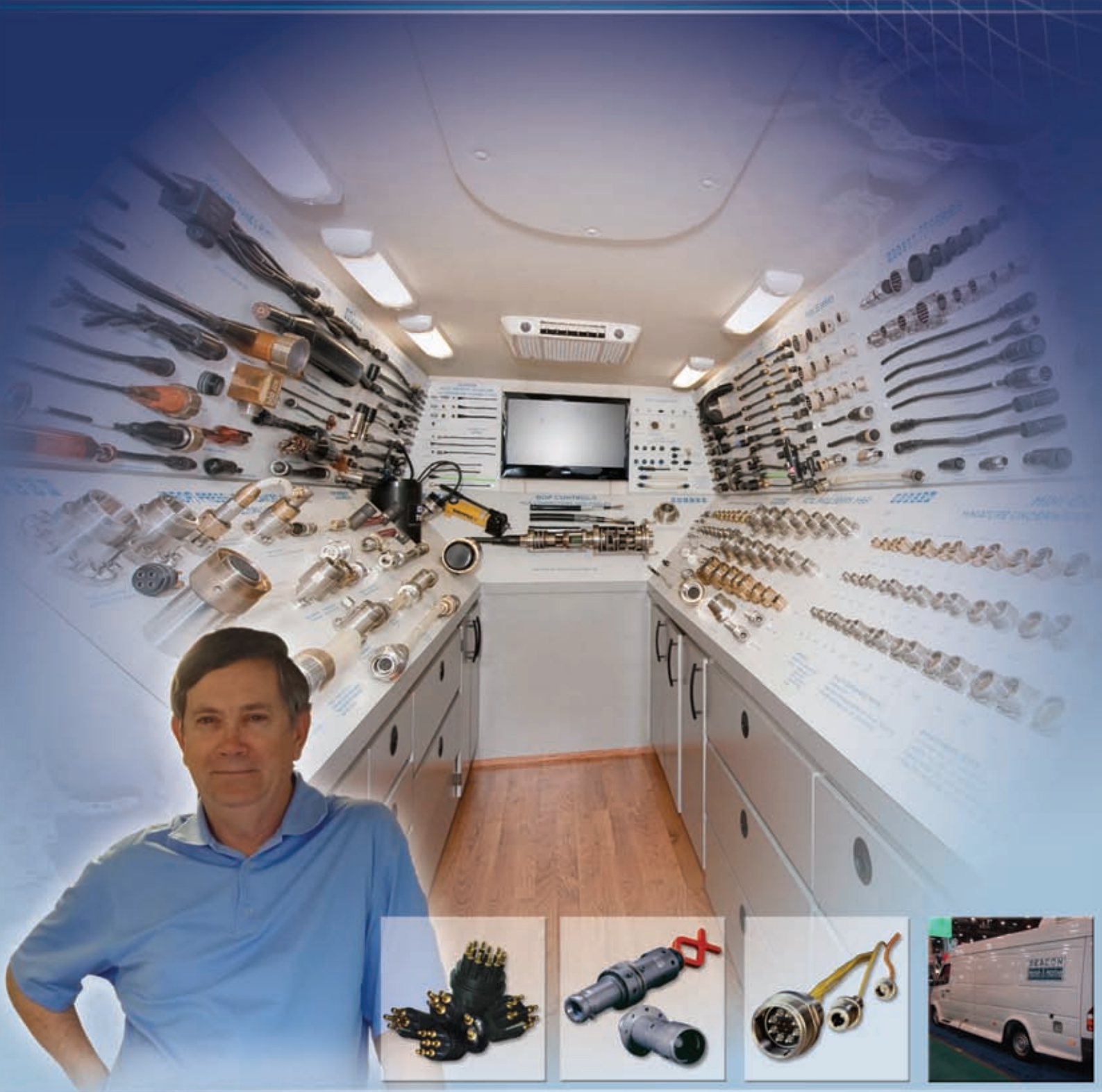


INTERNATIONAL Ocean Systems

The Magazine for Ocean Professionals



**CONNECTORS/CABLES/WINCHES;
OFFSHORE RENEWABLES/OFFSHORE TECHNOLOGY**



Taking the product to the customer

By Michael Mulcahy, president, Michael Mulcahy & Associates, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

SEA CON®'s mobile connector display vehicle

A supplier can provide information on its products to potential customers in many ways – including brochures, websites and catalogues – but many customers prefer to actually see and touch the product. This can be relatively easy to accomplish when the product range and/or samples are relatively small; however, when more than 40,000 different electrical connector configurations are involved, the challenge becomes daunting.

