



THE NEW NORMAL

by *Charlie Levine, BWI President*

When setting up a sea trial for a boat review recently, the first question I asked the Ft. Pierce, Florida-based boatbuilder wasn't about the displacement, power options, fuel burn or deadrise. I asked how many people would be on the boat and what was the company policy regarding wearing masks? These are the times we are living in. We have to be careful, but with boat shows cancelled and travel restrictions looming over us, the opportunity to get out and test a new boat had me extremely amped. It's been months since I ran a new boat.

While the number of cases continues to spike, especially where I live in Florida, there has been a wave of good news for the boating industry. A lot of reporting about the influx of new boaters and a rise in boat sales has been published in the mainstream media lately. Dealers are running out of inventory. Used boats are getting top dollar. Available personal watercraft and even kayaks are tough to find. But the boat builders I've spoken to are thinking about the future, and they're concerned. Nearly all of the upcoming boat shows have already decided to cancel or dip their toe into the "virtual"

experience. Builders are sitting on new models and they need to get the word out, but they're not sure how to do it. Boating companies need communicators now more than ever, and we need them, too. Without advertising support we can't do what we do. And with no press events, it's darn near impossible to report on new products. Yes, we can write stories based off of press releases, but that's lazy and transparent. To write engaging copy we need to touch the product, feel how it performs and ask tough questions. We also need photography and video, and relying on the builders to provide imagery and video assets is tricky at best.

So what do we do? I wish I had an answer, but I tossed out my crystal ball months ago because it kept steering me wrong. I will say, however, that creativity and quality will rule the day. I'm lucky that I work with a great team at Power & Motoryacht and we've been brainstorming some new concepts that I'm really excited about.

Despite all of the struggles we're dealing with as we shuffle work and family while trying to stay safe, I will say that I'm eternally grateful for the extra time I've had with my family

these last few months. Yeah, we had to cancel a trip to Lake Tahoe and I scrapped a fishing adventure to Panama, but I did put my 7-year-old son Max on a redfish that he'll remember for the rest of his life. And we finally got my 5-year-old swimming like a fish after two failed summers of lessons.

You have to take the good with the bad, and even though I can't wrap my head around the idea of sending the kids back to school, I'm going to make the most of this extra time together. That's all you can do to cure these pandemic blues, and most importantly, stay safe out there!

Inside this issue:

Page 02
GPS Under Fire

Changing Strategies
(cont. on page 03)

Page 03
Member News

Page 04
Calendar of Events &
New Members

GPS UNDER FIRE

BoatUS announced that the FCC gave the green light to mobile satellite services operator Ligado Networks, a private equity company, to build and operate a land-based industrial 5G wireless network. Some speculate that it will negatively impact the reliability of the nation's GPS system and harm boating safety.



Ligado's portion of the licensed "L-Band" spectrum (normally designated for space-based navigation and communications) is located near lower frequency bands used by hundreds of millions of GPS units in public safety, health, government, transportation, military, commerce, agriculture and other sectors. BoatUS believes that as the Ligado network is rolled out, instances of signal interference will increase. This will give current GPS users no choice but to either purchase new GPS units, or potentially suffer continued interference.

Presumably, the FCC's decision "disregarded ample evidence highlighting the interference issue, ignored established technical standards, relied only on limited studies with vague and impractical criteria to access interference, and was made during the COVID-19 pandemic when a final decision was circulated only among the five FCC commissioners as stakeholders were dealing with the health crisis."

It has been reported that the commission also ignored serious concerns from the departments of Defense, Transportation, Commerce, Interior, Justice and Homeland Security, as well as NASA, the National Science Foundation, Federal Aviation Administration and U.S. Coast Guard.

In 2010, the FCC suspended Ligado's (formerly LightSquared) proposal to use its licensed spectrum for a 4G LTE network also citing concerns over radio spectrum interference with GPS, forcing the company into bankruptcy. In May of this year, Ligado announced \$100 million in new funding from unnamed sources. For more information, contact Scott Croff at scroft@boatus.com.

EXPANSION & CONTRACTION: INDUSTRY PLAYERS ADJUST

Boats are selling like hotcakes as people try to figure out how to recreate while distancing and travel while locked inside the country. Boat dealers can't keep boats in stock, boat builders are hustling to keep up with demand and would-be boaters are spending their stimulus checks on new experiences. Some of the longer-term downward trends of last summer have been erased. However, uncertainty and a fear of a COVID resurgence and its lasting effects are casting a shadow on the intermediate and long-term economic outlook. As rent protections expire and long-term...



Story continued on page 3...

EXPANSION & CONTRACTION CONT.

...joblessness rises, will there be a glut of lightly used boats and COVID campers in 18 months?

