

Yachting Matters Spring 2006

Could this summer's crop of new technology make those lazy, hazy days of summer even more fun?

There are so many new and exciting products available at the moment that we have decided to limit ourselves to a selection of items which we feel are of particular relevance to advanced yachts. These fall into roughly three categories:

Pleasure

- High Definition TV – World Cup football on HDTV
- IPTV – TV broadcasts via the Internet and mobile phone
- Sky TV by Broadband – download movies and sport from Sky TV

Any Other Excuses Needed to Stay Afloat?

- IP Communications – VoIP - Skype
- Use your own GSM phone on board, no matter where the yacht is cruising
- The coolest gadget yet - the Jasjar

Safety and Security

- Off Yacht Backup and Restore Solutions
- Med Weather on your Mobile Phone

Pleasure

a) High Definition TV

HDTV has been getting media attention for several years now, and if you go to almost any electronics shop you will see a fairly good selection of HDTV sets on display.

If you have ever looked at one of these sets, you can see that the image they display is sharper and wider - it is more like a cinema screen than a TV set!

The higher resolution produces a picture with more clarity than you have ever seen before, and would ever have believed possible – you literally can't believe your eyes! Films retain their original width, which improves your home cinema experience. Furthermore, you get to see even more of the football pitch, which could greatly enhance your viewing of the 2006 World Cup...

HDTV is high-resolution digital television (DTV) combined with Dolby Digital surround sound. HDTV is the highest DTV resolution in the new set of standards. It is this combination which creates the stunning image and sound. HDTV requires new cameras, production and transmission equipment at the HDTV stations, as well as new equipment for reception by the consumer on the yacht. The higher resolution is the main selling point for HDTV.

Last year we predicted that by this summer Sky TV (the only English language sat TV in the Med) would be transmitting a large number of channels in HDTV format. In order to take advantage of this, you will need new HDTV screens, new sleek Sky HD Digiboxes and the new Sky HD subscription. The Sky HD box has all the features of the SkyPlus box and will be able to record high definition as well as standard transmissions. You will be able to use your existing stabilised TV antenna, LNB and distribution cabling. However, the cable from the Sky HD box to the new HDTV screens will be different. This will only work if the Sky HD box is alongside the HDTV screen.

If you are a football fan then this could well transform your essential viewing during the World Cup this summer, as Sky and other broadcasters may well be broadcasting games in HDTV format.

b) IPTV

Open almost any national newspaper, industry report or technology magazine and you are likely to find an article on IP or more specifically on IPTV. IPTV is the hot topic for all technology companies from the large telcos to the young companies.

IPTV is the delivery of TV programming to your mobile, your home, yacht or office via your broadband data connection rather than your terrestrial TV or satellite TV antenna. Albeit IPTV has relatively small penetration at present, in the UK last year it was the fastest growing digital medium in the latest regulatory report on the UK market.

What does this mean for yachts? When a yacht is not in port it does not have a copper wire connecting it to shore. Thus, even if the "TV satellites" are made redundant, the yacht will still need to use high speed (broadband) data connections to receive TV and these are also only accessible wirelessly. One wireless option is via satellite (VSAT available now, limited reception area, cheapest option and BGAN soon, wide reception but currently expensive) and the other via a shore based antenna when in range (3G UMTS or HSDPA).

Thus the traditional satellite TV dome may disappear but it may well be replaced by a second VSAT dome or BGAN antenna. However, as most yachts in the Med, even when in cruising mode, spend 95% of their time on the coastline where 3G and soon HSDPA will be available, they should be able to get TV reception without the need for a dome.

The big shift to IPTV is a long way off but it is already available and will expand during 2006. We do not expect a complete shift from satellite delivery of TV, but the industry emphasis is that the copper wire entering the home or office and the wireless broadband connection is expected to do more than it currently does.

IPTV is already available on 3G mobile phones in Europe. In February I was watching the Winter Olympics live on my mobile phone. In a few weeks I will be replacing my standard shaped mobile phone with a Jasjar, the hottest new gadget, which has a more suitable screen for watching TV and videos (more of this product later). The picture is pretty amazing and the delivery is a little ragged but with the gradual increase of 3G performance from 384kb to 3Mb this year this will no longer be an issue for TV. The UK digital satellite pioneer Sky, as already mentioned above and below, have a Sky Mobile and Sky Mobile TV service. Refer to their website www.sky.com/skymobile for further information. Sky Mobile TV will only be available to UK contract holders.

So, if you are kitted out with the correct 3G equipment this summer you will be able to watch IPTV anywhere a 3G signal is found. A number of our clients reported excellent coverage throughout most of the Med coastline last summer, so it should be even better this summer.

I am sure a number of you are thinking “we may be able to watch IPTV on our phones but we won’t be able to afford it as the data costs are so high!” Well here’s some good news – as we expected, Vodafone have just announced a dramatic reduction in their data tariffs for this summer making all these services affordable.

c) Sky TV by Broadband

On 10th January, Sky also launched, along with Sky Mobile, Sky by Broadband which enables Sky TV subscribers to download Sky programmes, including movies and sport, to their computers. Sky is giving millions of viewers the ability to download movies legally, and to keep up with Sky whilst on the move. This would be a very interesting content supplement for the DVD library and the media server onboard the yacht. However there is a hitch.

