue with software systems isn't it?

It's a huge issue because nobody pays attention to data quality. When different customers each enter their own information, critical data is missing, inaccurate or not usable. That makes integration impossible. In our case it's MESPAS that controls the data. No-one else, no customer can make changes to it. We maintain control centrally and we ensure that the whole system works between the different parties.

And that data is really crucial to the whole system isn't it?

Correct. Our concept has been based on this from the very beginning. We were the very first player in the maritime industry to use cloud software and shared data. We had to wait until the industry was digitally advanced enough to introduce it and, according to our founders, it took some time to gain acceptance. The MESPAS concept was actually developed based on the internet banking model for storing and managing global product data centrally. Banking clients must have instant access to their accounts, data must be consistent around the world, and it must be secure. That is why the data is controlled centrally.

Likewise, for ship management, it is much better to have products, part catalogues, maintenance settings and documents stored centrally and just link them with ships and

global offices. The same products are typically installed on hundreds or even thousands of ships, but the data is managed securely and stored centrally in one place. It can only be seen by relevant clients.

Do you think the lack of standardisation is still a problem?

Yes, to a degree. For a start there are so many players. Take the example of purifiers. There are many different brands and all of them have their own structure. There is clearly no real standard yet as there is in stores and provisions where IMPA has done a lot of good work. Our solution to the standard issue has been to provide the best data quality in the maritime software business.

We are in a period of frantic evolution.

How is MESPAS going to evolve?

Software is a living entity, it's constantly evolving. We are currently building the next iteration of our software. Think about eBay or Amazon where you can buy a new smartphone for example. You can check price, quality, brand etc and make you choice from those data sets, among others. This could be a vision for the maritime industry too.

However, shipping is different. The market is not transparent and is beset with data problems (i.e. all suppliers have their own data sets). It's not at all easy to check for a specific part and compare with others, because the systems don't speak the same language.

In the MESPAS procurement platform we have the solution to this. Using our structured data, we now enable suppliers to add price lists. They choose the available data and, for each product, they define a price. When suppliers have added their prices to the system, ship managers on the procurement side can look for a specific spare part and compare prices. This in turn allows suppliers to gain new customers. If they are currently not delivering any goods to one of our ship manager customers they can promote themselves on the platform, the ship manager can compare suppliers and they will get new orders. Thus, it becomes interesting for both parties. On the one hand you can compare prices and products, on the other hand you can win new customers. All on MESPAS.