

## **Danish team has designs for Chinese shipbuilding**

A group of former Odense shipbuilders are expanding in China by offering to help yards build vessels piece by piece like a set of Lego blocks

Veterans of Denmark's Odense Steel Shipyard have acquired a famous design team to get closer to the action in China, not least in managing production at Chinese shipyards.

Last week, Odense Marine Technology (OMT) picked up the marine business of compatriot Grontmij, including all Copenhagen and Shanghai activities and employees of Grontmij Marine Consulting, as the Euronext-stocklisted Grontmij engineering and consulting group gets out of shipyard design. Terms remain undisclosed, however.

Grontmij is the successor of Graig Grontmij Carl Bro, a former joint venture with Cardiff-based shipowner Graig. Its best-known products are its licenced Seahorse and Diamond bulker designs.

OMT boss Kare Groes Christiansen is keeping all staff and has added 30 engineers and designers in the past six months. He will also continue recruiting both in Denmark and China. The aim is not only to sell ship designs but to get involved in managing shipyard production at a detailed level.

“We come from the country of Lego,” Christiansen told TradeWinds. “You have seen the detailed instructions that are sold with a set of Lego. We would also provide that level of instruction with the ship designs we sell.”

But Christiansen wants to put the other kids' toys together for them as well, it seems. He says OMT is already involved in production of containerships that are being built to competitors' designs in Chinese yards — yards he chooses not to name — as well as giving more general advice on production.

“We want to give them the lowest possible throughput time and highest possible quality,” he said.

OMT is 75% owned by Valcon, Christiansen's engineering consultancy company, and 25% by former employees of the Lindo-based Odense Steel Shipyard, who kept the design and production management team together through a management buyout in 2010 as AP Moller-Maersk exited its 93-year-old yard.

Christiansen is also a former Odense man, who left to start Valcon in 2000.

“Our idea is to package some of the knowledge from Odense about how to run shipyards and use it in China,” he said. “What distinguishes us from other consultants is that we come from a shipyard. We can help with more detailed design and with how to build ships in a more efficient way.”

OMT will gain a well-established Chinese base in the deal. It had previously dealt with customers from its home base and only had ex-Maersk China head Tom Behrens-Sorensen as its representative in the Far Eastern country.

The deal expands OMT’s portfolio of ship types as the two shops specialised in different designs.

Grontmij has designed more than 150 handysize to ultramax bulkers delivered in China on top of gas carriers and feeder containerships. The Graig tie-up ended last year. OMT is better known for large containerships — it was the team behind the 15,200-teu Emma Maersk (2006), the world’s largest boxship when it was delivered.

OMT is not the only European player looking to assist Chinese shipyards in doing their job.

Finnish engine maker Wartsila, which got into the production supervision business in 2008 through a buyout, is also expanding in supervision and project management.

Speaking to TradeWinds at the recent Marintec China trade show, Wartsila Ship Power president Jaakko Eskola emphasised that his company’s growth in the maritime sector is increasingly coming from selling packages of mechanical products, including its engines, as well as extending as far as the bridge of the ship. Along with this, he said, comes detailed involvement in “putting the integrated solution together”.

Supervision and project management remains a small part of Wartsila’s business but it is growing as a service not just for installing engines and mechanical systems.

“Sometimes the yard wants to buy these services from us and learn to do them themselves, [while] some yards want us to continue in the future,” said Eskola.