GO for SET Maritime toolkit to tackle software selection challenge for shipping

A new Software Evaluation Toolkit is being launched for free use across the shipping industry that is designed to enable ship owners and managers to make better informed decisions on digital solutions necessary to achieve decarbonisation of their fleets.

The unique toolkit, named SET Maritime, is vendor-neutral and has been developed by US-based software-as-a-service provider OrbitMI for the sole purpose of simplifying the software selection process as the industry seeks to navigate the vast landscape of digital solutions.

There are currently scores of applications available from a total of more than 550 different software vendors in various categories such as vessel performance monitoring, voyage management and optimisation, navigation, cargo & vessel tracking, port operations, logistics and procurement.

The maritime technology market has exploded in recent years to meet increasing industry demand for such software that is intended to support better decision-making in areas like voyage routing and fuel consumption to drive lower emissions in line with new regulations, as well as cost savings.

'User-defined benchmarking'
It is estimated that, aside from new fuel technologies, digitalisation of the existing fleet will account for around half of efficiency gains needed for decarbonisation of shipping to meet the IMO's goal for at least a 50% reduction in CO_2 emissions by 2050 compared with the 2008 level.

"Digital solutions are vital to meet the environmental challenge and regulatory pressure is compelling companies to be more data-driven in their culture and organisation," says OrbitMI chief executive Ali Riaz.

"But one obstacle for the industry has been the lack of suitable user-defined benchmarking criteria to assess the bewildering array of applications available.

"Consequently, there has been little understanding of how to evaluate different applications so the whole business of software selection has been poorly informed, which has proven a big barrier to adoption."

Vendor ranking
To address this pressing industry need, SET Maritime serves as a structured toolkit with a range of criteria to evaluate software vendors in various categories including company profile, solution architecture, usage and extendibility, reports, dashboards and visibility, pre- and post-fixture features, and voyage management and operations.

Presented in an easy-to-use workbook format, the freely downloadable and customisable open-source toolkit allows software vendors to be ranked by the user according to their scores in each category.

In each category, users assign rankings on a scale of 1-4 with the following meaning:
      1 - Vendor does not offer this feature at all.
      2 - Vendor does not offer this feature but there is a workaround.
      3 - Vendor offers this feature and it requires manual intervention to execute.
      4 - Vendor offers this feature and it is integrated or automated.

Once all sheets are completed, SET Maritime generates a simple chart to visualise scores for easy comparison.

The toolkit is designed to be shared across different company departments for specialist evaluation in each category to contribute to the selection process.

"This is a toolkit to help the shipowner decide and is designed to greatly simplify the software selection process in support of wider implementation of digitalisation across shipping for future compliance with a greener regime," Riaz says.

Commercial driver
Sharing data from interconnected digital systems will become increasingly necessary in future for regulatory reporting on emissions and other areas - and there will be a heavy cost for non-compliance, he says.

Pollutive ships could face stiff financial penalties, as well as possible detentions, if as is likely the EU's Emissions Trading System is implemented for the maritime industry from 2023, while leading shipping associations are calling for a global levy on ship emissions, according to Riaz.

Another compelling commercial driver for increased adoption of software solutions is that these can deliver significant savings in areas like fuel efficiency, voyage planning and preventive maintenance through big data technologies such as AI-driven machine learning, he says.

"Making software selection decisions based on the right set of criteria is essential to deliver these productivity gains and a return on the company's digital investment," he adds.
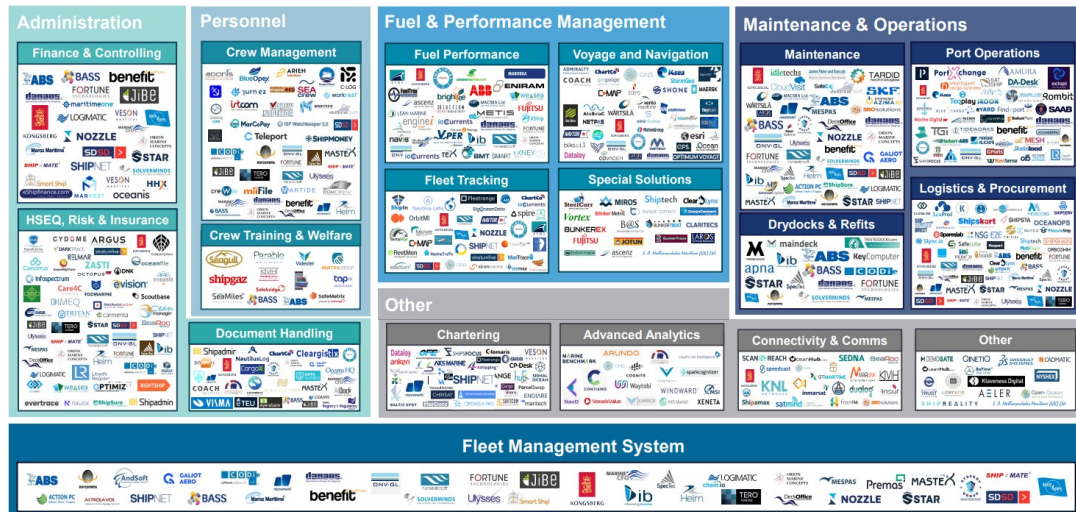
Collaborative effort
OrbitMI, which provides vessel performance management software, is advocating greater cross-industry collaboration to promote an API (Application Programming Interface) economy to unlock significant value in shipping - both for the environment and business.

In this spirit of collaboration, the company has brought onboard several supporters - software players Kongsberg Digital, SEDNA and DTN, the Kognifai digital marketplace, shipowner Stena Bulk, and media firms The Digital Ship, Marine Money and Blue-C - in a joint effort to promote SET Maritime to the wider industry.

This is only the first version of the toolkit that is being launched as part of an ongoing promotional campaign, with additional supporters being sought to come onboard. If you are interested in supporting SET Maritime, please contact: info@getsetmaritime.com.

For more information contact:
Mail: info@getsetmaritime.com

The size of the maritime software market has mushroomed in recent years. Credit: Kongsberg Digital