

Marina

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Essential reading for marina and waterfront developers, planners and operators



The five-level, 250-boat capacity 'boatel' at Top Rack Marina caters for boats up to 40 feet.

It wasn't long thereafter that integrated fuel management within marina management solutions was available from multiple vendors in the marina industry.

Today's options

In the short six years since the introduction of integrated fuel management the functionality and features of fuel management have continued to grow. Marinas have a larger pool from which to select unique solutions from multiple vendors. New features include enhanced visual graphics with visual animations, animated characters, human voice audio notifications, integration with commercial financial software such as Intuit's QuickBooks, ad hoc reporting tools, pay-at-the-pump solutions, etc. Based on this development of available solutions, integrated fuel management was ideal for mainstream acceptance as a core marina management solution module.

Top Rack Marina in Chesapeake, Virginia, USA, highlights the mainstream acceptance of an integrated fuel management system. Top Rack Marina is a full service marina owned and operated by Chesapeake Marina LLC. Opened in 2008, it is a relatively new facility located on mile marker 8.8 of the East Coast's Inter Coastal Waterway (ICW) and, as its name indicates, it set a goal to provide the absolute best amenities and services possible to its customers. Featuring a five-level, 250-boat capacity dry stack boatel that can accommodate

Integration with management software

by Vance Young

For as long as commercial marinas have been in operation, management has always looked for better ways to perform daily tasks. While true for any profession, the myriad of responsibilities faced by marina management in particular emphasises this need. The birth of marina management software solutions brought marina management to a new level as more and more marinas utilised computers in their management offices.

Marina management software solutions have been readily available from multiple vendors for many years. Although each has a similar goal of simplifying the operations of a marina, each encompasses various approaches and platforms. As time has progressed and technology advanced, the size and scope of marina management software solutions has also grown to include all aspects and profit centres of a marina and now includes integrated modules for management of slip/berth assignments, billing, reservations, retail point-of-sale, service, boat rental, restaurant and full accounting functions, to name a few. However, with the never-ending quest for excellence, the obvious next step for marina management has been to include completely integrated fuel dispenser management. With the majority of marinas operating a fuel dock, the incorporation of this step has proven to be quite successful.

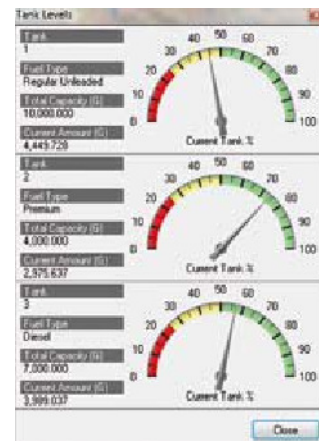
Birth of fuel management

The desire to include an integrated fuel management system in a marina management solution had existed for quite some time before action was taken. One of the primary obstacles

to development was the fact that there were so many different makes and models (including those using older mechanical dispensers) on the market. How would it be possible to correctly communicate with so many options? The arrival of fuel technology answered that question and successfully integrated with a marina management solution.

The first dedicated marina management software solution to include an integrated fuel management system was the MarinaOffice Suite of Solutions by Scribble Software Inc. In spring 2005, the newly integrated fuel management system was installed at a large marina resort in Kentucky. This system accomplished the task of tying the marina management point-of-sale module with the fuel dispenser management system, thus allowing the marina staff to directly authorise, de-authorise, pre-pay and cash out fuel sales directly from the point-of-sale screen.

Incorporating fuel management into the marina management system facilitates fuel sales, payment and stock control.



FUEL SYSTEMS & SUPPLIES



boats up to 40 feet, and the award winning Amber Lantern restaurant, Top Rack Marina is a cut above the competition.

When it came to fuelling operations, Top Rack had to address the needs of multiple types of clientele. Boats being stored in the boatel obviously needed to be fuelled going to and coming from the water. Also, due to its location on the constantly busy Inter Coastal Waterway, it had to cater to boats travelling north and south which stopped for fuel as well as to enjoy a fine meal in the Amber Lantern. With this in mind, Top Rack installed nine Bennett fuel dispenser hoses. Three of these hoses were located on land up near the boatel and the remaining six were located on the fuel dock. To accommodate as many customers as possible, Top Rack offered regular unleaded, premium unleaded and diesel, as well as high-speed dispensing methods.

The marina expanded its operations in the summer of 2011 by opening a retail ship store, enabling it to offer everything from snacks, beverages and deli goods to boating supplies. With the addition of the new ship store, management quickly realised the benefits that a fully integrated marina management software solution would add to their operations.

Considering the needs of dry stack storage, retail ship store, fuel management and a restaurant, Top Rack reviewed its options. With a heavy emphasis on fuel management, the marina finally selected Scribble Software's MarinaOffice suite and, before the new ship store opened, Scribble dispatched one of its many implementation teams to install and configure the management system.

With attention to detail, a significant amount of time was spent locating the appropriate wires that would enable the integration and control of the nine Bennett fuelling dispensers. Upon completion of the implementation, the ship store was outfitted with a new dual screen point-of-sale station merging the software with the integrated fuel management solution. With the flip of a switch, Top Rack's cashiers had complete control of their fuelling dispensers.

Upon further discussions with Top Rack's management, the justification for selecting a complete solution with integrated fuel management was made obvious. They wanted a system that provided a centralised point for all management solutions. The fuel management integration allowed them to control the fuel dispensers and seamlessly post the sales transactions into their QuickBooks accounting with very little effort. They no longer required a separate fuel console on the counter and no longer had to rely on an employee to manually enter the

amount of fuel sold. The integrated fuel management system removed the potential of an employee error. Evidence of this was showcased on the very first day Top Rack opened with the new point-of-sale with integrated fuel management. On day one, a river tug pulled in, requesting fuel. Staff on hand were able to dispense multiple high-speed hoses and easily cashed out over \$5000 worth of diesel with a single swipe of a card. Once the transaction was complete, the dispensers were automatically reset for the next customer.

For the future

Integration of fuel management with marina management systems has come a long way. As technology continues to advance and ideas continue to develop, one can only imagine what the future will bring. While nothing is certain, the ongoing development of integrated fuel management systems leaves much to the imagination. Perhaps, with the explosion of mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets (such as the very popular iPad), integrated fuel management may take a leap into the wireless mobile arena? The one thing that is certain, however, is that the ongoing quest to improve the efficiency of marina management and marina management solutions will continue.

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Above & below: Boats can be fuelled up at Top Rack's extensive fuel facilities, swiftly and accurately. The customer gets good service and marina employee error is eradicated.

