



Choosing a Shipyard to Build Your Yacht

Once you have determined that you want to build a custom designed yacht, one of the most important decisions you will make is choosing which shipyard will build your yacht.

Building a yacht can often be a long-term project and a major financial investment. Because of this, you will want to view your builder as a partner, one who is equally invested in helping you

meet all of your requirements while also fulfilling the expectations you have.

While not a complete guide, the following information will be helpful to you as you compare and consider different builders for your project. Additionally, your broker, designer or owner's representative should also be able to provide insight based on their experiences and familiarity with potential builders.

—Nick Boksa, BOKSA MARINE DESIGN



Viability of the Shipyard

As custom built yachts can take many months or years to complete the building process, it's important to fully understand the viability of the builder.

Is the company managing the building project in a financially sound manner? Do they have a consistent track record of starting and finishing projects without interruption and delays due to financial constraints? Is the builder bonded and insured to protect against failure?

During the economic downturn that began in 2007, many builders struggled to maintain

the same levels of service they had previously provided. Even today, shipyards face ever-changing challenges managing cash flow, their workforce and their suppliers.

Understanding the financial health of your builder will instill confidence as you move forward with the project.

Quality versus Value

When creating a custom designed luxury yacht, most owners set out with the intentions of building a uniquely impressive, awe-inspiring vessel. And while that should be the goal of the owner and designer, at

some point a delicate balance between cost and quality emerges, even for the wealthiest of owners.

An important consideration for the owner and designer is: what do you want the final vessel to be? Will it only be used privately or will the boat be chartered?

Does your yacht need to be built by one of the high profile, top-tier builders? Could the project be handled with another builder who may provide a less substantial build cost, but with a similar approach?

Can a balance be struck between value and quality?

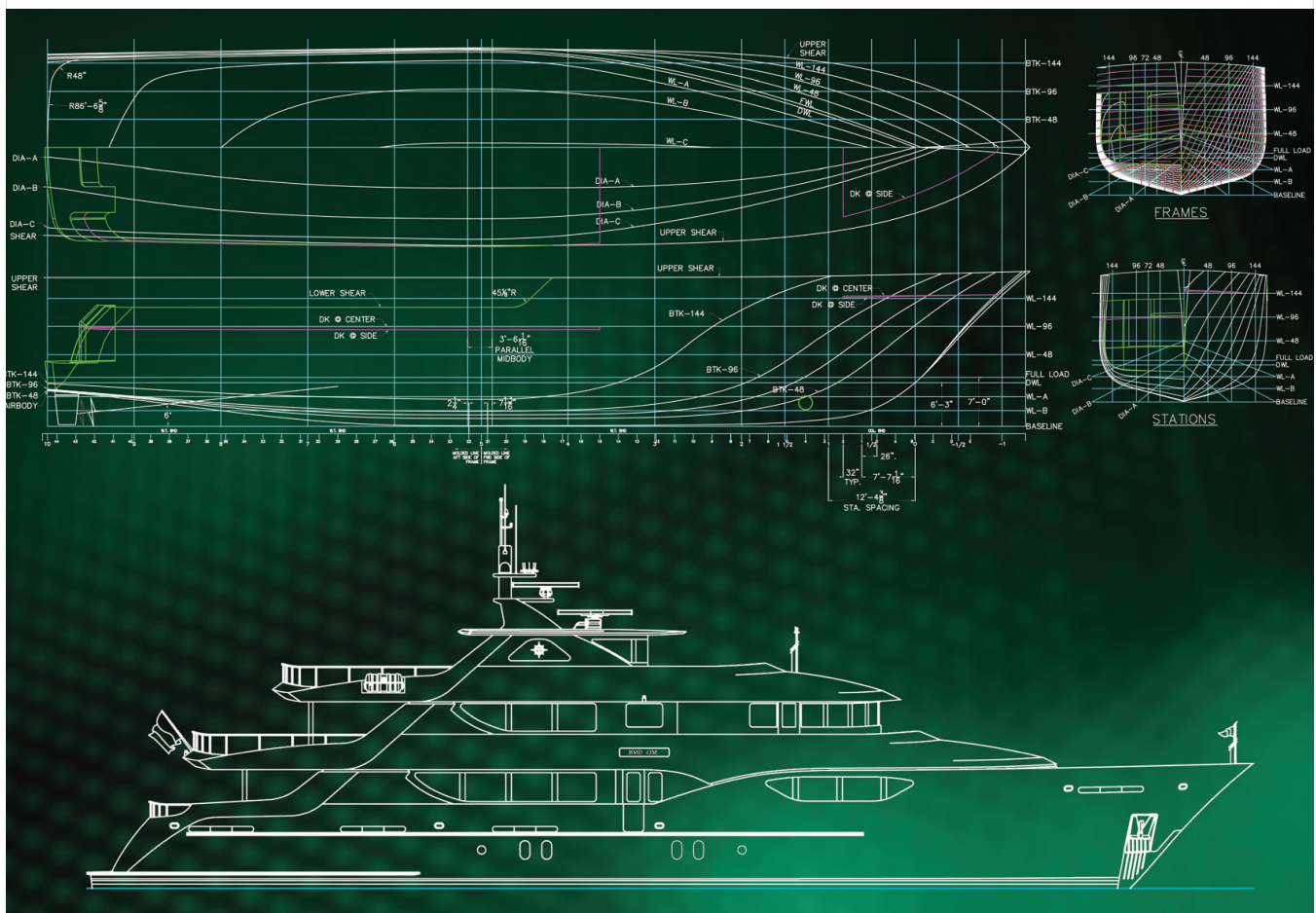
Relationship and Customer Experience

Many owners evaluate a builder based on their initial first impressions. These first impressions may occur because of conversations

they've had with other owners, brokers or captains. They may occur based on advertisements, boat show visits or experience with other vessels they've seen or chartered. And eventually, that evaluation will be based on the one-on-one experience with representatives at the shipyard.

