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May
2017

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crew

TECH TALK

engineer

YACHT BROADBAND 101

By Joe Nocon and Steve Griffin



Today, true broadband connectivity for yachts is not only getting more affordable, it's also getting more manageable in terms of every day data usage. For the captain, the ability to know what the onboard data usage is in real time is essential. After all, the ideal broadband plan for the yacht is one where captain, crew, owners, and charter guests can always access the Internet, check email, and conduct business online, without worrying about slow data speeds or high overage charges.

A captain's first tack is to work with the broadband service provider's tech support team to configure the yacht's network so that priority is given to the owners any time they are on board, ensuring they experience the fastest upload and download speeds for all their online activities. With advanced data management tools, the captain can allocate a certain amount of data to crew, and if there's a spike in data usage, he can see who's using it.

Many yachts have experienced issues where the crew and owner, or crew and charter guests, are competing for the same bandwidth, so we've seen a trend toward usage-based plans that provide the highest speeds; however, if the data is not being managed properly, there can be overage charges, and the captain may be inclined to completely cut off the crew.

Three approaches can keep everyone on board happy.

Data management: Check if the service provider offers a data management portal or service so that the captain can easily check bandwidth usage in real time by simply logging onto the yacht's broadband account. The captain should be able to allocate bandwidth per user on the yacht, to receive alerts if certain data limits are near, and to monitor the satellite broadband network's performance.

Dual airtime plan: Check if the service provider can set up two separate airtime plans with one onboard antenna system. This enables the owners or charter guests to have access to a usage-based plan that provides the fastest data speeds, while the crew can have a separate, fixed-rate plan where overage is blocked. That way, the two groups aren't competing against each other for bandwidth. This solution also increases the amount of total bandwidth available. With a dual airtime plan, the yacht also has a mechanism for re-billing charter guests for their usage if desired.

News and entertainment content delivery: Think about removing the burden on the yacht's airtime plan by choosing to receive news and entertainment content via multicasting. With that technology, the yacht can receive news, sports, movies, and TV programs via the yacht's service provider, but the content delivery doesn't count against the yacht's data allotment. [®]

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