

5 Questions to Allen Leatt



[Allen Leatt](#) became chief executive of IMCA, the International Marine Contractors Association, in autumn 2015 after a career with leading contractors in the offshore oil and gas construction sector. International experience in executive and managerial roles is highly appropriate in leading an international association and helping members across many technical and cultural boundaries. Hydro International asked him (and other leaders of organisations) 5 questions.

How would you describe your organisation?

Our mission is simply put – “to improve performance in the marine contracting industry”. Our role and value proposition is to establish a forum for our members in order to improve the industry in key safety, technical, policy and regulatory matters, that are in the best interests of the marine contracting industry. We achieve this through an active committee structure within a matrix of technical subjects and geographic region; a full-time professional secretariat based in London organises and facilitates the output of the association.

Geographically we are organised around five regions: Asia-Pacific, Europe & Africa, Middle East & India, North America, and South America. We have active committee involvement and events in each region throughout the year. We are very strong technically and IMCA is well known and respected for the development of a library of over 200 technical guidance and best practice documents to improve industry performance. These documents cover a broad range of technical disciplines, including diving operations, marine operations, ROV operations and offshore survey operations. They are very important in setting the recognised industrial standard of good practice, and are used extensively by our members and by oil companies and marine renewable energy developers alike.

As well as the technical dimension of our work, we are also very active in the policy and regulatory sphere, and represent our members with important national and international regulators. IMCA has a consultative membership status of IMO (the International Maritime Organization), which is an agency of the United Nations responsible for international shipping regulations. We take that membership very seriously.

Who are the members of your organisation?

We have around 1,000 members, representing the vast majority of offshore marine contractors and the associated supply chain - worldwide. We have a range of membership categories, including: global contractors who are the recognised industry leaders and have a global operational footprint; international contractors who have a strong presence in numerous geographic markets; national contractors who have strong regional market positions; equipment suppliers to the industry; training and personnel agency suppliers to the industry; and corresponding members including governmental and non-governmental organisations. This reflects a strong and resilient membership portfolio who we are proud to represent.

How is capacity building strengthening your strategy to achieve your goals?

Where we are in the current business cycle, I see no capacity being added – quite the reverse. After a 10-year bull market driven by USD100 oil, our industry is rapidly adjusting to the market and economic realities of USD50 oil. This means cost cutting, restructuring, and taking capacity out of the market. Our industry has always been cyclical in nature, but this serious readjustment is particularly hard for us all, since the collapse in demand has been so rapid and acute. In such an environment, there will be opportunities of course for companies to re-position themselves and perhaps redefine the marketplace - which could have a tremendous upside, a growing number of our members are actively involved in the marine renewables industry, particularly the offshore wind sector. Equally, I am confident that our industry will adjust its cost base to be competitive in the industrial new landscape, and will emerge far leaner and more efficient than in the heydays of rapid growth.

Do you foresee any developments that will significantly change the hydrographic sector?

There is always the possibility of course that some new technology will come along and redefine the sector; however, historically our industry is perhaps better characterised by a relentless series of incremental improvements, rather than a single step-change in technology. Unlike the smartphone industry we don't need to invent a new App every day, but we are very good at continuously improving every day, and we are very good at innovating technically and commercially. I am sure there will be plenty of opportunities for our industry to exercise these skills while climbing out of the current down-cycle.