

BY JACK O'CONNELL

# ALEXANDRA ANAGNOSTIS-IRONS,

## FOUNDER & OWNER, TOTAL MARINE SOLUTIONS



**T**wenty years ago, Anagnostis-Irons saw an opportunity to help companies meet their expanding environmental compliance requirements. Today, she and her team at TMS are doing all of that and more.

### TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF – YOUR BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION.

I was born and raised in South Florida to a large and tightly knit family. My first job out of high school was with Bahama Cruise Line as a purchasing agent. I didn't know a thing about vessels or the industry when I started, but I quickly learned how ships run, the technical operations, and the well-oiled team that is required to run a vessel. I worked full-time with them while earning my B.A. and later my M.B.A.

The maritime industry in South Florida is expansive and yet feels like a family. As I changed positions and went to other cruise lines, I ended up working with many of those same people. That's what I love about this industry – we may all move around, but our hearts remain together with the industry.

### WHEN DID YOU FOUND TOTAL MARINE SOLUTIONS (TMS)? HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

Opportunities present themselves when you aren't expecting them. I was working as Director of Technical Purchasing for a major cruise line, which put me in contact with several innovative and forward-thinking maritime companies. One of my tasks was to pursue new environmental solutions, and

I began working with a small manufacturer out of Sweden that was producing groundbreaking new equipment.

The only challenge was they had no North American technical support team. I suffered a personal loss around that time and decided I needed to go out on my own. I started representing the Swedish company in North America, and that business grew to where we are today.

### AMAZING. SO WHAT IS TMS? HOW HAS IT EVOLVED AND WHAT SERVICES DOES IT OFFER?

TMS provides MARPOL-compliant solutions to shipowners and operators worldwide in the cruise, commercial, yacht and offshore industries. We work with innovative manufacturers around the world to provide full lifecycle support from sales to maintenance, training and service. We work alongside our manufacturing partners and often collaborate on modifications, changes or new products.

We're known for our customer support and service. We're headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, but we provide service worldwide. Our clients know that when they contact us they'll get someone on the phone, get knowledgeable and experienced technical support

and outstanding customer service. That's what's made us successful.

### WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR CLIENTS? ARE THEY MAINLY IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY?

We work with the entire maritime industry, but cruise is where we started. Today cruise accounts for about 50 percent of our revenue. Our business is really based on relationships. We work closely with both our clients and our partners to find solutions that work for the long-term. Since my first day with Bahama Cruise Line, building strong relationships has always been the key to my success.

### HOW MANY OFFICES ARE THERE? IS THE COMPANY GLOBAL?

We are headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, but we have service support located all over the world – in Australia, Singapore and Cyprus, for example. Having long-term and reliable relationships with technical and service contractors has been especially important during the pandemic, while vessels were laid up.

Annual requirements for preventative maintenance still need to be met, so it was essential to have these regional resources when local travel prevented service technicians from flying and prevented vessels from



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sailing because it allowed us to perform necessary and preventative maintenance on schedule.

Our reach is global. We host fleet-wide environmental and technical workshops from our Fort Lauderdale training center, and our service engineers travel around the world to meet our clients and tend to our equipment and maintenance contracts.

### THREE YEARS AGO TMS INTRODUCED A PRODUCT CALLED OCEAN GUARDIAN, AND IT'S BEEN A HUGE SUCCESS. WHAT IS IT?

Ocean Guardian is a digital tool that helps our clients navigate the complexities of environmental compliance no matter where they are in the world. Ocean Guardian maintains a digital database of international, national, regional and port regulations pertaining to the environment. Users can access that database and see the regulations for any location in the world, including the vessel's current location. Audible alarms in Ocean Guardian let the crew know when they are entering or exiting a regulatory zone, and the system notifies users of approaching regulatory requirements.

Our regulatory database is continually updated by maritime professionals and vetted by a third-party maritime law firm, so our clients can be confident in the regulatory information.

### OKAY, HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE COMPANY'S OPERATIONS AND BOTTOM LINE? HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED TO ADAPT?

