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Bespoke shipping software systems became famous in the past decade when large shipping companies figured out how to automate core processes. Nowadays, with the developments in maritime technology, even small vessel operators are able to streamline their business functions, cut operational expenses, and improve staff productivity with the use of advanced shipping software solutions.

However, despite the efficiency and cost benefits of using modern off-the-shelf systems, why do some operators still spend heavily on developing bespoke software applications?

One reason is the fact that in-house or bespoke software applications are developed to exact specifications â€œ a â€œone-size fits allâ€• solution â€œ which operators believe to deliver competitive advantage. In addition, moving away from existing platforms to embrace new technology can be painful for some companies, especially when software applications control key areas of their operations. While some may consider these factors enough to stick with their old system, there are more practical reasons why forward-thinking operators are moving toward packaged.

1. Expediency

Building an in-house system to manage complex shipping tasks requires hiring qualified programmers who will develop, install, and maintain applications. In addition, the process of software development and installation often involves costly trial and errors. On the other hand, packaged liner shipping software solutions are available off-the-shelf, easy to install, and can be tested prior to purchase.

2. Adaptability

Considering the current speed of developments in technology, IT platforms can date very quickly. In order to enjoy the full benefits of modern technology, shipping companies must keep up with that speed of change by regularly upgrading their systems.

Bespoke software applications built on older platforms may require expensive re-programming in order to work properly on modern platforms. Packaged shipping line software on the other hand offer greater flexibility through a â€œswitchingâ€• feature which allows operators to customize applications and regularly upgrade their systems to effectively handle changing business requirements.

3. Cost

Developing a bespoke software application for terminals and ships can cost up to 50 times more than buying an off-the-shelf package. Considering such a big cost difference and with the shipping market not faring very well, cost is a major consideration for many operators and merchants.

Maritime software companies continue to research and develop shipping software solutions in answer to their clientsâ€™ growing needs. Software houses also offer guarantees and free after-sales services for certain periods which makes investing on packaged software more secure and reasonable.

With the development of cheaper and more powerful alternatives to bespoke systems, the days of large shipping companies having significant advantage over smaller ones are essentially over.

Small shipping companies can effectively cut their operational expenses and boost their revenue potentials by choosing the right software solution for their business. Even small vessels nowadays invest in these solutions because of their benefits in terms of cost, efficiency, and productivity. Additionally, operators and merchants are able to forecast expenses and incomes and make intelligent business decisions

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