

Get some industry insights from Marina Broker one of Italy's most successful marine businesses



We interviewed Michele Raugai, broker at Marina Broker, about his thoughts on the marine industry, how the industry has changed over time and what exciting projects he is planning for 2017.



Michele Raugai

already had 20 years of experience in the shipyard Calafuria where he had produced fishing boats from 6 to 12 meters, these were designed by the pioneer Vincenzo Catarzi.

In the early years there were various representatives which included local small shipyards, this however changed with a collaboration and consolidation of all the former dealerships making Azimut Benetti Group the main dealership for Tuscany and Liguria. Demanding and difficult customers enjoyed the changes and were satisfied thus creating a brand that has grown a lot over time. The brand is still well known today for the quality of build, making it an international prestige brand nowadays.

Personally, I consider myself fortunate to have joined this company about 10 years ago becoming Operational Director within 5 years. Our core business is predominantly the brokerage of used motor boats from 30' to 60-70 foot.

How and when did you discover your passion for the marine industry?

I was born and bred whilst growing up in a seaside environment and consequently I blame my parents! I took my first steps, then first dives before playing with a 4mt motorboat coupled with an outboard engine. My love for boats and the sea grew

and my course in life was plotted. I carried out nautical studies and was proficient with a boat before gaining my driving licence.

It was essential for me to meet and mix with like minded individuals which ultimately led to me being in this position.

How has the marine industry changed during your working career? Has the development of technology such as the Internet changed the way you deal with customers?

The industry has changed massively and isn't recognisable anymore. The last 10 years have brought the biggest changes and this has created new and better opportunities. Recently thanks to our international marketing we are receiving enquiries from customers abroad which was never previously possible. Some of these international customers simply berth their boats in Italy to take advantage of spending their vacations in one of the most tranquil and beautiful countries, Italy.

Of course nowadays competition is strong and it is vital to create a strong network of customers. Print media is rarely used now whereas before the Internet all you could do was design an advertisement using a single picture and a small amount of text. Of course, if you want to be successful now you need to create a detailed offer and present your boat in the best way with full specifications and high resolution pics and videos - otherwise you don't even get a response or enquiry.

How do you currently see the marine industry? Have you noticed an improvement to the Italian and international market?

The international marine industry has had better times, our history tells us that, certainly in Italy this goes in cycles and it is influenced by different factors. We have had rosy periods, big investments were made in the industry creating some of the best boats in the world. This involved developing new technology, better human resources and innovation. All of these factors contributed to the saying "Made in Italy"! Sadly this era didn't last and we have had to face less fortunate times where we seem to have lost our capacity to create success from our skills and expertise. In the last couple of years we have seen an increase in enthusiasm within the industry thus keeping our hopes high for the future.

It is essential when you approach an international market to be dynamic and to be able to change a problem into an opportunity. Just recently, our salesman have been overwhelmed by foreign customers

that propose ridiculous offers and are forced to accept them. Looking on the bright side the solution might be to not take on such heavy finance which comes with the sale but to look at better finance options which in theory could lead to better options on new build boats. Within our business the hope is that we will return to producing and building new models.

Do you have an anecdote to tell about your time at Marina Broker?

I have so many stories a book wouldn't be enough to tell all! Sometimes you create a special bond with a boat, it can happen when you produce a new model and then you sell it for it only to return several years later for maintenance and servicing or maybe taken in as part exchange. It has happened where I have actually sold a boat four times. I have a similar experience right now with a boat named "Maria Teresa" but for my client's confidentiality I won't reveal anymore. I've even made some clients so happy I've been invited to holiday with them on board their purchase.

What are your future projects for 2017?

That's easy to explain as we are going to be busy on several fronts. Firstly, we need to list more boats into the brokerage. We are going to concentrate on yachts whilst breaking into the superyacht market looking at boats over 20mts. In doing so, we will be able to offer a much wider range of products.

Our team from Boatshop24 is building websites for boat brokers. How did you decide to use our Infinity website solution for your business?

It's always important to envisage your glass half full not half empty and thus you remain optimistic. We wanted to reorganise our internal resources which would optimise our work and Boatshop24 Infinity seemed the best option to create an effective shop window. Considering it was offered by Boatshop24, a portal that we trusted and that had always delivered strong leads for our boats, it was not a tough decision. Boatshop24 has been incredibly useful to our business especially since we entered the international markets. We also wanted to be the first in Italy using this innovative solution which will drive more traffic to our site whilst generating enquiries from all across Europe.

How do you think Infinity will impact your business and make a true difference?

Well you can be the strongest, the most skilled and the best organisation with the best boats in the world but if you do not know how to communicate it right to the correct target audience, there will always be someone else selling his boats much faster than you. Advertising is the best way to get closer to your client. It is the first step in gaining his trust. This is why we at Marina Broker always try to provide as much information and detail as possible about the boats for our clients. We like to highlight the most important information and take high resolution pictures which we can then share with our customers.

We are confident that Boatshop24 Infinity will make a massive contribution to our business. We want to be visible and easily found on the world wide web. We want a solution that will allow us to send a clear simple message to our customers. An essential tool to the package is the Infinity app that allows us to manage all of our stock directly from our smartphone. Our motto is "always positive and always thinking forward".



Marcello Modesti