



SHIP SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

from one source



From cradle to the grave, and everything in between, Turkey's AVS Global Ship Supply is the one-stop cost-effective solution consultant for shipowners and managers alike. "Across borders, languages, cultures and race, we are an indispensable partner," commented Chairman Abdülvahit Şimşek. Profile by Andy Probert.

Abdülvahit Şimşek, Chairman



For some in the maritime industry, AVS Global Ship Supply is the heartbeat, brains and energy that quietly drives them on in the sea of business.

Managing global ship supply, catering, technical, marine technologies and ship management from Istanbul, the AVS company has many arms.

One arm, AVS Global Ship Supply provides services more than 1,400 ports in over 100 countries all over the world. It offers ship owners and ship management companies a single point of contact for provisions including deck, engine, cabin, electrical and medical stores.

The company's Contracted Ship Supply division can follow this up with provision services within an agreed budget, through AVS's in-house developed software that automatically provides the provisions a crew needs and manages stock at the same time.

On the ship management front, together with sister company, the Holland-based Q Ship Management, AVS provides ship management solutions for different types of vessels including bulk carriers, tankers, container vessels and multi-purpose vessels. The company acts as a third-party ship manager, with tailor-made management solutions, focusing on each client's requirements.

Part of this includes ship crewing. On this subject, AVS has teamed up with Limassol-based Marlow Navigation. Marlow Navigation guarantees to meet market standards and clients expectations in regard to the qualification of crews by constant training, cooperations with marine academies and in-house agency training.

AVS also invests in marine technology – including AVS Marine Technology, Satellite Communication, Sim4Crew (sim cards for crew) and IT services that provide IT support to the companies and vessels. Through its subsidiary, Rammi Food Service, AVS is able to offer clients an experienced multi-cultural food trading company with many years in the international food market business.

Food for thought

In fact, food trading forms the foundation AVS's establishment over 30 years ago.

"Our family used to have a small grocery shop back in the 1980s in Aliaga, and we used to have a customer come to us, take everything off the shelves when they visited, pay for them all and leave," said Abdülvahit Şimşek, now Chairman of AVS.

"We thought Wow, what is going on here?' We discovered it was a buyer from a vessel that had docked in port. More customers, both Turkish and foreign, followed and that was the turning point for us. We put together a business plan and took a step towards the ship catering industry."

The visionary was Abdülvahit's brother, Osman Şimşek, but a collective decision was made that one of the eight brothers and six sisters should go to England and receive an education. 'Lucky' Abdülvahit was the chosen one and, so, between 1986 and 1991, he went to London to study management science, business and marketing. On his return, the family maritime business in Nemrut and Aliaga took off and moved from a local supplier to an international one.

"Inspired by areas of service I had seen on international platforms which we weren't active in, new investments followed, and we now have many interests in the maritime sector," he commented.

Turning point

For AVS to work on a global scale, Mr Şimşek and his colleagues quickly learnt that they had to adapt to the global structure of clients.

"You also need to have a global culture, identify client needs well, and create your system accordingly," he added. "With this fact in mind, we believe seafarers don't have boundaries of language or race and the world is a huge market, so we have built our marketing strategies on that belief.

"We solely focus on marine people: the shipowner on land, the charterer, and the crew on the ship!"

With such a global view, Mr Şimşek heaped praise on the "young dynamic staff; experts in their fields and who can speak different languages" to ensure AVS is "always available and able to respond to the needs of clients with no regard to time difference.

"Our vision is shaped by the needs of our customers. We observe them and figure out what services they might need or what we can offer them differently to make their lives easier.

Catering space

With this thought process, AVS has become the first local catering company in Turkey.

Mr Şimşek expanded: "We have created procurement lists and budgeted them, adhering to international maritime principles and taking into account the supply processes of the ships, the eating"



habits and the nationalities of the crew, and the shipowners' budgets. No matter where the vessel is in the world, it can get service from us."

This is achieved with AVS' large procurement team, with each vessel having a contact person who can be reached 24 hours a day to meet their needs.

"Our catering service is not limited to food only," commented the Chairman. "After moulding the food supply according to set budgets and weights, we found this system can offer easy-to-plan budgets and predictable costs to shipowners' satisfaction. "So, we have also adapted this business model to the technical catering requirements of the shipowner and the ship."

He said: "Since food has been our main expertise, we have developed our own food brand and begun food production and distribution. This was actually born out of a necessity.

"Satisfaction of the ship's personnel is one of the most important concerns of the shipowner. We have made agreements with our suppliers in certain places so local clients can get access to Turkish foods when they are looking for ethnic tastes while travelling the world."

