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Shipping can and must adapt to cutting-edge technologies

Synergy founder and ceo Rajesh Unni shares his vision on the way forward in shipmanagement

The Synergy Group is seeing "unlimited opportunities" in the way shipping can and must adapt to technology and digitalisation, as the potential for future growth and business scalability lie in the use of innovation and its benefits to the crewing sector.

Rajesh Unni, founder and ceo of shipmanagement firm Synergy Group, has urged the traditional shipping industry

forefront on quality."

Unni observed that with a lot of new regulations coming up, newer and modern ship types that need special expertise such as LNG, change to electronic engines, stringent demands from the oil majors vetting and compliance and so forth, are giving rise to an increasing need to place competent crew on board and at the same time keep operational costs in check.



Capt. Rajesh Unni

Seafarer welfare goes hand-in-hand with maintaining competent crew, as Synergy can attest with its various welfare initiatives. Some of them include medical and accident insurance coverage, 24/7 helpline, counselling services in nine different languages, and women empowerment in a male dominated workplace.

With the shipping industry going through major regulatory changes and more defined expectations from oil majors over the last decade, managing these would require specific knowledge, experience and expertise, according to Unni.

to embrace the use of cutting-edge technologies to solve on-the-ground issues in the logistics value chain.

"The shipping industry unfortunately continues to remain mostly traditional with little or no influence from the IT revolution. Our ongoing work with Alpha Ori Technologies, our IT partner, is already redefining this very aspect," Unni shares.

"This gives us the necessary edge in a very competitive market and is the way forward for us to ensure real-time proactive decision-making, ensure cost optimisation, minimise risk and be in the

very hard to assist them [shipowners] in this regard with a competent crew and latest technology to offer safe, well maintained and fuel-efficient ships to comply with all changes and expectations," Unni says.

"It's very difficult and expensive for a shipowner of a small fleet in particular to manage on their own. The shipmanagers, with their global resources offer tremendous value and, in many cases, enable the shipowners to focus on business growth," he believes.

Unni noted that there has been a

"paradigm shift" in the last decade with more owners relying on third-party shipmanagers. The reason for the spurt has been due to the repossession of vessels by banks and investors in the depressed market conditions over the last decade where the owners needed to continue to trade the vessels but lacked inhouse expertise themselves.

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Rajesh Unni, Synergy Group

"Hence, we believe that shipmanagers are here to stay in the future. That being said, it remains to be seen what effect digitalisation and automation will have in the years ahead where shipowners may well be in a position to manage themselves with smaller outfits," he says.

Unni added that M&A activity, quite prevalent in recent times, will see consolidation but will not wipe out third-party shipmanagers.

Synergy, which first began operations in Chennai in 2006, came to Singapore in 2009 to seek growth and greater international exposure. "Singapore, due to its strategic location and the government policies, is perhaps the biggest maritime hub in the world and is growing each year. As technical service providers, we are also looking at other allied industries in the shipping sector which included commercial traders, insurance players, oil majors etc, with whom we could intersect," Unni says.

"On the flip side, such luxuries come at a premium and make Singapore an expensive place to have a very big setup."

At present Synergy manages about 230 ships covering tankers and containers.