

SEDNA's Powerful Teamwork and Transaction Tool

In shipping, the team with the best documentation always wins. Today, for many stakeholders, that increasingly means employing SEDNA's E-mail software platform for myriad projects.

By Joseph Keefe

Bill Dobie is Founder and CEO of SEDNA with over 20 years of experience in bringing technology and people together while creating opportunity for innovation and growth. His newest product, specifically designed for the shipping industries, is a cloud-based communication and transaction management platform, purpose-designed for the shipping sector to help reduce operating costs and improve team efficiency.

That's important because, among other things, SEDNA brings organization accountability to transactional based projects. Before and during any project, the improvements that SEDNA brings to any team's efficiency can be the difference between success and failure. Afterwards, the remarkable storage and organization of all project-related data may well be just as important. That's because, in shipping, the party to a dispute or contract discussion may be in the right, but only the side with the best documentation will win.

Tellingly, IBM and Maersk recently cited the fact that the "cost of the required trade documentation to process and administer many of these goods is estimated to reach one-fifth of actual physical transportation costs." Given the context – that more than \$4 trillion in goods are shipped each year, and more than 80 percent of the goods consumers use daily are carried by the ocean shipping industry – the potential savings are almost beyond comprehension.

For the most striking case for an alternative to the current reliance on e-mail, one need only look at a garden variety transaction, which creates as many as 1,000 emails. Indeed, for the high value, income-generating human assets of these organizations – such as traders, brokers, ship agents, and ship

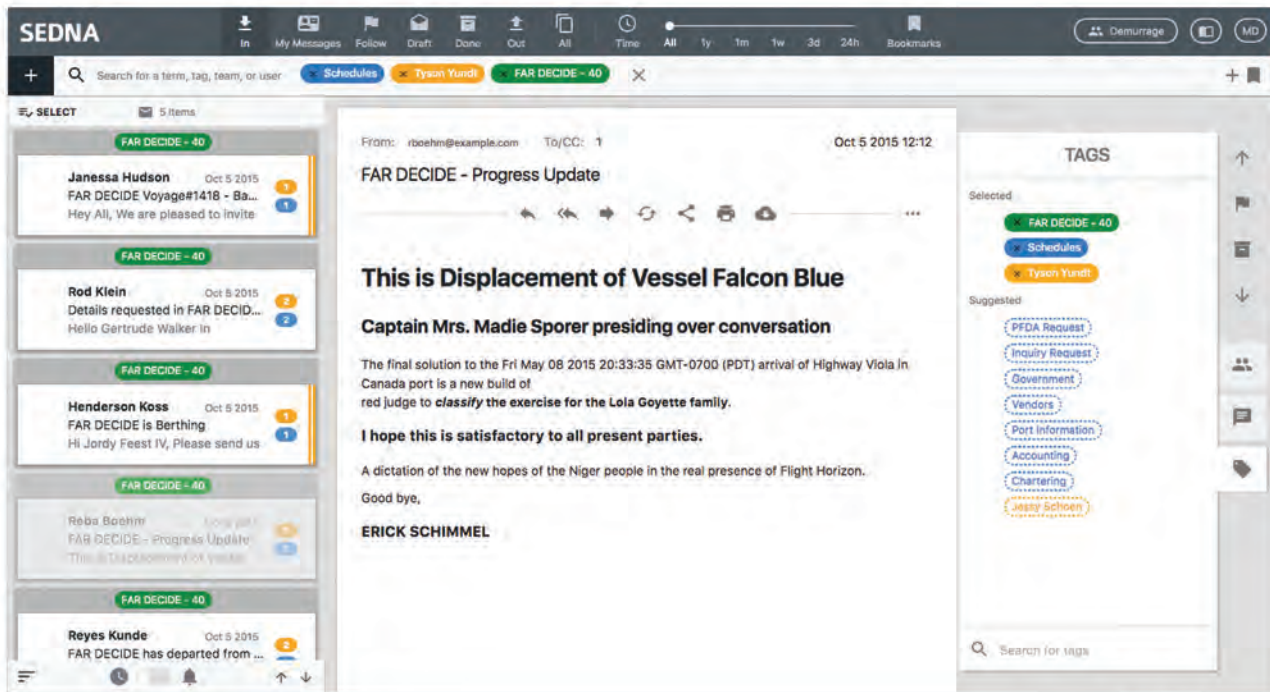
owners – exchanging millions of internal and external emails each day, using antiquated software systems is no longer fit for purpose. And, that's where SEDNA comes in.

