The Challenge

"The yacht club has two yachts, an old sigma 33 and a newer Dufour 40. We finance them by collecting fees from the people who go sailing. We need to ensure the boats are used every weekend so that we have enough income to pay the mortgage and mooring fees. The crewing secretary also has to make sure that there is a qualified Skipper and a Mate for each trip.

"In order to go sailing you have to be a member of the club so that you are covered by insurance. We have about 150 members and our membership year runs from 1st April each year. Many people leave renewing their membership each year until they are just about to go sailing. That means that the Crewing secretary has to have easy access to the latest membership list.

"We don't have a club house or any fixed location for meetings so keeping a computer list easily accessible for the membership secretary and the crewing secretary was awkward and used to involve lots of telephone tag, eventually phone conversations and emails with spreadsheets attached.

"The club treasurer also needed access to know who had been on which trip so that she could check that they had paid. 'We wanted something to help us keep track of the membership dues and the fees from each trip.

"We also wanted to do this as much online as possible, with committees' trip and crewing organisation we thought being online would be the way to go."

"In order to go sailing you have to be a member of the club so that you are covered by insurance."

Project Details

"Our decision to automate was driven by the realisation that it was possible to make life easier for the crewing secretary. The next task was to find a system that met our requirements. Many of our members are fairly familiar with IT applications, so we had the talent to look around.

"After a few trial runs we settled on Activityforum, it contains a set of basic club management functionality that for everyone was a must have, these essentially were the most time consuming activities for key club volunteers, managing the membership list and subscriptions, the other is the production of renewal reminders, e-mails and labels.

"As well as giving us the administration tools we wanted the system supported the ability to automatically update our web site and allow the members to communicate with each other. We wanted to have the crewing sheets, the events list and some news pages on the web site. With the exception of the crewing, all this was available out of the box. The developers added the ability to manage our crewing list and we now have a system which exactly meets our needs.

"We are now looking to extend the system with the ability to book crew places online and send email confirmations and reminders to those who have booked. All these facility are already part of ActivityForum and will be easy to introduce when the time is right. "Overall it will make managing the club easier for the committee members."

"We need to ensure the boats are used every weekend so that we have enough income to pay the mortgage and mooring fees."

Conclusion

"We looked at a number of solutions that seemed to fit the bill, but the more we looked the more we realised we did need some special features and we also need the vanilla of an ordinary club operation. We decide we would look at crewing and boat scheduling first and the membership second.

"At the beginning ActivityForum lacked some of the features we wanted, so we helped the developers to add them, and now we can use it to manage the crewing easily. Since it allows members to see who is booked on each trip they can easily see on the web site what spaces are available when they want to book a trip.

"Because we don't have a club house with a notice board, we also use the system to organise social events and special sailing events where we arrange rallies for members who have their own boats and just want to get a crew together to take part.

"We are now planning to use some of the other features of ActivityForum like the ability to have a Forum where members can chat with each other or upload pictures taken while on the various trips.

"ActivityForum is our virtual Club room where we can all meet and stay in touch even when we can't go sailing."

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