

My Am



Amazing

Voyage

with **Seakeeper**

A Perspective from Walt Rigg, General
Manager of Seakeeper's Onsite Program



When I tell people that I manage an Onsite for Seakeeper, I'm usually hit with two questions: Who is Seakeeper? And what the heck is an "Onsite"? Seakeeper is the world leader in motion control technology for boats. The company was started by an entrepreneur and a marine naval architect who have a passion for the water, and their vision was to transform the boating experience for people of all experience levels. Their gyro stabilizer eliminates up to 90% of boat roll. I can personally attest that a large group of passengers can actively *try* to rock the boat, and it's like standing on solid ground.

What is an Onsite?

That one's a little tougher to sum up. The rote response is that it's a Fastenal branch within a customer site (in this case, Seakeeper's state-of-the-art facility in Leesport, PA) staffed by dedicated Fastenal personnel (in this case, six employees led by me). But beyond that, it's hard to generalize. An Onsite can be whatever our partner needs it to be – we can get creative to

do anything that's beneficial, almost without limitation.

Of course, it takes time and trust to get to that point. The stakeholders have to know that we have their best interest in mind and the best solutions for their business. This isn't blindly given – it's earned. And it doesn't happen overnight.



Charting a New Course



For me, the journey began in 2016. I was the operations manager in Fastenal's Freeport, PA branch, and I was spending more and more of my time working with a fast-growing company called, you guessed it, Seakeeper. I had no interest in sales, thus my operations role, but I found myself taking on some "sales-like" activities. (With just one purchaser at the time, Seakeeper would come to us with challenges, and we would provide solutions.) One day, my general manager and district manager asked if I would become the dedicated account specialist for Seakeeper. I wasn't expecting that, but I took the opportunity and ran with it.

Initially, we were providing a small scope of products, but we earned opportunities by introducing efficiencies (for example, replacing handwritten notes with scanners) and by really rolling up our sleeves to provide great service. I remember spending late nights on the smallest, most miniscule things to make sure everything was completed and correct. They really appreciated that, and before long there was no question: If we thought there was an opportunity for improvement, they trusted us to give it a shot.

It was a very organic process – with each win, the relationship strengthened.



Coming Onboard

An Onsite program was the logical next step, and Seakeeper immediately recognized the value – closer collaboration, immediate access, and more investment by Fastenal in their business. At first, we were holed up in a tiny crib and a back-corner office, but we gradually expanded to provide dedicated inventory for the facility in a growing number of product categories – again, by bringing value and earning those opportunities.

A great example: Seakeeper was looking for tighter point-of-use supply of OEM parts for their different

product lines. We pulled in our FMI Technology specialists to conduct a site assessment, and they presented a solution to digitally monitor the inventory levels. This was a big leap in efficiency, a much more secure and proactive way to manage the supply chain. On the MRO side, we introduced our vending solutions to provide point-of-use access, capture usage data, and reduce consumption. Based on those efficiencies, we were given an open invitation to present any and all opportunities to move products into the vending program.

Riding a Wave of Growth

Seakeeper's growth really exploded in the 2019–2021 timeframe, and we scaled our service to keep pace with production. We added headcount, expanded the point-of-use program, and used Fastenal's resources to provide creative solutions. If you're wondering how the word "creative" applies to a dry topic like industrial supplies, here are a few examples:

Working with our manufacturing team to quickly produce custom bolts for prototyping.

Working with our engineering team to provide application-specific fastener testing (specifically salt spray testing to

measure the corrosion resistance of an alternative coating).

Working with our IT team to help Seakeeper automate the procurement process.

And working with our industrial services team to provide cut-to-length tubing, kitted assemblies for very specific production processes, as well as kits of critical spares.



... All of which help Seakeeper solve problems and streamline operations.



Being Part of the Crew

These types of ideas are often sparked during Seakeeper's daily production meetings, where we're able to collaborate in a very direct and candid way. Instead of waiting for an email request, we can hear what's going on first-hand and chime in with a solution: "Hey, we have an industrial services team that can do a job like this." In this sense, we really function more like a department of their business than an outside supplier. They don't just give us orders to fill – they bring us problems to solve and goals to achieve.



So, on one level, we're very much ingrained in their operation. But on another level, they don't have to think about this supply chain at all, which to me is the real value of an Onsite program. As mentioned earlier, the people at Seakeeper have a passion for the water and marine technology. We serve as their in-house supply chain experts so they can focus on bringing an amazing product to the world. I'm proud to be part of their success and excited to see where the voyage takes us next!

(By the way, if you want to learn more about Seakeeper's technology, check out this video – it's pretty cool stuff.) ▶

