Choosing the Correct Lubricants

B & L TRANSOIL (HOLDINGS)

A) General

As known Lubricants contribution in the overall running cost of a vessel is about 3-4%. Lubrication however is of vital importance for the ship's performance and trouble free operation.

Whilst the % cost may sound small, these amounts are of considerable value when converted into absolute numbers.

Lubricants purchasing is not the simplest issue as it involves a complex of parameters such as: 1)Engine / Machinery Maker's recommendations. 2) Vessel's age and specific needs 3) Vessel's trading routes. 4) Operator's specific requirements

B) The product

The specific characteristics of the lubricants recommended for each type of engine or machinery on board is clearly shown in Engine/Machinery manufacturer's technical bulletin.

Operators who wish to apply correct and trouble-free operation must strictly follow these recommendations and the Seller must have the appropriate know how to propose the most economical and technically efficient solution.

Using a high performance Lubricant, a reliable and service oriented Supplier / Partner will, in medium long term, decrease the overall Lubrication cost immaterial of the price per unit.

Products of approved high quality and performance can achieve considerable cost savings by reducing wear, feed rates, maintenance intervals, spare parts, delays, labor cost etc. This requires close monitoring by the chief engineer and close co-operation with the supplier/partner who will provide all the necessary information and technical assistance required related to lubrication.

The carefully selected ports for supplies and the choice for the correct grade are major criterion factors that will help keep the overall lubrication cost within the Budgeted parameters.

The age of a vessel is of paramount importance when deciding on the lubricant to be used.Great consideration must be given when choosing, especially the Cylinder and Refrigerator lubricants. For older vessels it is an unnecessary expense to apply specialized products.

C) Supply ports

To maintain the overall lubrication and/or the price per unit within budgeted or acceptable levels great consideration must be given to the ports of uplifts and next port/s of call. This will enable the purchasing department decide on major ports for supply and the topping up ports. It goes without saying that for certain companies a major port maybe considered as a secondary port and visa-versa. This depends on the vessel's trading route.

Vessel's trading routs can dramatically influence the Lubrication cost not only because there is a considerable price difference from port to port but also because supplier's facilities (bulk/drum supplies, barging etc.) are not the same which, may result in wide price variations.

Some suppliers are very strong in Far East but expensive in Americas, others are only strong in major ports but very expensive in secondary ports.

D) The Supplier/Partner

The above variations have led many operators to supply their vessels on a spot basis.In such cases special care must be taken to supply the vessel with straight equivalent products but the written confirmatio n of the supplier regarding miscibility / compatibility of the proposed products with those on board is advisable.

Supply on a spot basis can under certain circumstances save money. Under these circumstances the Supplier / partner must not only act as single dealer but it is imperative to have the necessary technical know how. In other words your supplier/partner must have a pre-active role and act as an extension of the operator's arm to assist in managing in the most technically efficient / cost effective Lubricant solutions.

Purchasing Lubricants on a contractual basis offers the buyer some advantages such as the ability of pre-estimating the annual cost. Used Oil Analysis on a free of charge basis can be considered as another advantage even though this approach will elapse from the market. This approach may be rigid considering other terms and conditions such as minimum days and quantities required which can increase the cost considerably.

This is the reason why some Operators use a second supplier in case the main supplier is unable to supply or prices offered are expensive. Even the burden of a sample analysis, to comply with the ISM Code, will only add about 1-2% of the overall lubrication cost which is by far less when compared to the possible costs which can be generated out of a rigid contract.