Richard Freudenstein, Sky’s Chief Operating Officer, said “his clients expect to be able to access content whenever and wherever they want”. If you read the website (same web address as above) it is clear that if you are officially UK based, with a Sky subscription for Movies 1 & 2 or Sports 1 & 2, you have a UK email address and access to the Sky website from a location anywhere within the UK, then yes it is “wherever they want”. However, any website can detect the country from which a hit originates, and block access if necessary. It’s a shame as this would be a great new service for yachts.

Any Other Excuses Needed to Stay Afloat?

a) IP Communications

There is absolutely no reason to stay in the office or at home with the advent of IP communications. Otherwise referred to as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or the ability to make a telephone call over the Internet. Our most common exposure to VoIP is Skype.

What additional excuse will IP communications give the owner of a yacht to use his yacht more this summer in the Med? The first and most obvious is that by using IP communications his communication costs will be significantly reduced. If the yacht has VoIP capability then the calls made by the owner when the yacht is anywhere in the world can be configured to be local calls relating to his country of residence or his office location and would obviously be considerably cheaper. If the owner is calling his office or home which is also VoIP capable then the calls will cost nothing. It would be like being in the office or at home, but much more fun. Additionally, to improve crew morale, we have configured "Skype for Crew" on a number of yachts this year to enable crew to call friends or family who are on Skype at no cost to the owner. So IP communications provide for cheaper communications and a happier crew!

Secondly IP based communications can offer a host of exciting new business, yacht and pleasure applications with capabilities for collaboration, contact centres, instant messaging, conferencing, off-yacht backup, home newspaper printing and many other uses. These IP applications can make the yacht a fully functional floating office.

b) Use your GSM on board when the yacht is anywhere

I am assuming that owners would use their yachts more if communication back to their business interests were transparent and easy. I am also assuming that a potential charter guest who is relying on a call coming in to clinch a huge deal would be more prepared to book that week if he or she were confident they would receive that call. I think I can also assume that entire families would be happy if the kids can continue texting their mates...

What if those all essential calls were to be received on the owner's or charter guest's own mobile phone, thus eliminating the need to pass on new phone numbers or let anyone know where they will be over next week?

It is now possible to turn the yacht into a floating GSM cell that roams around the oceans. Anyone can make and receive a call or text message on their own mobile phone or mobile number on the yacht from anywhere in the world.

c) The coolest gadget yet - the Jasjar

Eventually we have the first product that represents the true convergence of the PDA and 3G phone in one. The Jasjar is a PC, personal organizer, mobile phone, digital camera, video recorder, gaming console, MP3 player, voice recorder, video player and speakerphone. It uses Windows Mobile and can communicate via 3G, GPRS, GSM, Wi-Fi. It has Skype, photo and video library and multimedia management, Word, Excel, Acrobat and Powerpoint. It also has software to enable you to keep in touch with your PC in the office, on the yacht or

at home when you are on the move. It is very useable with a qwerty keyboard and great pivoting screen that can be used like a tablet PC.

Any discerning and self respecting high tech yacht should replace all their guest laptops with these. The guests can sit on deck and do everything they could with the laptop but also use it to collect their own video footage, photos, email and listen to their own music. With the addition of further software it could probably also be used to control and select music or movies from the onboard media server. I bet the captain would want one as well!

Safety and Security

a) Off Yacht Backup and Restore Solutions

This is a simple new service that fills a genuine need. It provides an automatic, secure, off-site backup for all or selected data on the complete IT network or a single PC or laptop on today's complex yacht.

In our experience well over 80% of yachts do not have an IT Disaster Recovery Plan and even those that do, do not practice it. Off yacht backup storage is unheard of until now. This new Off Yacht service has been created by E3 and Clunk Click. E3 are the yacht technology specialists and Clunk Click is one of the best of breed backup and restore specialists. The service copies the selected data at a specific time each day, compresses and encrypts it and then transfers it by a broadband connection and stores it on a series of secure servers. The data is so well encrypted that neither E3 nor Clunk Click can see the data. Each day the data copied is incremental, thus saving time and money.

The system is very simple to set up and use and, once in use, access to anything from a complete restore to a selected file is very straightforward. This unique, inexpensive service also has backstop support provided by E3. They will monitor your backups and will notify you of any changes in your routines, such as not having made a backup for 5 days. The service will work over any broadband connection. However it is ideally suited to a yacht with VSAT. This is a Disaster Recovery Plan that works.

b) Med Weather on your mobile phone

Another simple new service is that provided by Metmarine. They provide world wide marine weather forecasts, in English, direct to registered mobile phones. There's no signup, credit card or contract required. You simply text the code of the area you want and you receive a text with the latest forecast straight back set out in the following format:-

Today from 07:00 CEST 28/06/2005

1014mb Falling Slowly to 1013mb
Wind WSW 1 Backing S 3

Visibility Good
Mostly Sunny, Max Temp 26C, Sea Temp 25C

Tonight from 19:00 CEST 28/06/2005
1013mb Falling Slowly to 1010mb
Wind S 3
Visibility Moderate
Mostly Sunny, Max Temp 24C, Sea Temp 25C

Tomorrow from 07:00 CEST 29/06/2005
1010mb Falling Slowly to 1009mb
Wind SSE 2 Veering S 3
Visibility Good
Occasional Thunder, Max Temp 25C, Sea Temp 25C

Simple, neat and inexpensive.

For further information, go to our website www.e3s.com . Select Contact for Links and select Information for downloadable Fact Sheets and Brochures.

Roger Horner is Managing Director of the E3 Systems Group. The E3 Group specialise in providing solutions and solving problems in every aspect of electronics on today's most sophisticated yachts. They have offices in Palma, Antibes and Barcelona.

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