Foundations

Bill Dobie is an entrepreneur with a long history in the shipping industry. In 2000, he co-founded Navarik, a pioneer in the delivery of software as a service to large industrial organizations. Then in 2010, he started Stage 3 Systems which runs major software services for shipowners, charterers, and agents around the world. Eventually, that kind of innovation also produced SEDNA, which today, run as a completely independent business.

SEDNA, says Dobie, was really spawned by the needs of his existing Stage 3 customers. He explains, "Everywhere we went, we continued to see our systems being deployed or other software systems being deployed, but we also saw most of the commerce happening in e-mail." As it turns out, shipping is a business that requires discussion and collaboration, and e-mail is one of the primary ways that industry goes about that process. But, Dobie saw that the process was far from perfect. "What we saw again and again, is that everyone was looking at new initiatives but nobody actually looked at the e-mail itself as a starting point in order as a way to work better."

SEDNA can be described as a transactional E-mail software platform. In reality, it is much more. "We help people build ships. We help them monitor the performance of the ships; before and as they are being built," says Dobie. In shipbuilding, he says, change orders are what cost money. Continuing, he adds, "What we saw with one of our customers – Seaspan



SEDNA Systems Pte. Ltd. 2018

– during one project, there were about 30,000 e-mails going back and forth just to figure out and follow up on that type of thing. And, while we continue to build and deploy software for shipping companies, we realized that all of the ‘good stuff’ was actually contained in an e-mail.”

SEDNA in Action

Separately, another firm – a West coast-based shipping agent – told SEDNA, “We’ve got Outlook, and we’re not allowed to archive the e-mail after 6 months.” Anyone who has overloaded their local server with too much Outlook mail can sympathize. Dobie and the SEDNA team set out to produce something better. Instead of building an add-on to Outlook or other programs, the team set out to build a better hosting client.

SEDNA is a messaging platform, and it’s for shared e-mail, built very much for the shipping business. Shipping uses shared e-mail and this often involves a distribution list. At its heart, SEDNA replaces that aspect of Outlook. Dobie explains further, “It’s where your shared e-mail comes into, and then I come in, I see a message, I can see that you read it, I can see that someone else read it, I’ve read it, I can leave a note on it for you, I can ask you to do something on it and I can follow along.

Cloud-based, and built on top of Amazon, the SEDNA product is secure and highly available. For shipping concerns who deal daily in transactional matters – shipbuilding, charter contracts, and other similar actions – SEDNA becomes a logical choice for shared, team-based e-mail. So for private e-mail, a standard e-mail program works well for what it was intended, which is private e-mail involving HR matters, personal communications, etc. But for a team e-mail where the group has

to work on something together, which is mostly how shipping works, SEDNA could be the panacea.

SEDNA allows another system, through an interface, to program it in real time. In this way, e-mails related to different transactions, can automatically be tagged, eliminating the time which a user has spent organizing or looking for the e-mail they have to act on. Dobie points to a real life situation to explain it better. “We have a big ship agent in Australia – they’ve got about 60 agents – all those agents were dragging e-mails into folders, two hours each, daily. SEDNA eliminated all of that by automatically filing the e-mails, and presenting them to the agents.”

The new v02 version of SEDNA boasts much improved functionality. With a more user friendly interface and an even better database, the platform is much more intuitive in letting people know which messages are important require their focus. New features also include allowing private conversations between team members, while staying inside the SEDNA.

