

The Ocean Technology Workshop Series: The Importance of Offering Technical Training to Equipment Users

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Abstract

During the third week of October, 2004 a non-profit trade association, Marine and Oceanographic Technology Network (MOTN), along with its partners and sponsors will gather marine technology business leaders in Newport, Rhode Island to provide hands-on training and at-sea equipment demonstrations on their latest products and services. The 4th Ocean Technology Workshop will offer equipment operators and buyers a unique opportunity to use the equipment and see how the products perform in the marine environment. There will be a particular focus on technologies for port and harbor security. Oceanographers, coastal and offshore surveyors, marine operations managers, field technicians, government officials in charge of purchasing equipment, oil exploration personnel, port and harbor security personnel concerned with underwater threats, search and survey personnel and program managers will benefit from seeing these products in action both on land and at sea. Offering these hands on training workshops has been an extremely effective way for technology-based companies to solidify their existing customer base as well as attract new, very serious customers. The three previous workshops have enabled equipment users to get up to speed on the latest technology in a very short period of time.

This paper will discuss the background of MOTN's Ocean Technology Workshops (OTW). It will outline how they have grown and improved over the years. It will also provide an overview of the upcoming event in Newport, RI and discuss how training companies and attendees can benefit by participating.

Author's Note

The marine technology business is made up of small to medium sized organizations that develop technology to measure the oceans for research, military and commercial customers. The equipment is designed to operate in the extremely harsh ocean environment. Technologies don't change every year, but every other year manufacturing companies find that they either need to train new users of their equipment or they must educate current users about new features on the products they are operating now. Keeping customers up to date on product changes and upgrades is a time-honored way to preserve their loyalty. The Ocean Technology Workshop series is a way for manufacturing and service companies to educate their customers in a relaxed professional environment.



There were over sixteen different training sessions to attend at the 3rd Ocean Technology Workshop in Plymouth, MA

Background

Every other year leaders in the marine technology business set up classrooms for key equipment users and purchasers to learn about their products. During October 19, 20, 21, 2004 the 4th Ocean Technology Workshop will take place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Newport, RI. "This is not another trade show. It's a place where serious buyers and users of equipment can meet with product engineers as well as sales staff to see how a product operates both on the bench and at sea", according to event chairman, Ted Curley of EPC Labs of Danvers, MA.

MOTN (Marine and Oceanographic Technology Network) created the Ocean Technology Workshops in 1996 to enable members of the New England based trade association to train existing and new customers on the latest models and new products both in the classroom and at sea aboard coastal research vessels.

There have been three Ocean Technology Workshops to date; the first and second were held at the Sea Crest Beach Resort in Falmouth, MA in 1997 and 1999 respectively. The third was held at the Sheraton Inn in Plymouth, MA in the fall of 2002. Attendance increased by 10% the first two years and by 25% the third year. A total of 206 trainers and attendees attended the 3rd OTW in September 2002.

Many leaders in marine technology manufacturing and

services have offered training at multiple OTWs. Products and services that are typically featured during training include: current measurement devices, underwater imaging systems, side scan sonar, sub-bottom profilers, data acquisition systems, echosounders, acoustic releases, electronic charting software, real time environmental monitoring systems and much, much more.

The first two OTWs were held in N. Falmouth, MA because of its proximity to the core group of companies that are located along Cape Cod's marine technology highway, Route 28A. Companies such as Benthos, (now incorporated with Datasonics), Falmouth Scientific, Mooring Systems, Edgetech, and many others invited guests from all over the globe. The tour of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) was a huge success. In addition there were live equipment demonstrations offered aboard several coastal and ocean going research vessels tied up at the WHOI docks.

For the first two years, classroom sessions took place in the mornings at the Sea Crest. In the afternoon, shuttles delivered attendees to the WHOI docks to board scheduled equipment demonstration trips or to tour WHOI. Attendees were able to receive training in the class room on a Sea Beam side scan sonar, for instance and then see that same system in action in the marine environment later that same day aboard one of the boat trips.

Benthos, Inc. of N. Falmouth utilized the OTW to piggyback a sales training event. They invited over 15 of their international sales representatives to receive instruction on the new (at that time) Benthos/Datasonics line of products at the 2nd OTW. This was a great situation for Benthos because it enabled them to get a lot of "bang for the buck" in terms of educating their customers. It was also great for the sales representative because they could visit with many of their other principles that were either offering training at the OTW or who were nearby, making a plant visit very convenient.

