

“Stay curious. Ask questions. Make time to learn. Fix things properly the first time around. If you don’t know something, find someone who does. Know what’s under your feet — this is where you live half of your time. Oh, and safety matters!”? That is the advice that Croatian Chief Engineer, Dejvis (Davy) gives our young cadets.

He joined EXMAR in 1999, celebrating his 26th year sailing with us, and has experienced everything from WAASLAND to CHAMPAGNY.? Congratulations, Davy! Time for a trip down memory lane.

What did your path to becoming chief engineer look like?

“Before joining EXMAR, I walked a bit of a different path than many other Chief Engineers. I sailed as Engine Cadet on Croatian vessels during the start of the war in Croatia. Upon return, I served some years in the Police Special Unit, where I maintained their trucks and engines.

With those skills, I started building my own speedboats. In ten years, I managed to build four boats up to 7 meters, and started a business in beach and holiday activities. I also, still, repair vintage cars, motorcycles and boats. Life was never boring, yet I was looking for something more. That’s why I decided to go back to sailing in 1999, this time as Fifth Engineer with EXMAR.”

What was the switch to EXMAR like for you?

“I boarded WAASLAND for the first time as a young engineer —I was 27 years-old— and thought: ‘Wow, all foreign ships must be like this!’ It was so meticulously organized and tidy, I couldn’t believe my eyes. It completely changed my view of standards forever. I later realised its standards were a league of their own, but all voyages and vessels taught me invaluable lessons. Even today, after so many years on board, EXMAR vessels still amaze me. Like the brand-new and high-tech CHAMPAGNY, which I visited earlier today. On smaller vessels, I handle electrical and automation myself, but here, you need specialists with very specific training.”



What are you most proud of in your career?

“I am proud to have always been more of a maker than a user. My colleagues and I jump from ship to ship, building and improving things, finding ways for people to work better. That mindset has guided me and helped me grow into the Chief Engineer role. I am proud of my career, but not without acknowledging all the colleagues who helped me evolve. I still keep in touch with many of them. I’ll happily take this moment

to thank our famous and retired Chief Engineer Jan Stautemas! As for the future, I’d love to be part of something like a technical squad, —a team of chief engineers working across multiple vessels, sharing knowledge and searching for improvements together, in order to raise the standard of operations on ships. I believe there’s real value in building such a collaborative network within a fleet.”





Tell us some more about your famous ‘Sunday Sessions’?

“I’ve always taken time to share what I know with young people on board. Every Sunday afternoon, I share technical skills. Yes, you can Google what you don’t know, but what’s better than to talk about it? If you’re on a ship for two months, you need to know what’s under your feet. These sessions make sure our standards remain high.

For one hour, I bring everyone down to the office or ECR, pull out a huge whiteboard and give our young cadets and apprentices a notebook. We choose a topic, put it on a page and I teach them all I know. From the basics of electricity and electronics to cooling systems, and from testing electric motors to gaskets and welding... You name it! Whatever I don't know, we look up together; anything to help them develop their knowledge and skills.

It's not about showing off, it's about passing something on. I love it when I see something clicks for someone else, and I will always remain thankful for what my teachers have taught me. After all, everyone has room for improvement."



Any advice for young engineers?

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I started here as a Fifth Engineer in 1999. Now, after 26 years, I enter the Antwerp office and I see all these faces, —they have gotten older.

Then I look in the mirror, and I'm older too! Not that older means wiser automatically, because I also learn from my younger colleagues, but I really hope to transfer as much as possible of my humble knowledge to them. At EXMAR, we are experts, and we all have to keep pushing to remain an example."