

surveyor acceptable to all parties and funded by all was appointed, and whose judgement on the finished coatings was binding on all parties. An evidently sensible approach, which removed the charges of conflict of interest against the surveyor, and brought certainty to the outcome

without a drawn-out period of claim and counter-claim of what had been delivered against expectation. Finally, I was struck by a comment from one of the lawyers present, "Beware of loose language in a contract – 'best' can only be something that you have never achieved before!"

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Applicator Standards

A look at superyacht quantifiable paint/applicator standards and the issues involved from an applicator's angle. Will the proposed ISO standard be enough?

I do believe that we need a paint standard for superyachts and I voiced my opinion on this in the recent coatings conference in Monaco. It is inconceivable that in the multi-billion-dollar superyacht industry, we don't have a defined standard for one of the fundamental major cost components of new builds and refits, that is paint.

Paint has a substantial impact in terms of appearance and overall client satisfaction. It can also be one of the major discussion points in terms of acceptance, delivery and warranty. In just about all other parts of the vessel there are standards, be they for steelwork, engineering, electrical or interior. Many of the components are specific in terms of material, often factory-made and, in any case, must fit strict design criteria.

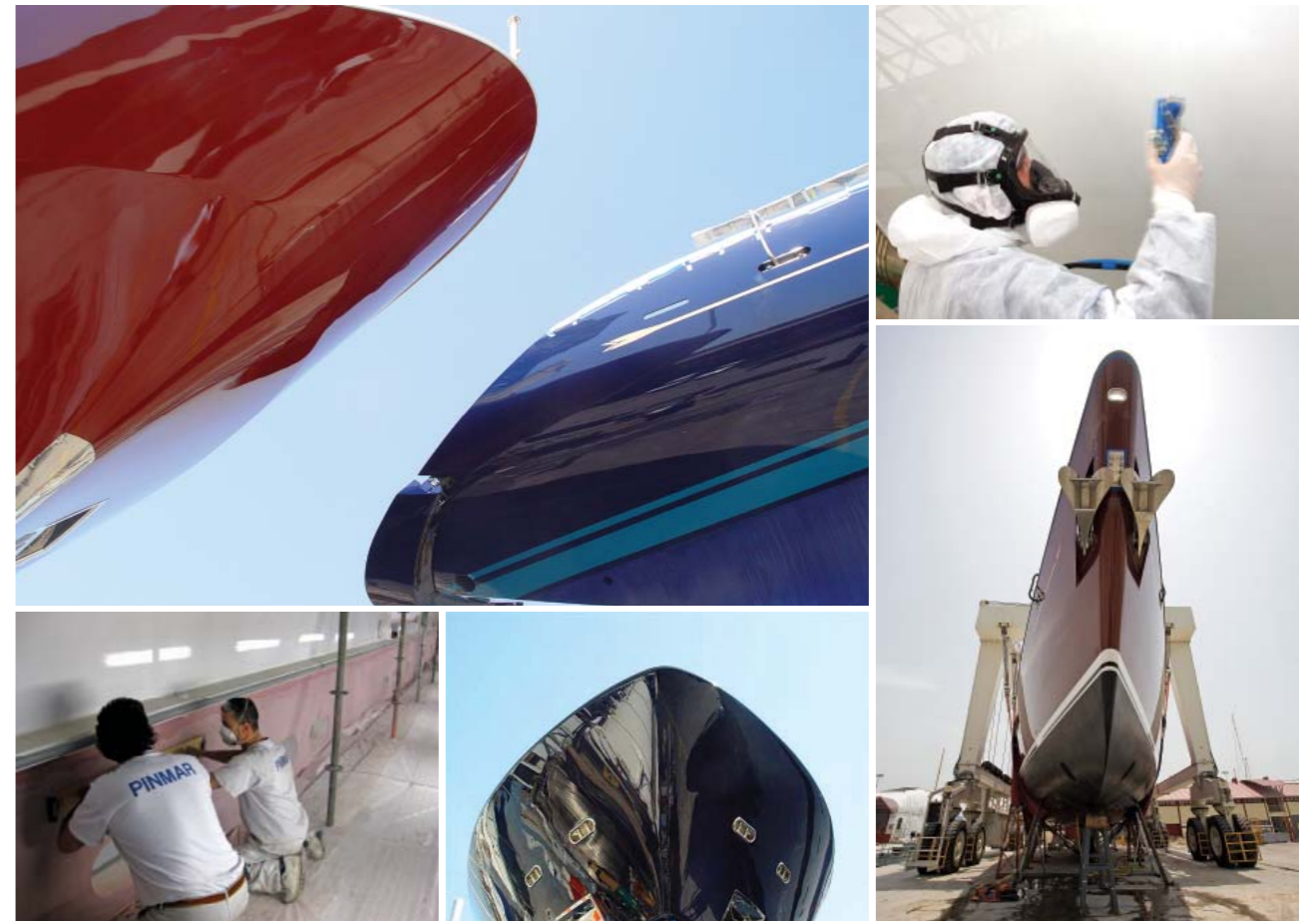
There are many reasons we appear to have now arrived at this necessity for a standard. Significantly, recent legislation has required the modification of products through the need to reduce VOCs and change certain raw materials. As a consequence, the finish is different