The 3rd OTW was originally scheduled to take place September 19 - 21, 2001, ten days after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Due to the fact that air space was closed for many days, the event had to be cancelled. Training company personnel and equipment simply could not make it to the venue. It was a tumultuous time for the entire country. All contractors and companies were extremely understanding. After polling the training companies it was decided to reschedule the 3rd OTW to take place September 23-25 2002. That event attracted 206 individuals from all over the globe. It was the most successful OTW to date. Plymouth, MA was chosen was because it was off-Cape, which meant that attendees did not have to contend with heavy Cape Cod traffic. It was also closer to Boston's Logan Airport, making it easier for attendees and training companies to travel. The other reason the event was moved to Plymouth was due to the close proximity to the docks. It was a five-minute walk across the street to get to the boats. Finally, the Sheraton Plymouth was chosen as the next venue for the 3rd OTW because it offered more services for the corporate traveler. The Sheraton was excellent in all aspects except one very important area: there was no cellular telephone reception any where inside the building. That factor was

very inconvenient for all participants.

The at sea equipment demonstrations were run all day concurrently with the classroom training sessions for the first time at the 3rd OTW. The schedule was carefully crafted not to present too many conflicts so that company personnel could provide training both in the classroom and on the boat if necessary on the same day.

Both the attendees and the training companies were surveyed upon completion of the event. They thought the schedule was just right, the venue was fine except for the cell coverage and the length of time to deploy equipment was too long. They liked the Plymouth location because it was close to many historic sites, restaurants and shopping. The boat operations personnel were not happy, however with the dockside facilities. They were shoe horned in amongst a working fishing fleet during their busy season making them less than cooperative. Another limiting factor of the Plymouth venue was the fact that it took a long time (20 minutes or so) to steam to deeper water where some of the equipment could be deployed. The steaming time cut into the demonstration time and the water was not deep enough to demonstrate some of the finer points of certain products.

Partnering Organizations

Three other organizations partnered with MOTN to train their users at the same time. According to Lourdes Evans of Coastal Oceanographics, Inc., "OTW was a great venue for us to run our HYPACK MAX Mini-Camp. We had not offered this to our New England customers in a while". Bill Woodward, President of Service Argos, Inc. said "we find that brining our workshops to the users increases attendance and enables them to spend more time at the sessions and less time traveling. Because there is a significant overlap in the MOTN and Argos customer base, particularly in the New England region, this was a great opportunity". In addition the New England section of the Marine Technology Society coordinated the special speaker series and packed a room to the brim for two afternoons. Collaborating with like-minded groups increases attendance at the workshops, aboard the boat trips and at the exhibit area and at networking events.

The New England Section of MTS provided the Technical Speaker series each afternoon, which featured: Thomas A. Soja, President, Tom Soja and Associates spoke about the current status and future of the offshore fiber optic cable industry. Don Eickstedt, MIT Computing Center spoke about the fusion of Artificial Intelligence and Ocean Engineering and trends for the future.

A representative of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Weapons Technology and Undersea Systems Division spoke about the current and future of Unmanned Underwater Vehicles. Captain Jon Bailey, head of NOAA's Airborne Survey Dept. discussed current and future trends in airborne survey of marine related topographical features. Barbara Reid of NAVOCEANO N4 spoke about the current and future activities at NAVOCEANO.

4th OTW Moves to Newport, Rhode Island

Even though training companies and attendees rated the

Plymouth OTW extremely high, there are several reasons the event has been moved to Newport, RI. MOTN has been courted since the event's inception by the town of Newport, RI to hold an OTW. After several site visits, it was determined that the Hyatt in Newport had the potential to be the best venue yet. It is located a short walk from the vibrant historic downtown area of Newport. Restaurants, shopping and site seeing abound within a block of the Hyatt. The docks are located at a public marina steps away from the hotel. There is deep water (100+ft) within five minutes from the docks and Newport is home to many existing and potential equipment users. This deeper water will enable the manufacturers of various sonar equipment and deeper water systems to show their equipment in its best working environment for the benefit of their existing and potential new customers.

The Newport, RI venue for the 4th OTW will be particularly attractive due its proximity to some key customers such as the US Naval War College, Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Science Applications International Corp. Raytheon Systems Integration, University of Rhode Island, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, EPA New England Region 1, United States Geological Survey, Army Corps. of Engineers, University of Rhode Island, University of Connecticut, UMASS – Dartmouth, MIT, University of New Hampshire, and Northeastern University as well as a plethora of small to medium sized manufacturing and service companies located within 2 hours driving distance.

There will be a particular focus on technologies for port and harbor security at the 2004 OTW. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on United States targets, the security of America's ports, harbors and waterways has become an increasingly important concern for federal, state and local officials responsible for protection of these critical assets. . . Advanced marine technologies being developed by the oceanographic and marine technology industry, academic institutions and the Department of Defense, can be utilized to minimize risks. Much of the technology exists today and can be made available quickly to military and law enforcement personnel for coastal and vessel protection. Many of those technologies will be on hand at the 4th OTW.

