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Tips to optimize a yard period

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When it comes to yacht maintenance, one recurring pattern that results in lost time and

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money is the lack of pre-planning. All yachting professionals are looking out for their owners to help them save money. This often results in a corrective, maintenance-based way of thinking: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Inadvertently, machinery problems aren't registered or addressed until they become a severe issue or cause a failure.

When preparing for your yard period, remember to hire a reliability-centered services company that focuses on preventative and predictive maintenance by way of condition monitoring. This will save you time, money, and headaches.

By, "predicting" what your machinery will do, you are preventing issues from occurring. This reduces the chance of very expensive, significant repair costs that often catch captains by surprise. The following pointers represent modest investments that will save time and money in the long run.

Get a vibration analysis survey

Before your yard period begins, get a vibration analysis survey by a reputable company to prioritize your shipyard needs and service goals. Vibration analysis can spot issues such as:

- Misalignment of couplings, bearings and gears
- Unbalance of rotating components
- Looseness
- Deterioration of rolling-element bearings
- Gear wear
- Rubbing
- Aerodynamic/hydraulic problems in fans, blowers and pumps
- Electrical problems (unbalanced magnetic forces in motors)
- Resonance
- Machinery soft-foot conditions
- Eccentricity of rotating components, such as "V" belt pulleys or gears

Vibration analysis also can pinpoint crucial mechanical elements that need attention, and forecast what problems are likely to appear. A good vibration monitoring program can provide substantial savings in consumed energy, and

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minimize spare parts used and lost production. With your report, you will be able to lay out the needs and goals of your project to ensure your machinery is ready when you need it to be.

Captains and chief engineers may also want to consider doing periodic vibration monitoring of machinery. Monitoring machinery over time provides data that makes any deviation from the baseline noticeable. This allows you to spot trends through consistent measurement and detect faults before they become serious.

Research subcontractors

Research your desired subcontractors and make sure they have the skills and expertise to deliver the desired results and meet your expectations.

Your contractors are vital to maintaining the efficiency of the yard period and keeping you on schedule. Maintaining good communication and ensuring they have thorough information – such as drawings, a work list and technical documents – will help ensure that the yard can adequately accommodate you. Contractors who have skilled labor and are reliable will provide a smoother overall maintenance experience.

Procure parts in advance

Some of the longest yard wait times include waiting for a vital part to be rebuilt or shipped. Some parts can take more than three months to get. Look into what you need before your yard period, then order parts and materials in advance to avoid delays.

Use condition monitoring as a tool

As mentioned, vibration analysis is a great tool to detect potential issues, but there are other predictive and preventative maintenance practices that also allow you to catch problems before they become costly repairs or outages. Another form of condition monitoring is oil analysis. This can help detect early wear on gears, bearing races and other internal machinery components, as well as contamination problems.

Adding predictive and preventative maintenance helps prevent failures by predicting the future condition of your machinery through in-depth analysis. It's essential to have your vessel regularly surveyed for signs of wear and tear – before an unwelcome surprise.

The more preventative maintenance performed, the more significant your ROI will be for the investments you make into your machinery.

Rich Merhige is owner of Advanced Mechanical Enterprises and Advanced Maintenance Engineering in Fort Lauderdale (AMEsolutions.com). Comments are welcome below.

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