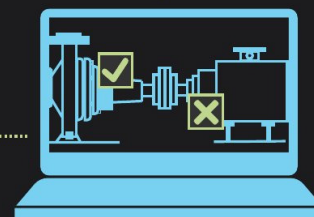
We started TMS in September of 2000, so in January of 2020, on the cusp of our 20th anniversary, I said to myself, "This is gonna be some year!" And it turned out to be just that, but not at all in the way I expected!

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To help stay connected with clients, our Technical Director launched a weekly "technical forum." Each forum focuses on a specific type of equipment that we sell and support. We invite environmental officers, chief engineers, shore-side folks, and he talks about the equipment, maintenance and troubleshooting. The forums have a Q&A component as well because there are people who log on and might not have that specific piece of equipment but have a question about something else on their vessel.

These forums have been great, not only in keeping equipment in top shape but also in keeping us connected with our clients and maintaining those relationships during this isolating time. Here in Fort Lau-

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*“This Week In Maritime” was a grassroots project! At the outset of the pandemic, information was flying around quickly, and details were changing – sometimes on a seemingly hourly basis. I connected with four colleagues, Jeanne Grasso of Blank Rome, Kathy Metcalf from the Chamber of Shipping of America, Karin Orsel of MF Shipping in the Netherlands, and Consuelo Rivero of ERSHP Grupo in Spain to share information on what we were hearing in our various international and national-level meetings.*

derdale, we have a daily call at 0 a.m. because I want to make sure our team feels connected, recognized and valued. Staying connected and providing a sense of stability in these uncertain times, when we’re all working remotely, is critical in all businesses.

**YOU ARE VERY ACTIVE IN INDUSTRY GROUPS AS WELL AND, SHORTLY AFTER THE VIRUS HIT, HELPED START AN INFORMATION-SHARING FORUM CALLED “THIS WEEK IN MARITIME” WITH OTHER MARITIME LEADERS. TELL US ABOUT THAT.**

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Shipping in the Netherlands, and Consuelo Rivero of ERSHP Grupo in Spain to share information on what we were hearing in our various international and national-level meetings.

We quickly realized that we needed to share this information further afield, so we put together a few key contributors and sent out an invitation. The sessions continued weekly, and as the immediate issues abated, we moved to a different schedule in the winter. Sessions range from facilitating crew change to ship recycling to regulatory changes. These sessions really serve to keep us all connected, informed and abreast of what is going on around the world.

It’s been a great success and the topics have been really relevant as the pandemic has changed. Our January session was on the vaccine rollout and if you look back on the

list of topics – there’s been more than 30 of them now – it’s like a chronology of what’s happened during COVID.

**WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TMS IN FIVE YEARS?**

My goal is and always has been to ensure we have an opportunity to help support our clients in their compliance needs. COVID didn’t put a pause on environmental regulations coming into effect, so as these regulations continue to become more stringent and more numerous, we want to make sure our clients have the right offerings – whether equipment or data products – to meet them.

Building our portfolio and continuing to strengthen our customer service, participating in other associations that help support the industry at large – that’s what it’s all about.

**MarEx**

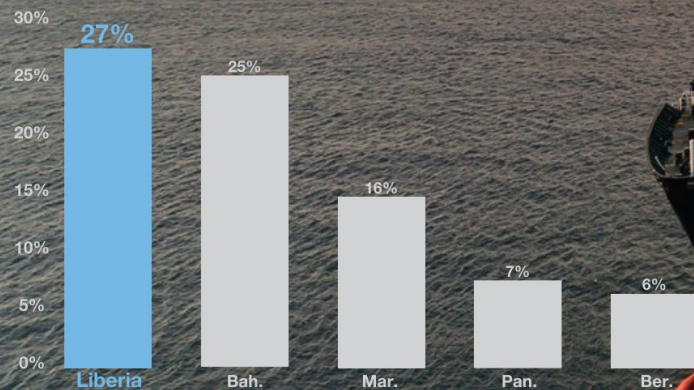
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