



Watering down the costs of cleaning

As environmental concerns dominate the shipping industry, the cleaning sector is one area where new products are being developed in line with the 'greener' ethos.

However, John Paperone, owner of US-based Environmental Solution says not enough is being done to ensure some so-called environmentally friendly products are what they claim to be.

His company distributes a wide range of eco-friendly products with the most popular products including cleaning solutions and bilge products that reduce oil content and clean bilges while underway.

"A neutral pH, non-corrosive, non-toxic cleaner, is a significant change in employee safety and, in the event of discharge overboard, does not provide any environmental challenges," explained Mr Paperone.

"The industry and many governments have only given lip service to this topic. Hence, many traditional cleaning chemical manufacturers have merely watered down existing formulations and have called them 'greener' and more environmentally responsible. This takes great advantage of literary licence."

He added: "Our products provide economical, environmental and time-

saving advantages through natural cleaning and contamination removal using the technology of bioremediation."

Bioremediation is the process of using naturally occurring, safe and beneficial micro-organisms to degrade environmentally harmful contaminants and turn them into non-toxic compounds.

Although Environmental Solution is starting to make inroads into changing the way managers and owners think about the environmental impact of cleaning products, Mr Paperone is under no illusion it will be a quick and easy journey.

"I read numerous articles in trade publications of companies having a greater interest in environmental affairs but until they extend that to mundane, daily activities, the task will remain incomplete. Until there is a change in some corporate cultures, which emanate from the top, we will continue to work hard for our advances!"

Slim budgets are also proving a challenge in finding new business: "Money is tight and people are generally reluctant to change or experiment with new products," he said.

This was echoed by Dasic Marine, which supplies tank cleaning systems but has started diversifying into other areas due to the slow growth in the shipping sector.

The family-owned company, based in Hampshire, UK, has spent the past couple of years developing and producing water cannon to fight piracy and has also branched out into supplying tank washing machines for premises such as breweries and distilleries.

"It's a small part of our business, but one which is starting to grow," explained Sales Director Simon Robinson.

"Around 90% of our business is marine but there is not much growth in the

marine side of the business at the moment. The water cannon is an evolution of the tank washing machine. It uses the same nozzle technology, just in a different orientation."

Dasic Marine supplies tank cleaning equipment and gas freeing fans and business is a mixture of newbuildings and existing vessels. Like many areas of ship supply and services, Mr Robinson has seen cutbacks being made on cleaning equipment with many companies paralleling the downturn in the newbuild business.

"This year, so far, most of our business has been in the Far East because that is where the shipbuilding is but it has been reported that the newbuild orders in Chinese yards are down by 43%," said Mr Robinson. "There is talk of some of the small to medium sized yards suspending work, so I think this is a long term problem."

"We've seen that all the companies now are almost operating hand to mouth. They will only place an order for an item when it's urgent. Most orders are in and out with two weeks, even from quoting time to delivery."

"There is a massive, massive price pressure because the yards are also seeing their ship prices drop and the day rates are well, well down."

So, how does Dasic Marine try to keep ahead of the competition?

"We invest a lot in design and product development but now, for me, it's all about service," said Mr Robinson.

"We've set ourselves up so that if a customer rings today with an enquiry, we reply within a day and generally from a stock planning point of view we've got it in stock. Even on bigger ships which turn around and say they need an urgent delivery, we can do it. That's what it's all about." ■