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Full steam ahead for navigation technology at the Southampton Boatshow

The Southampton boat show kicks off this week and hosts not only a brilliant display of the latest yachts afloat but also a plethora of new technology from the marine equipment sector.

The smartphone and ever updated range of apps has infiltrated its way into the high tech electronic navigation market with niche UK manufacturers such as Digital Yacht producing wireless gateways that allow an iPad or tablet to integrate into the boat's navigation system.

At this year's show they will introduce their new AquaWear server which wirelessly streams live position, instrument and AIS data from a boat's system to smartphones which can be worn by the skipper or crew. The device also supports iPads, MACs and PCs so these can be added into the system at the navigation station. They also make an App for iPads and MACs called NavLink which turns your device into a high resolution electronic chart display with routing and real time navigation capability.

Digital Yacht started life 4 years ago developing sensors and AIS tracking systems for boats but quickly realised the potential of wireless and in particular, the ability to get consumer electronics integrated into boat navigation systems. "Yachtsmen love the touch screen interface and simple operation their phone or tablet offers and of course, it represents a massive saving over purchasing a dedicated touch screen navigation device which might run into £1000s" says Nick Heyes, who is CEO of the Bristol UK and Boston US based manufacturer. "It's not just a UK phenomenon either with exports last year to over 100 different countries."

Boaters are also starting to take advantage of new satellite navigation systems. In addition to GPS, the Russian Government funded the \$5 billion Glonass system which is now operational, global and free to access allowing sailors to have the benefit of two independent positioning systems.

The market for the humble compass and log looks bleak judging by the new range of technology.

DIGITAL YACHT 2014 IS ALL ABOUT NEXT GENERATION NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATION AND ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS FOR YOUR BOAT. BOATING SHOULD BE FUN, SAFE AND EASY AND OUR PRODUCTS INTEGRATE INTO EXISTING AND NEW BOAT NETWORKS TO BRING A POWERFUL DIMENSION TO YOUR ON-BOARD ELECTRONICS.

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