Quaynote
Communications

West Nautical's Managing Director, Geoff Moore, has had the privilege of travelling all over the world during his maritime career. Here he shares some expert insights into current yachting trends.

What trends are you seeing so far this year in the sales and charter markets?

The end of 2023 was strangely quiet in the yachting sales market, particularly at the boat shows. Things seemed to pick up at the start of 2024 with some large sales. There were a few yachts on the market that really needed to sell, which meant that they were offering a great bargain for any lucky owner looking to purchase at this time.

Despite the ongoing credit crunch and the somewhat financial depression that is going on at the moment, the firefighting sales seem to be a thing of the past. The shipyards continue to be extremely busy with new build projects, however not many of these new build yachts are making it to the sales market and are being delivered directly to their owners.

Many buyers are waiting for it to become more of a buyer's market than a seller's market, a shift that we have been waiting for, for six to nine months.

With regards to the charter market, the end of 2023 saw an influx of bookings for summer 2024. The first quarter of 2024 was quieter than expected however the start of spring and the second quarter of 2024 has seen an increase in charter bookings. Whether this is down to politics, war, crisis, the upcoming American election, we aren't sure, but things are definitely looking up and we expect the summer 2024 season to be busy on the charter market.

Which charter destinations do you expect to grow in popularity?

The new destination that charter clients are interested in this year is Malta due to the fact that they have amended their VAT system by reducing their taxes, making it more affordable than chartering a yacht in Italy, France and Spain. Malta is well located to include Sicily and the Aeolian Islands in the charter itinerary.

Greece and Croatia are also great destinations, not only for their beauty and great cruising but they also have lower VAT rates than other destinations in the Mediterranean.

Turkey has done a major advertising push for land-based holidays recently, which has reinvigorated charter clients love for the destination. With its history, natural beauty and culture, this is the perfect place to charter a yacht this summer.

How are buyer profiles changing? Are you seeing a growth in younger buyers?

I would say that yachting is becoming more accessible to younger clients because people are accumulating wealth earlier in their lives meaning superyacht owners can be in their 40's and 50's as opposed to their 60's and above.

A lot of people in older generations are the buyers as opposed to the younger generations who tend to charter more than own a superyacht as they want the experience of yachting without the responsibility of owning one of these incredible assets.

How are your marketing strategies evolving in response to these changes?

Everything is of course going digital now, so we have realised who our customers are and understood that digital marketing is essentially the shop window.

The use of social media, pay per click advert campaigns, SEO for google searches etc is the way forward as opposed to the print advertising which was once the best form of marketing.

As a company, we have needed to find a balance between digital advertising to hook clients and the organic client-based referrals, research and attendance at events to build the trust with customers.

Charter customers can be very transient, you can never meet them and still do a deal with them whereas a sales customer relationship is entirely different in its length as well as the amount of trust needed between the sales customer and their client manager.

Have your team noticed any changes or patterns in crew retention?

Crew retention is always changing and something that is getting worse and worse as the younger generations move on board as well as the increase of new build yachts launching which attracts better crew from other yachts.

More and more rotation is coming in for the mid-tier size yachts ranging from 50 to 70 metres, now offering very good rotation packages whereas five years ago, it was only 70m plus yachts offering rotation. This is to attract good crew, especially on the two season yachts.

Crew retention in yachting is a huge problem as you train people up, they get the experience on board and then leave whether it is for career growth, a promotion, or simply to try something new with better terms and conditions.

The loyalty that crew would have traditionally had to a captain, or an owner doesn't necessarily exist anymore. However, we don't think this is only a trend in yachting, this is generally a trend we are seeing with the latest generations of crew between the ages of 18 – 25. They seem to have more of a culture that yachting is a lifestyle business rather than a career choice and too much work, poor internet and poor food and small, cramped conditions are generally not as accepted as they would have been by the traditional yacht crew ten to twenty years ago.

Geoff Moore first joined the Merchant Navy when he was 18 years old before entering the superyacht industry in 2007. Geoff has continued to work within the yachting industry from ashore, running West Nautical from their global headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne.

West Nautical is a full-service superyacht company ranging from booking clients dream charter holidays to delivering new build superyachts to their owners and everything in between.