

Interview: Bob Black, CEO, Seebyte

Five Minutes with

Bob Black, CEO, Seebyte

SeeByte, the Edinburgh-based developer of the software for managing unmanned and remote assets, recently appointed Bob Black as its new CEO. Black, who joins Seebyte from Capgemini, where he headed its Oil & Gas division in Aberdeen, will be tasked with the mission to take SeeByte deeper into global Energy and Defense markets, where its customers already number 11 of the world's leading Navies, several major oil companies and global offshore contractors. Black recently took the time to share with Marine Technology Reporter and its readers his insights on the company, his new position, and the subsea market in general.

— by Greg Trauthwein, Editor



How did you initially take an interest in the maritime/subsea industry?

I've spent the last 20 years building technology and consulting businesses in the Defense & Security and Oil & Gas sectors, but never both sectors at the same time. SeeByte has great traction in the Military sector, and is perfectly poised for stronger growth in the Oil & Gas sector. The opportunity to join SeeByte as CEO was a great opportunity for me to deploy market knowledge from both sectors to drive the growth of a company.

How would you describe your management style?

The principal job of any manager is to create an environment where teams can be successful. Managers achieve very little on their own. SeeByte has a remarkable team of creative and talented people assembled from around the globe. My principal objective is to ensure that our culture

and environment removes any blockers to their success.

Briefly describe SeeByte and its position in the subsea marketplace?

At its very core, SeeByte creates advanced software that's used for managing unmanned and remote assets. We assist our customers in transforming their raw data into information that can be used for asset management and the operation of underwater vehicles. SeeByte aims to eliminate the difficulties faced by operators and to make their work safer, quicker and more accurate. We operate in the military and energy sectors, with a vision to become the premier smart-ware provider for owners and operators of remote vehicles and platforms.

What attracted you to accept the top spot at SeeByte?

I've always believed that if you get

enough smart people together then anything is possible. SeeByte has retained a technology lead thanks to the quality of our people, and has a great track record of debt-free profitable growth. With the quality of our team and the opportunities before us, the potential was too attractive to ignore.

Taking the helm as CEO of SeeByte, what do you count as your biggest challenges relating to the company?

As I mentioned, SeeByte has a reputation as a quality provider of smart software solutions. What people don't realize is that we also have a great record of de-risking and fielding novel technologies from concept through to production. It is this aspect of the company that intrigues me as it has not been as well promoted in the past as it should have been. I feel it's an area where we can offer significant experience to our cus-

tomers, so it's something I am keen to drive in the future. At SeeByte we aim to help our clients adopt new and better operating practices through the deployment of our technologies.

What do you count as the most significant subsea technologies that have helped us to work underwater more efficiently and safely?

I would have to say that the advent of robotics has been instrumental in making the shift from shallow waters to deep waters, efficiently and safely. **In both the military and offshore industries, UUV's are helping operators reduce the risk to humans and the environment.** However, most of the systems in use today are fairly basic when it comes to their software capabilities; I think that SeeByte can make a real difference in the future of safety and efficiency with our SMART software offering. At the moment, our focus on autonomy is, in my opinion, key in enforcing efficiency and safety in underwater scenarios, by allowing ROV's to reason and make decisions to assist the human operators.

How is SeeByte investing today to ensure its viability tomorrow?

Well, clearly my appointment is a statement of intent that we are looking to strengthen our management and skills as we improve and grow our global footprint. Already 75% of our revenues come from exports, despite our team remaining predominantly based in the UK; it's a firm view that through investing in our staff today we will be set to progress globally in the future. In relation to our product-base, SeeByte prides itself on being at the forefront of SMART technology, and by remaining firmly invested in state-of-the-art technology and solu-

tions I think we will ensure our future viability and success.

Share with us your outlook on business for the coming few years?

I think there is a great opportunity for SeeByte to penetrate the Asian region,

and this is actually something that we are currently progressing at this moment, so geographically this is a focal point for the future. In terms of advancements in technology, the military and oil & gas space has been

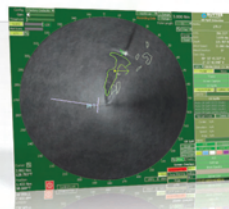


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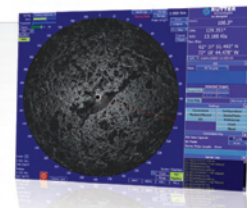


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investing in autonomous underwater vehicle technology and I feel we are in an ideal position to help progress with this, having invested a significant resources in the future of autonomy.

What do you consider to be the biggest challenges to your company in terms of: Legislation?

More than half of our revenues come from export, with the U.S Military as one of our main customers. The legislation involved in legally exporting

software with potential military application remains a challenge for us.

Technical Matters?

I'd have to say that the global lack of standardization in data formats and the differing exchange of data between systems can at times prove a difficulty – especially since one of our main focuses is on the plug-and-play, simple to use concept of technology.

Competition?

In the past our biggest competitor has

actually been the status-quo. It is hugely challenging to persuade large organizations like the military and oil companies to adapt to the latest advancements in software technology, even when doing so would be to their benefit. Perhaps surprisingly, in our experience government clients have been quicker on the uptake than large commercial organisations. As a small company, it can be difficult for our value propositions to gain sufficient traction and momentum to cut through established ways of doing things.

At its very core, **SeeByte** creates advanced software that's used for managing unmanned and remote assets.

Bob Black, CEO, Seebyte

