

Q&A | SeaMates International

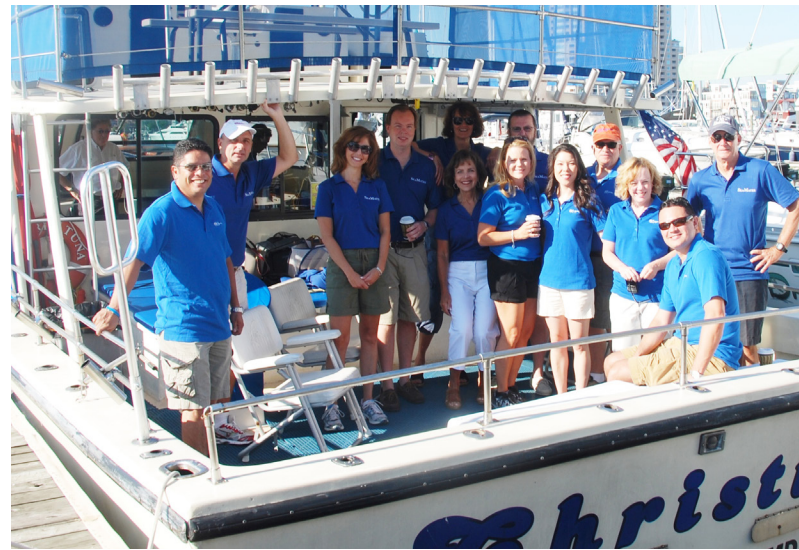
Michael Burke, Vice President of SeaMates, shares how electronic shipping with INTTRA changed the way his company does business - from reducing documentation fees, to saving time and dollars in every step of the shipment process.

Can you share the origins of SeaMates and how it grew to where it is today?

A: SeaMates was founded in 1983 by Richie Burke and two partners. They met and worked together at SeaTrain Lines. When SeaTrain filed for bankruptcy, they started SeaMates.

Unfortunately, SeaMates did not take off as expected. The two partners found other jobs, but Richie stayed and put everything he could into SeaMates. Slowly, he grew the business and attracted a good team of directors, agents and staff. Everyone involved believed in the same principle – if you provide great service with competitive rates, the customers will remain loyal to your company.

We are now the #1 Ocean Transportation Intermediary from the U.S. to the Middle East. We handle containers to all destinations, but our top areas are Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe and the Far East. We currently have a staff of approximately 30 people. Our headquarters are in East Rutherford, New Jersey; but we have sales representatives



throughout the U.S., including Charleston, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sausalito, and Charlotte.

When did your company start using INTTRA's services and why?

A: We were first introduced to INTTRA in 2008. We started using INTTRA for e-Bookings, track and trace, and submission of online shipping instructions.

Due to the ease of working on INTTRA's website, we continued to increase our volumes together. In 2011, we began developing the EDI process to submit our shipping instructions directly from our in-house system.

We could not be happier with the results. Our instructions are now submitted to the carriers accurately, eliminating the need for B/L corrections after the shipment has sailed.



Finally, what trends are you seeing in containerized shipping e-commerce?

A: As the steamship lines continue to look for ways to have customers take on more of the workload, e-commerce will continue to grow.

Several years ago, you would have to speak to a customer service representative to book a container, confirm it sailed, as well as track and trace the shipment. Today, you do not have to pick up the phone to complete any of these tasks.

As an industry, we still have a long way to go to further streamline the procedures, including eliminating the need for hard copies of bills of lading and commercial invoices. Unfortunately, this will be more difficult to accomplish due to local customs requirements at destination. However, SeaMates will continue to strive to become more efficient in the areas we can control and pass the benefits on to our customers.

Learn more about SeaMates at www.seamates.com.
Visit the INTTRA website at www.intra.com.



Founder of SeaMates Ritchie Burke (L) and Vice President Michael Burke (R).

How has the INTTRA e-commerce network benefited your business?

A: By using INTTRA's services, we have been able to reduce (or waive completely) the documentation fees charged by carriers. In addition, we have completed the EDI link between our custom system and INTTRA. This has eliminated the need for double entries of our shipper's instructions, which is a very timely and error-prone process.

We have also completed the e-booking project, which allows us to request e-bookings directly from our system. As a result, we no longer experience the inefficiency of having to complete the request on the carriers' websites.

This allows us to turn our bookings much quicker and get them to our customers in a very timely manner. Since we are not tied up on the phone with the steamship lines, we are more available to assist our customers with their questions, discuss new opportunities with current customers and initiate contact with new customers.