Technologies for research, military applications and offshore energy will also be featured. Oceanographers, coastal and offshore surveyors, marine operations managers, field technicians, government officials in charge of purchasing equipment, oil exploration personnel, port and harbor security personnel concerned with underwater threats, search and survey personnel and program managers will benefit from seeing these products in action both on land and at sea.

In addition to the classroom and at sea equipment demonstrations, training companies are welcome to display their materials on tables that are sprinkled throughout the venue. To accommodate more equipment, there will be a limited number of 8 x 10 exhibits available at the 2004 event. The daily training sessions and the complimentary at sea equipment demonstrations are open to all registered attendees. There is no other place to see all these products in operation.

There will be two days of concurrent sessions where prod-



Geoacoustics training personnel aboard the RV Sakonnet at the 3rd Ocean Technology Workshop. They demonstrated their Geoswath Low Cost Bathymetry System.



Dirk Casagrande deploying the Sea Sciences Acrobat Towed body aboard the RV Quest at the 3rd Ocean Technology Workshop.

uct engineers will demonstrate equipment and discuss applications on a wide variety of new and existing products. This is a great opportunity to meet with design engineers who can instruct you on the fine points of equipment operations.

At Sea Equipment Demonstrations

There will be an opportunity each day to board one of several coastal research vessels provided by MOTN members to see some of the new products operate in the deep, pristine waters of Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island. CR Environmental of Falmouth, MA and Quest Marine Services of Fall River, MA, both MOTN members, provided research Vessel Fleet Logistics. Without their extremely well equipped and staffed boats, the equipment demonstrations would not have been as effective. These two organizations will coordinate the water operations in 2004.

OTW provides an opportunity for the attendee to see first hand how a particular piece of equipment, technology or system operates at sea in a real time and practical working environment. What is most unique about OTW is that the attendee in the course of a day will be able to board several small coastal research vessels and make as many as four short trips to sea in one day to observe any number of different systems in actual use. These trips, four per day per boat not only give the attendee a chance to see the systems operate but they encourage them to pose questions to engineers from the various training companies regarding the many technologies demonstrated. This is particularly useful to an individual or organization that may have purchased a piece of equipment and is experiencing difficulty with a specific phase of its operation. Additionally the opportunity presents itself for an attendee to learn the more advanced or creative techniques that a system being demonstrated may be capable of performing. Should an attendee be involved in the decision making process regarding the purchase of a particular piece of equipment or technology, the at sea demonstrations will give that individual the opportunity to compare similar products produced by different companies. Thus the individual making the important final decisions regarding a purchase will be able to see first hand which system or technology would be best suited to meet their individual needs.

The waters adjacent to Newport Rhode Island, Newport harbor and the southern end of the East Passage of Narragansett Bay provide an ideal location to demonstrate marine technology. The region is sheltered from all points of the compass rendering weather a non-issue, sea conditions are always relatively calm even during periods of extreme wind. The undersea environment is also unique, in that just minutes from the dock the full range of sub sea oceanographic and geological conditions can be encountered, including deep water, a submarine canyon, a seamount, both steep and gentle sloping drop offs, shipwrecks large and small, both old and new. The region has areas with both high current and slack water, varying levels of turbidity, large water temperature changes as well as full range of biodiversity. With all these conditions combined the location of OTW enables the various training companies to be able to demonstrate their particular technology to its fullest potential.

There were three boats doing up to four trips a day at the past three OTWs. Depending on the size of the boat between 6-10 passengers was accommodated. Attendees have said that they come specifically to the OTW series of workshops to meet with key company personnel and see the equipment in action. It is very expensive for just one company to charter a boat and spend the better part of a day training their customers. By collaborating with other companies, the training companies can leverage their resources for mutual benefit. Attendees can see so much in a very short period of time.

The OTW events attract more customers than any one company can attract alone. The key to promoting the event is for the companies who are offering training to invite their customers and sales representatives. Additionally, the past events have been advertised in the industry trade magazines (Hydro International, Sea Technology, Marine Technology Reporter,



3rd Ocean Technology Workshop guests enjoyed a spectacular sunset and networking reception on the lawn of the Plimoth Plantation.

Underwater Magazine and International Ocean Systems) The combination of the company contacts, the display ads and word of mouth has been extremely effective. "We are trying to attract high quality people to our events. We don't want thousands, we want two hundred or so key individuals who are currently using the equipment; can make purchasing decisions or who are seriously considering purchasing an item and want to see it in action before purchase," said Steve Withrow, Executive Director, of the Marine and Oceanographic Technology Network (MOTN).