The industry's smart players are looking beyond the immediate and adjusting the way they do business with a more far-reaching outlook. Approaches differ. BRP has launched a growth and cross-pollination strategy by introducing "Uncharted Society" with over 40 experiences involving BRP water and on-road vehicles. Trips include four categories—water, land, snow and mud—and are planned to take place in California, Arizona and Florida. BRP believes this will introduce newcomers to powersports in their various segments (not just marine) and will perhaps create future enthusiasts.

Meanwhile Groupe Beneteau has outlined a five-year strategy looking to streamline operations and marketing, thereby controlling costs and enhancing efficiencies. The company calls their plan "Let's Go Beyond." The company's goal is to 1) make production sites more responsive and efficient, and 2) streamline layers of management.

Which will be the wiser move—revenue growth and brand awareness or cost containment and operational efficiency? Time will tell, but certainly, both companies are on the right track by anticipating future shifts and making a move now to ensure not just survival, but also profitability.

MEMBER NEWS

BoatUS Foundation Offering Rentals of PLBs and GEPIRBs

The BoatUS Foundation is offering affordable rental of Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) and GPS-enabled Emergency Position Indicating Rescue Beacons (GEPIRBs). For boat and yacht clubs organizing sailboat racing this summer, the rules have changed with COVID-19, but less crew translates to fewer hands on deck and fewer eyes on the water in case of a crew overboard situation. Perfect for short-term needs such as sailboat races and passage making, the program



offers ACR ResQLink PLBs and GEPIRBs for low daily, weekly and monthly fees. Boaters can order online and pay a shipping fee. For more information, visit <https://www.boatus.org/epirb/rentals/>.

CALENDAR & EVENTS

Updates on Fall Boat Shows

IBEX

Only last month we said IBEX would be an onsite show, opening on September 28. However, on July 9, we received information that IBEX will become virtual as organizers create an "online community experience." No changes to dates have been announced.
www.lbexshow.com

METS at the RAI

At press time, the Metstrade show is still scheduled as an in-person event at RAI Amsterdam on November 17-19. However, RAI has taken a massive hit this year and the organization is anticipating cuts of approximately 25 million euros

(\$28 million) including the loss of 125 jobs, representing 25 percent of its 483 employees.
www.metstrade.com

Annapolis Shows

As of now, the United Sailboat and Powerboat shows are expected to remain on schedule this fall in Annapolis. The powerboat show will take place October 1-4 with the sailboat show following on October 8-12. For more information, visit www.annapolisboatshows.com.

FLIBS

Meanwhile, Informa announced AllSecure, a standard for health and safety in anticipation of holding the Fort Lauderdale (FLIBS) show as an in-person event October 28-Nov 1.



FLIBS will follow the GBAC (Global Biorisk Advisory Council) standards for enhanced cleaning, including undergoing deep cleaning before, during, and after each day's events. This includes complete overnight disinfection, electrostatic sprayers with EPA biodegradable disinfectants, and continuous sanitation throughout the course of the boat show, with a focus on high-touch areas.

Additionally, all staff and participants will be required to wear a face mask and submit to screening measures such as scanned temperature checks upon entry. No word on whether show attendees will be required to wear a mask or whether the convention center portion of the show, which is indoors, will be treated differently.

Phil Purcell, CEO of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, which owns the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, estimates that FLIBS has an economic impact of around \$1.3 billion statewide.

For more details, or to download Informa's AllSecure complete health and safety guidelines, visit <https://www.flibs.com/en/attend/COVID-19.html>.

BWI Officers

President
Charlie Levine ('22)
editorialoutfitters@gmail.com

1st Vice President
Chris Woodward ('21)
chris.woodward@bonniercorp.com

2nd Vice President
Brady Kay ('21)
blk@harrispublishing.com

BWI Past President

Alan Jones
boatscribe@comcast.net

BWI Directors

Lenny Rudow ('22)
ultangler@gmail.com

Kim Koditek ('22)
kkoditek@nmma.org

Ron Ballanti ('21)
ron@strike-zone.net

Jim Fulliove ('20)
jim@mejbiz.com

Ben Stein ('20)
ben.stein@panbo.com

Executive Director

Zuzana Prochazka
info@bwi.org

The BWI Journal is produced by and for members of Boating Writers International and can be found at www.bwi.org. Send items to be considered for publication to Zuzana Prochazka, info@bwi.org. All information contained herein is meant for the use of members, is in their best interest, and appears in as true and accurate a form as possible. Membership in BWI is open to anyone involved in the recreational boating industry. Active members are generally writers, editors, photographers, videographers and broadcasters. Associate members are generally PR or communications firms. Supporting members are usually manufacturers or marine organizations.