Advances in IT

AVS is a company proud of its significant technological investments. According to Mr Şimşek, AVS is the first Turkish company to develop a fleet management software system; an offering developed furthered through ship satellite communication services. Since early 2017, AVS has been developing software that will benefit the maritime industry.

"With our products, shipowners can manage their vessels on a single portal," assured Mr Şimşek. "Our IT department grows more and more every day as recent technologies are followed and integrated to our existing applications. In short, we provide the industry with information and communication services."

The growing concern and demand by shipowners for onboard cyber security is one of the key growth triggers.

"Since shipowners can't have an IT specialist on each ship, it is necessary to provide this support from the outside," said Mr Şimşek. "AVS provides this."

The company has also expanded into the GSM space, developing a product called Sim4Crew.

"Thanks to Sim4Crew, seafarers can use their Sim4Crew mobile SIM cards anywhere in the world and they can communicate with their loved ones via internet or voice calls," stated Mr Şimşek.

"With Sim4crew, seafarers can have a single mobile number for an amount close to the local GSM charges, and they don't have to buy a SIM card at every port they go to."

AVS is also developing software to enable the handling of purchase and sales processes more quickly. AVS Soft is the most important of them. This programme allows AVS to neatly organise client orders and requests, offers a retrospective viewing option and reports on demand, as well as helping clients better monitor their vessels.

"Thanks to the Vestra marketing robot, developed by our own programmers, we are able to do a job that can be done by a large marketing team with only two or three people," proudly smiled Mr Şimşek. "The Vestra marketing robot searches all the vessels navigating the world and helps our sales team determine the needs of the vessels with great ease."

AVS is also playing an active role in bringing the International Shippers and Services Association's (ISSA) next convention to Istanbul in November this year. "It'll be a wonderful opportunity to bring the industry together," added Mr Şimşek.

Mr Şimşek is also the owner of AVS Marine Technology, which provides ship management software support to maritime businesses; is a current External Relations Committee Member of GİSBİR (Turkish Shipbuilders' Association); holds the position of Profession Committee President at DTO (Chamber of Shipping); and is a member of the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD).

Despite all these key attributes to serving the industry, he acknowledged that challenges still remained for seafarers – not least the current erratic economic developments in the world.

Challenges for maritime

"Unplanned growth and downsizing are felt very much in this industry, causing shipowners and investors in other areas to think twice, be more careful and perhaps withdraw their investments," said Mr Şimşek. "Due to the long-running lack of coordination in the supply-demand balance, the freight charges are affected negatively and in turn, it affects us."



Mr Şimşek also voiced his concerns regarding the “huge number” of regulations which create a “serious workload” for the shipowner. “Moreover, encountering different rules and official conditions in every region makes our job much more difficult.

“The industry is becoming more and more complex with each passing day instead of becoming more practical. This leads to an increase in costs and creates a bigger burden for the shipowner. As a result, investors will move towards more practical, simple, risk-free areas, and so weaken our industry.”

He said AVS, being sensitive to the trends of the marine sector, was able to restructure quickly according to customer needs.

“That’s thanks to the fact we are young, dynamic and flexible. We are innovators, we can observe the needs of the day and the industry. We think and make decisions quickly; we don’t have rigid and unchanging rules. The only thing that does not change for us is the satisfaction of our customers and our commitment to our core ethical values.”

Underpinning its unique ability to meet clients’ needs no matter where they are in the world.

“The fact our clients can find a respondent at any time and our ability to create quick solutions to unplanned adverse situations, sometimes in the middle of the sea, benefits seafarers,” said Mr Şimşek.

“On the land side, cost planning has become extremely important, especially due to the changing world economy. Planned, predictable, surprise-free budgets for the services we offer make shipowners feel comfortable and makes us the best option.”

He added: “We take care to go to them with constructive solutions when the ever-changing economical balance leaves our clients in tough situations.”

The same is true, added Mr Şimşek, for AVS’s relationships with suppliers.

“As long as we observe and create different business opportunities, our suppliers can keep developing their own markets. The more customers we can reach, the more our service network with our suppliers can expand.”

Staying ahead of the curve

As a keen innovator and with an entrepreneurial spirit and a keen eye for staying ahead of the curve, Mr Şimşek – or AVS – is not one to stand still for too long.

“Information has always been very important to us. How you use information is proportional to your success. That is why we believe that data management will continue to be important in the future.

“We are developing software for this and are trying to use technology in our company as well as sell it both to vessels at sea and to their companies on land.”

Mr Şimşek concluded: “Our job is to supply, so we need to monitor the needs of the people on board very closely.

“Although unmanned ships are on the agenda at the moment, we believe that will take time. This means that our work will continue for a long time in this way.” ■



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