Networking Opportunities

The OTWs enable equipment suppliers to interact directly with their customers and colleagues. Providing a relaxed yet professional venue for training has been the hallmark for the organizers of the OTWs. The first day there is a golf scramble. On Tuesday October 19, 2004 sponsors and golfers will be treated to one of Rhode Island's best 18 hole golf courses. The holes are being sponsored by businesses all over the globe including; many of the training companies mentioned below. These golf outings have been a great way for attendees to relax, get some exercise and fresh air while fostering valuable relationships. Prizes are awarded at the end of the game.

The next networking event is the Welcoming Reception on Tuesday October 19, 2004. This event is included with the registration fee. Ample food and beverage is on hand at this casual kick-off to the next two days of classroom and boat demonstrations. These receptions have been very well attended by many industry contacts in the area as well as the official OTW registrants.

On the first day of workshops and equipment demonstrations, a New England lobster bake is planned to gather the entire group. Past events have featured speakers and entertainment. It is hoped that the 2004 Lobster bake will be held at one of the historic mansions located along the waterfront in Newport. There will be a key note speaker as well as some additional, home spun entertainment.

Past Training Companies

A sample of the products some of the companies have featured at past events follows:

Applanix offered training on their inertial navigation roll and pitch heading sensor.

Benthos offered training on their side scan sonars, sub-bottom profilers, acoustic releases, acoustic modems, altimeters, pingers and remotely operated vehicles.

Coastal Oceanographics offered two full days of classroom training on their HYPACK MAX product.

C-Map installed their CM-93 Electronic Charting software on one of the research vessels to demonstrate how one can monitor the position of a towed instrument right on the navigational chart.

EPC Labs offered training on and demonstrated their full line of thermal graphic recorders and data acquisition systems that display side scan sonar data, sub-bottom profiling data, and satellite imaging data.

Endeco/YSI provided training on the use, calibration and installation of the 6 Series Multi-parameter instrument line featuring CTD, and self-cleaning turbidity, and Chlorophyll as well as their line of V-Fins.

Falmouth Scientific highlighted their 3D Wave Speed and Direction Meter as well as their 3" Micro CTD both ashore and at sea.

GeoAcoustics offered training and at sea demonstrations on their Deep Tow 2000 System, their combined side scan Geo Chirp II, their telemetry systems and their GeoSwath Low Cost Bathymetry Systems.

Mooring Systems demonstrated their miniaturized trawl resistant bottom mount and offered a workshop on Design Considerations for Oceanographic Moorings.

L-3 Communications Sea Beam offered the latest on their complete line of multi beam sonars.

ORE Accusonics demonstrated how their Track Point II positioning system operates onboard the R/V Ocean Researcher.

RD Instruments featured their Workhorse Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler and their Doppler Velocity Log for navigation and positioning both ashore and at sea.

Sea Sciences offered training and harbor demonstrations on their Acrobat Tow Body, their portable electric winch and their rope clutch.

TSS offered training and boat demonstrations on their DMS2-05 Motion sensor and their Meridian surveyor gyro.

Triton Elics International offered training and at sea equipment demonstrations on their topside data acquisition data management systems.

The 4th OTW at a Glance

Tuesday October 19, 2004

12-4PM MOTN Golf Scramble

4PM-6PM Registration at Hyatt Regency Newport

6:30-8PM Welcoming Reception at Hyatt Regency

Wednesday October 20, 2004

7AM-9AM Registration

8AM-4PM MOTN Training Workshops, Hyatt Regency Newport

9AM-4PM At Sea Equipment Demonstrations

6PM-9PM Reception and New England Clam Bake

Thursday October 21, 2004

7AM-9AM Registration

8AM-4PM MOTN Training Workshops

9AM-4PM At Sea Equipment Demonstrations

The Marine and Oceanographic Technology Network (MOTN), a regional association that is committed to expanding the business opportunities of its members by enhancing their marketing presence and business practices through a focused and cooperative approach, are executing the OTW series of. Contact: MOTN, 37 Teneckye Hill Rd. N. Falmouth, MA 02556.

For updates on the agenda and to register to attend, please take a look at www.motn.org/workshop or contact: 781-740-1456, fax. 781-749-1120 e-mail: Martrep@aol.com.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to credit Mr. Ted Curley of EPC Labs with first introducing the Ocean Technology Workshop concept to the board of the Marine and Oceanographic Network in 1995. He made this suggestion out of frustration with how uneconomical many industry trade shows had become. The OTW series is designed to serve the training needs of the participating companies and organizations. The intense training that can be delivered at the OTWs is unique.

Additionally the author would like to express gratitude to the members of the MOTN and all the attendees and training companies of the past three OTWs. Their loyal support and continual ideas for ways to improve the OTWs have built this venue into a highly effective way to be trained on new equipment. Last, but not least I would like to thank Eric Takakjian, captain and owner of the RV Quest for his input in preparing the At Sea Equipment Demonstration part of this presentation.