As with any high value dealing, a solid relationship plays a vital role in customer experience. The efforts a builder makes to match customer expectations can be a key component when it comes down to choosing the builder.

Customer experience can and will be defined by many elements during the selling process just as it will be during the building process once the builder is chosen. Some examples include the facilities and amenities provided for owners or owner's representatives at the shipyard. Very simply, it may



include the professional appearance and demeanor of the builder's executives as the owner begins to develop the 'gut feeling' so many decisions are based upon.

Most builders are savvy enough to realize that one project could very easily lead to another project further down the road. They also know that satisfied owners can be their company's best marketing tool. Or conversely, a dissatisfied customer can inhibit future sales.

Organization of the Shipyard

📍 Visiting the location of the builder and taking a tour of its shipyard can provide invaluable insight. Envisioning where your yacht will be constructed may very well impact your choice of builders.

Does the shipyard look organized? Are the buildings clean? Is the equipment in good condition and well-cared for? Building a boat is dirty work, but maintaining a structured work environment is a mark of dedication and an indication of the quality of the end product.

And while an owner won't spend much time at the builder's location, the organization of the yard may in fact be more important to the designer, architect, engineering firm or owner's representative who is managing your project. These players have a vested interest in ensuring that the yard is capable of adhering to the detailed designs and timelines they've created.

Craftsmanship

📍 The largest cost involved in building a custom designed yacht is labor. It is important to understand the level of craftsmanship involved in the building process.

The men and women who build the furniture, install the decking, weld the steel or manage dozens of other components are the foundation of the shipyard and provide the builder a value that is unique. It literally takes thousands of man hours to build these large boats and the expertise and attention to detail contributed by each individual laborer directly impacts the quality of the vessel.

Continuity of craftsmanship is also a point that can not be understated. At many shipyards, the experience and understanding of how to properly craft a seagoing vessel is passed down through the years. That pride and commitment is a mark of quality and is invaluable.

And whether it is the builder themselves or their suppliers, these craftsmen play a vital role in helping bring the naval architect and designer's plans to life.

Branding and Pedigree

📍 Many owners develop an affinity for a specific builder based on other yachts they've seen, been aboard or possibly owned. They may also develop a connection to the builder through interaction with the representatives of the builder or even the marketing campaigns seen in yachting publications, websites and industry events.

The 'brand' of the builder is not to be underestimated during the evaluation process. While owners are investing millions of dollars in their yacht, they're also associating the purchase with the image and pedigree of the builder. This can be particularly important as brand and pedigree often impact the ability of the boat to "hold value" if re-sold or chartered.



Location of the Builder

📍 The location of the builder and its shipyard is a consideration for many owners. While the owner may not visit the yard with frequency, there will be handful of trips taken to view the building process. Also, the captain or the owner's representative may impact the decision as they will make frequent trips to the builder or potentially be temporarily housed near the builder during the building process.

Some owners who are more involved with the building process may choose a builder who is relatively close to them. Other owners may choose the location of the builder because of the perceived notion that a builder in one

country may be better than another.

Location can, at times, impact the builder's ability to hire or retain high quality employees as some locations are more or less desirable for employees. As the yacht building industry is international and potential savings may be had by choosing a builder in one country over another, exchange rates may also affect the decision making process.

Experience with the Type of Yacht You're Building

📍 One of the main considerations for an owner is finding a builder who has experience with building the type of vessel they are hoping to create.

Are you choosing a builder because of their history with a particular styling? Are you choosing a contemporary look over a traditional one? Do you require metal or composite construction? Do you need an innovative propulsion system? Do you require a builder with experience with complicated lifts and doors?

One builder may be better known for building long range expedition yachts. Another may be more attuned to luxury stylings. As you begin working on your yacht's design and outline your wants and requirements, conversations with your designer or broker will help you evaluate which builder is right for you.

Building Processes

Understanding the builder's core competencies and their approach to yacht construction can give clear insight into their ability to meet your design requirements.

One thing to consider is the builder's approach to design. Are they still utilizing manual drafting, lofting and 'stick building' techniques where the parts of the boat are laid out on the shop floor? Or are they using the more common and advanced approach of 3-dimensional CAD designs which result in a higher precision, higher quality end product.

Does the builder paint in the same shed where they build? Or do they have a dedicated paint shed?

Will furniture be built on-site, a process which is generally slower and more expensive? Or is the furniture to be built off-site, modularized, shipped and then joined? The process may impact a buyers decisions.

Green Technology

Applying green technologies to newly built vessels is a relatively new consideration for many owners, but an important one. Owners and their builders can create vessels with greater fuel efficiency, lower emissions, carbon offsets and increasing use of renewable resource technology. Incorporating these technologies during construction is important for owners who want to maintain a certain image. Green construction can also be an invaluable marketing tool for yachts that will be chartered.

Questions to ask would include: How will the shipyard manage their waste? How do they manage energy consumption? Does the yard have a real intent on applying green construction methods?

About Boksa Marine Design

Boksa Marine Design is a naval architecture and marine engineering firm located near Tampa, Florida. We specialize in all aspects of custom yacht, production boat and commercial marine design solutions for owners, builders and operators worldwide.

For more information about vessel design and building solutions, please contact our office at +1 (813) 654-9800.