In March 1996, SEA CON® developed an innovative approach to reach its far-flung customer base. Rather than visiting customers with a few samples in a case, SEA CON® introduced its 'connector display van'; the first of two consecutive vehicles operating over the last 16 years, each one a showroom on wheels with hundreds of different underwater connectors. The first van, which operated continuously from 1996-2005, showcased 15 SEA CON® connector product ranges,



Display van at the Offshore Technology Conference



Glenn Pollock, SEA CON®'s Gulf and Midwest sales manager

including the Metal Shell (MSS), Glass Reinforced Epoxy (GRE), MINI-CON and ALL-WET connector series.

The van concept offers a number of advantages over a static display, including the following:

- Ability to connect with the 80-90% of engineers and other technical personnel who do not regularly attend trade shows, but who have input into OEM buying decisions.
- Mobility of the entire displayed product collection.
- Customer ability to see, touch and relate to connectors' appearance and physical scale.
- Flexibility of interchanging displayed products on the fly.
- One-on-one discussion of alternative

solutions to various customer applications and final configuration scenarios.

Operating out of its home base in Houston, Texas, in nine years of service the mobile showroom visited 35 US states, covering more than 160,000 miles (257,440 kilometres) and hosting more than 5000 visitors. Two stops in particular enabled reaching 50-80 visitors (four at a time) at a single location. In 2005, SEA CON®, after consuming three van engines, retired the original van and, in March 2006, introduced a new, updated mobile showroom, also operating out of Houston.

The new van could accommodate several hundred connectors in more than 20 SEA CON® product ranges. In five years of operation this second-generation van visited 42 states and British Columbia,

Canada, traversed 140,000 miles (225,260 kilometres), and hosted thousands of visitors. Although the van executed its mission well, SEA CON®'s ever-expanding product range ultimately dictated that SEA CON® retrofit the van in 2011 to accommodate its latest products.

The 2012 version of SEA CON®'s display van contains nearly 1000 samples of the company's connector products. Its wheels hit the road in March 2012, and an ambitious itinerary for this year has already begun.

More than 25 SEA CON® product ranges are now displayed in the van, including the following connector series:

- Hummer
- MINI-CON (Optical and Electrical)
- WET-CON/Micro WET-CON
- OPTI-CON
- Metal Shell (MSS)
- 55 & 66 Series
- SEA MATE
- Glass-Sealed

- Glass-Reinforced Epoxy (GRE)
- HYDRALIGHT
- CM2000

In addition, the van showcases some of the applications where SEA CON® products are used including:

- Blowout preventer (BOP) multiplex connectors and cables (electro-optical).
- Cable and connector series (underwater camera, light, sensor and inspection applications).
- MIL-SPEC systems.
- Downhole fibre optics.
- Proximity and limit switches.
- Towed array inserts and connectors.

In each of its incarnations, the SEA CON® mobile product display vehicle has provided year-round coverage, with its itinerary set as much as possible to allow its physical presence at major offshore oil conferences in the US and Canada. The van annually visits all four quadrants of the US on a rotational basis, staffed by experienced



SEA CON® products



One of SEA CON®'s displays inside the vehicle

SEA CON® personnel who conduct marketing presentations at each destination.

SEA CON®'s willingness to try a new, unconventional approach to the challenge of connecting with geographically dispersed current and prospective customers has paid off in terms of improved customer contact, communications and sales. The van's configuration continues to reflect the latest developments in SEA CON®'s product evolution.

Glenn Pollock, SEA CON®'s Gulf and Midwest sales manager and in-house expert on van operations and marketing, says that the ability to reach out to multiple influential visitors at each location and the inherent mobility of the vehicle have enabled the display van to pay for itself many times over.

Visit the display van at the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC), 30 April to 3 May 2012, on SEA CON®'s booth #5255 ■

Michael Mulcahy is a former US Navy officer and former Sea Technology magazine managing editor. He has written more than 100 ocean science and engineering articles. His interests include undersea connectors and cables, marine engineering, naval architecture, commercial diving, ROV operations and ship salvage engineering.

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