



Fraser Surrey Docks: Growth is good

Growth is nothing new to Surrey Docks Ltd., the Vancouver, B.C.-based multi-purpose marine terminal. Fraser Surrey has been growing steadily since its founding in 1964 and now handles more than 400 deep-sea vessels each year. A new container crane, extensive marketing and a favorable business market in Vancouver have contributed to Fraser Surrey's growth. As cargo volumes continued to increase, Fraser Surrey began looking for tools to improve efficiency.

"My job is to act as the lead planner," explains Nick Willcox, Fraser Surrey operations superintendent. "I'm the container person and have watched as our container volumes continue to grow much more rapidly than our break-bulk business."

Fraser Surrey handles the volumes with three-dock gantry cranes, two with 45 metric tonne lifting capacity and one with 65 metric tonne lifting capacity. Although it had the container handling equipment in place to handle the increased cargo, the growth in volume was causing bottlenecks elsewhere.

Vessel planning challenge

It's the kind of growth that can strain other mid-size ports, especially in terms of vessel loading and unloading. Fraser Surrey responded by bringing on more vessel planners and looking at vessel planning software. Fraser Surrey also handles significant volumes of steel and forest products. However, according to Willcox, containers now comprise about 40% of the terminal's total volume, a significant increase over previous years.

"Our container segment is growing much faster than break-bulk," said Willcox. "In fact, in October we met our entire production goal for Q4. We've never seen that kind of growth."

For years Fraser Surrey relied on a homegrown application for vessel planning. But the software wasn't scalable for large container volumes and training new vessel planners in the system was time consuming.

"Previously we had a fairly basic container planning system that was built in house," Willcox said. "It was homegrown and basic. It worked to a point but it was slow and awkward to use and slowed down the planning process."

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Operations Superintendent,
Fraser Surrey Docks

A staged solution

In 2000 the growth spurred Willcox to look at vessel planning software. He conducted a review of the four leading software packages. After extensive review, he selected Tideworks' Spinnaker vessel planning software.

"There is a similarity between most of the planning systems," he explained. "Spinnaker was the best package due to its extra features and customer service, including how fast Tideworks reacts to our questions. The other benefit with Tideworks was time-to-deployment and cost of implementation. We could deploy Spinnaker in stages, adding rail and yard planning as needed, not all upfront."

Since adding Spinnaker, Fraser Surrey has more than doubled its container volume. Willcox credits Spinnaker for enabling Fraser Surrey to handle the increase.

Growing with Spinnaker

"Spinnaker is far ahead of our old in-house system," he explained. "With our in-house system, we had three vessels every two weeks, handling 60,000 TEUs a year. Now we're looking at five vessels a week and 120,000 a year. I don't know how we would have gotten through October without Spinnaker."

System efficiency and ease of deployment aren't the only benefits with Spinnaker, according to Willcox. Ease-of-use and simplified training has also improved Fraser Surrey's operations.

"Spinnaker is easy to get started on and easy to use," Willcox said. "The basic functions are quickly learned by the people I've trained. Once they get past the basic functions the advanced functions provide added benefit. If they run into problems, they use Tideworks' online help and quickly get answers."

About Tideworks

Tideworks is a leading provider of cost-effective, reliable software solutions for growing terminal operations and shipping lines worldwide. The company helps more than 50,000 users and nearly 90 facilities run their operations more efficiently and profitably. From optimized equipment utilization to faster turn times, Tideworks works at every step of terminal operations to maximize productivity and customer service. For more information about Tideworks Technology, visit www.tideworks.com/.

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