



Bringing VSAT Benefits Onboard

Bourbon Partners with iDirect and Orange Business Services to Modernize Fleet Communications

In 2005, French marine services company Bourbon faced a growing business challenge. In just two years, the company's monthly L-band connectivity fees had more than doubled due to increased communications activity onboard its vessels.

Anticipating a strategic period of growth in its business, Bourbon recognized the need to upgrade their communications infrastructure to a more predictable and cost effective alternative. The company took action and began an initiative to equip the majority of its fleet with a state-of-the-art VSAT broadband system, built on the iDirect platform and managed by Orange Business Services.

Today, Bourbon has dramatically reduced its data and phone connectivity costs, expanded its networking capabilities, streamlined vessel operations, improved customer communications and enhanced crew welfare.



**Business
Services**

"Bourbon has been able to upgrade to an always-on broadband network, while reducing its communications costs by a factor of five."

Michel Verbist
Orange Business Services



High-Speed VSAT Network Modernizes Fleet

Bourbon is a major international player in marine services. It provides the world's most demanding oil and gas companies with a comprehensive range of new-generation, innovative and highly efficient vessels, and extensive subsea capabilities.

Today, Bourbon is successfully implementing its plan to become the confirmed leader in offshore services. With more than 290 vessels already in its fleet and an additional 175 vessels on order, Bourbon recognized that it could not reach its goal without modern communications infrastructure built for high-speed, onboard connectivity.

Rising Costs and Limited Connectivity

With its legacy L-band network, not only was Bourbon battling rising monthly fees, but crew productivity was being impacted as well. Internet connectivity was not being provided

to the vessels on a consistent basis. If it was needed, it was only available at very low data rates. This prevented Bourbon from automating and centralizing business processes to improve operational efficiency.

Bourbon also was not prepared to meet growing crew demands for contact with friends and family back home. Given the shortage of experienced personnel in the maritime market, expanded communication capabilities were considered a strategic priority for retaining and attracting a qualified crew.

Bourbon realized it had outgrown its L-band network and could benefit significantly from a flat-fee, always-on broadband service. Bourbon made a strategic decision to replace its current L-band primary network with VSAT technology and install VSAT systems onboard nearly all its new vessels.



Bridging Ship and Shore

To develop this network and expand its efforts as a market leader, Bourbon partnered with Orange Business Services. Orange developed a high-speed Virtual Private Network (VPN) for Bourbon, based on its global VSAT service. The Orange service is built on the iDirect satellite communications platform and operates across a global span of Ku-band beams supported by iDirect satellite hubs stationed in Orange's European and Asian teleports.

Orange began installing Ku-band antennas and iDirect two-way IP routers on 150 Bourbon vessels. It then turned on a flat-fee, always-on VSAT broadband service that could reach data rates from 512 Kbps up to 4 Mbps. The network connected Bourbon's vessels to each other and to the company's land-based offices..

Greater Business Productivity

Bourbon is now utilizing the VSAT network to improve several important aspects of its business. These include:

- Increasing daily phone and email usage from ship to shore and ship to ship
- Improving operations by running real-time business applications onboard its vessels
- Reducing costs associated with vessel management and maintenance by enabling remote access and support
- Accessing real-time weather and navigation information, resulting in faster routes and fuel savings
- Expanding contact with customers, vendors, port authorities and corporate operations
- Providing crew with high-speed Internet access for email, chat, VoIP calls and online training



Lowering Phone Charges

The Orange maritime service is built on the carrier's next-generation MPLS network. And since Bourbon's corporate network is also based on Orange's MPLS network, Bourbon's vessels can take advantage of cost-effective Voice over IP capabilities.

Bourbon vessels can communicate with the company's land-based offices and to other Bourbon vessels without incurring per-minute charges. For calls outside the MPLS network, VoIP traffic is routed to the closest switching point, which greatly minimizes toll fees. This has reduced Bourbon's cost-per-minute charge by eight times compared to its previous communications solution.

Another advantage of the Orange service is a predictable data throughput rate. Although the Bourbon network shares satellite capacity between a larger pool of vessels, Orange can guarantee a Committed Information Rate using iDirect's Quality of Service platform feature. As a result, Bourbon consistently experiences business quality voice connections. Even in congested areas, where L-band rates can drop to between 9.6 and 64 Kbps, Bourbon's VSAT service is protected from network degradation.

Moving Business Forward

New Horizons

VSAT connectivity now plays a major role in Bourbon's ambition to produce state-of-the-art vessels, complete with the latest in IT systems and maritime electronics. Over the next several years, Bourbon plans to produce on average one new Liberty Series vessel every two weeks from its shipyards. Before they leave the shipyard, nearly every vessel will be equipped with communications infrastructure that includes a Ku-band antenna, iDirect router, Cisco switches and VoIP.

Bourbon's success showcases the joint value of iDirect's IP-based satellite platform and Orange Business Services' next-generation converged network. It's a combination that's helping one of the world's most trusted carriers bring greater integration to maritime communications.

"Thanks to iDirect, we can serve the most demanding maritime companies in the world, helping them improve productivity and protect their future," affirms Michel Verbist, product manager for satellite solutions at Orange Business Services. "As high-speed connectivity becomes a business requirement across the maritime industry, VSAT communications adds a valuable service capability to our network and a critical strategy for our success."

A Strategic Move

When Bourbon upgraded from L-Band to VSAT connectivity, it gained powerful new network capabilities:

- ◆ Always-on broadband service to support rising network usage
- ◆ Data rates from 512 Kbps up to 4 Mbps to support bandwidth-intensive applications
- ◆ Business quality voice connections at a cost-effective rate
- ◆ Protection from network degradation based on stronger Quality of Service features

The VSAT network has already generated significant business advantages and cost savings.



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