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News, Views and Reviews from the
International Dynamic Positioning Operators Association



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a vision for the future

The use of “visuals” to support DP Training has long been debated. Since virtually the advent of the Nautical Institute (NI) scheme there have been arguments over whether the use of “an outside view”, or “visual channel” can aid training. Those against the mandatory use of such technological enhancements always argued that it was more about the lecturer and the DP kit than some flashy, head nod to realism.

Such arguments raged as the price and ability to provide such enhancements were perhaps prohibitive - certainly had the NI prescribed them, then many a training centre would have gone to the wall. In a pragmatic way the use of visuals was slowly sidelined, and the debate tailed off slightly.

In reality what has happened is that the use of such technology has increased, the prices have fallen and most new centres coming on stream do indeed have the visuals included in the training packages that have purchased. Slowly we have reached the point where visuals are more common than not, and the old school of “talk, chalk and painted bridge scenes” are seen as almost quaint.

Back in 2006, IDPOA Executive Director Steven Jones speaking at the Global DP Trainers meeting in Kongsberg said that the debate on whether visuals should be mandatory or not was fairly irrelevant. Based on dropping prices and increasing availability he said that such arguments would look rather old fashioned in hindsight. It seems perhaps he was right, and the decision to allow the market to choice has allowed innovation and investment to blossom.

Does the use of visuals make a poor lecturer good? No of course not. Does the use of visuals make up for poorly maintained or outmoded equipment? Once again, no. Can visuals enhance the learning experience and deliver 21st Century training to 21st Century trainees? A resounding yes.

We asked VSTEP, one of the leading names in maritime visual development for their thoughts on where this was now headed. VSTEP make the extremely successful Ship Simulator PC games - but their involvement in maritime simulation is not more games master than ship master. Here Pjotr van Schothorst tells of the company’s vision and of the satisfied client base they are cultivating at DP Training centres around the world.



Many DP training centers do not use an outside view yet on (all) their DP training systems. Those that do are very positive about it. According to Capt. Tony M. Moeller, Operations Manager of Maersk Training Denmark: “The outside view makes the training much more realistic. It combines the manual manoeuvring with the DP training. It also makes it possible to do vessel to vessel operations. I can’t see a DP Simulator course without it, it is vital for quality training.”

Capt. Noel Leith of Swire Marine Training Centre Singapore: “The benefits of the outside view are immeasurable. An important part of our DP training programme involves students being assessed in their ability to move inside the exclusion zone, approach and set up on DP. The outside view allows this to happen in a very natural way and also allows the environment to be used as a visual queue.”

Capt. Homer Gloria of Bourbon Manila DP Training Centre: “The benefit of having an outside view is that it makes the simulation exercises more realistic. During practical exercises, trainees can practice their estimation and judgment by looking at the outside view and not totally rely on what they see on the DP monitor. In cases where the DP system experience failures and does not give correct data, it is important for the DPO to use his human senses to let him make a correct judgment. Seeing the condition outside the vessel during simulation exercises help the trainees improve judgment and build confidence. The DP operator also uses the outside view as part of his situational awareness and assessment of required actions.”

Capt. Glenn Fiander of the Marine Institute, Newfoundland: “A good DPO should always observe the outside world to confirm what is

being reported to him/her electronically (DP screens, survey screens, etc.). Without visuals, training is simply not realistic. We have had students tell us that in the real world they would not position their vessels in close proximity to other vessels/structures when those structures are not visible. Having no visuals in training is the equivalent to working not with reduced but with 0 visibility. If training is conducted without visuals, are students getting the impression that they can trust the electronics 100% of the time and don’t have to look outside? If anyone doing the DP training is left with this impression, there is a problem.”

The current generation of outside view simulation solutions is not yet perfect. Says Bengt Karlsson of Kalmar Maritime Academy, Sweden: “What I am waiting for is a system that allows us to estimate distances by means of eyes only. In today’s system you can’t say if the distance to a platform is 300 or 50 m.”

Some of the DP systems used in training centers are not equipped with an open interface like NMEA, so they cannot benefit from the lower cost simulators like VSTEP’s Nautis. Instead, they can only be used in combination with the much higher priced solution of the original DP equipment manufacturer.

With all the interest in DP Sea Time Reduction by means of intense DP simulator training, the positive experiences with the outside view added to existing DP training systems and the reduced costs of this outside view with modern software and hardware technology, it looks like there is a bright future of this new concept. I am sure we won’t see a DP training system without in a few years time.

What's On 2010



Asia Offshore Operation & Development
27-29 October 2010
Grand Millenium Hotel, Beijing, China



IMCA Annual Seminar
23-24 November 2010
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai, UAE



Deep Offshore Technology International
30 Nov-2 Dec 2010
Amsterdam Rai, Amsterdam, Netherlands

DP Training Courses

Australian Maritime College

AMC DP LAUNCESTON

DP Induction:

- 22-26 November
- 6-10 December

DP Simulator/Advanced

- 15-19 November
- 29 November – 3 December
- 13-17 December

AMC DP PERTH

DP Induction

- 15-19 November

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