and the desired 'wet look' cannot always be achieved. Topcoats are much less flexible and forgiving than they used to be.

Projects are now much bigger; costs are higher and so too are expectations. As the consequences and risks for owners are greater they are seeking outside experts to control and advise. The problem is that the experts do not have any agreed standards defined to which they can insist that a paint job must conform. The basic parameters can of course be monitored, controlled and measured, and quality of application can be assessed...but when it comes to the topcoat assessment, the only thing on offer is their opinion and that is where the problems can start.

There has been a lot of criticism of paint surveyors recently, some of it merited and some not. Specific to agreeing on the merits – or not – of surveyors must be the understanding of what their brief is. Is it a request from the owner or their representative to "Bring me home a free paint job?" Indeed what is the first thing a yard or applicator does when the owner's

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Pinmar at work

surveyor rejects an application? They appoint their own surveyor! If the first two don't agree they bring in a third, so now we have three opinions and that's all they are – opinions.

We all used to know what a great paint job looked like: perfect gloss, silky paint, and we all know what we want, but the problem is we cannot actually have it any more. So we have to find a solution.

The first thing in my opinion is that the manufacturers have to be more open and tell the industry what we can expect from their products. From that we can start to create a standard. Let us call this "achievable expectations and a defined application process". Understandably the manufacturers are reluctant to do this, but can you imagine a high-performance car manufacturer answering the question, "How does it perform?" by "Well, it depends who's driving it, sir"?

There has been some progress in

terms of making people aware of a standard and having specific figures written into contracts. But we still have several problems; as yet clients don't understand what the numbers mean; we cannot agree how to measure them and then people don't always like the finish even if it complies with the criteria.

In my view we need to take the following steps:

1. Make people understand what the products are capable of with openness and clarity; this will involve the manufacturers themselves.

2. Start managing people's expectations. People will not be satisfied if they do not understand both possibilities and limitations.

3. Create a standard that everyone in the industry agrees with – applicators, surveyors, shipyards and clients. This can be done by a process of consultation with key players, which will need panels and documentation. This could then be

used to develop an ISO standard. In general people are a lot more knowledgeable about paint these days, but having a technical knowledge and understanding is quite different from ensuring a good result. We should change the dynamic of having one interested party commissioning and paying the surveyor as it is genuinely difficult to avoid bias...would it be OK if I paid the judge and then asked him to resolve a court case between us? Is this dynamic sensible in our industry, or indeed any industry?

Not only do we require a standard, we require qualified applicators to work to that standard and qualified surveyors to monitor it.

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