If time is money, then for a shipper, demurrage can be real currency. Indeed, midsized trading houses often set up demurrage departments as profit centers. As they meticulously document every second of every voyage, their transactional partners can miss critical ‘time bars’ because they either weren’t aware of that data or more likely, couldn’t get to it on time because it has been either misfiled or deleted. But, not if that trading partner is using SEDNA.

Seaspan: Sold on SEDNA

Seaspan is an independent owner, operator and manager of containerships. In a nutshell, Seaspan provides many of the



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world's major shipping lines with alternatives to vessel ownership by offering long-term leases on large, modern container-ships combined with industry leading ship management services. A global operation, Seaspan employs more than 4000 people on shore and at sea. Three years ago, they turned to SEDNA as a way to better organize certain aspects of their transactional business. Since then, they haven't looked back.

According to Ian Robinson, Director, Projects and Technology at Seaspan Ship Management Ltd., the software wasn't originally rolled out in one flash. “We had teams all around the world so it was a case of building it, team by team. And we built it out for sub-teams, so it started with a definite central plan, and over time, we found more uses and functionality for it. It's quite mature now in our organization, but it's taken about two years to get it set up with the teams the way we wanted it to.”

For Robinson and Seaspan, SEDNA is a supplement to his existing E-mail platform. “I'll qualify that,” he explains, adding quickly, “For me, it's a supplement. I have Outlook to deal with management in the company and more personal, one-to-one stuff. Tasks involving things like HR we still approach in the old-fashioned Outlook way. But, if you are talking about teams, groups or project-based tasks, then it's definitely SEDNA.”

Also according to Robinson, when Seaspan teams are dealing with the same vessel or the construction of the vessel, one of the things that SEDNA handles very well is guarantee claims – where you might, for example – be dealing with a series of issues all under one contract. “With Outlook, you get people sending to people that they think are involved, or might not be involved, so pretty quickly, the information is out there, but it becomes fragmented. When you are dealing with

a single project, it is more ideal when the whole team knows the status. We're not dealing with dollar signs; usually, we're dealing with real issues on real ships. SEDNA allows you to know what's important – time and action – instead of having to sift through a mountain of E-mail, one by one.” At the same time, senior staff often don't need to be involved in the day-to-day minutia; they can collect that information and then find what they need, when they want it.

For the shipbuilding aspect of Robinson's day-to-day routine, SEDNA has introduced a level of organization and documentation that is invaluable. “Sometimes, we'll have teams imbedded into a shipyard for more than one year. It might be a series of ships; sister vessels. And often times, the problem we might have in one ship, probably will impact the other nine,” he explains, adding, “It's about having common information and you realize you don't have to reinvent the wheel to start the next vessel that might be getting the keel laid a month apart from another. If you have a group e-mail address, then the information available for one ship is also available for all ten.”

Benchmarking what SEDNA has saved his department overtime is difficult, says Robinson. As an example, however, Robinson points to specific transactional advantages that SEDNA can bring. “SEDNA remembers the issue that we had with the main engine on the first ship in a series, so when the fifth ship comes along, we have that knowledge to prevent it or shorten the pain, even when there is turnover of personnel over a five year period (yours and that of the shipyard). All the notes are saved and in one place. The knowledge base is there; you can look back and find why you made that decision. The shipyard might want to push an extra cost on you, where prior to that, it was a standard cost and procedure. Or perhaps,



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you’d already paid for it at the start of the project. That’s a direct impact save of the software.”

Security is important to Seaspan, as well. Like any big firm, Seaspan has contractors and full time employees involved in every project. With standard E-mail-based operations, then the potential for leakage of sensitive information is very real. SEDNA, on the other hand, is securely held, with only access to Seaspan authorized personnel. Contractors have access to information but they can’t walk off with it, send it elsewhere or delete it.

SEDNA’s unlimited data capacity and archiving capabilities also come in handy. “At a high level, it’s about individual projects, and then drilling down, it allows you to find what you need in one place. The search functions are very good and the tagging function is quite useful. And, the secure storage can handle high volume. You don’t have to purge,” says Robinson.

In the end, Robinson describes a comfort level with the product and an awareness of SEDNA can do. “I’m quietly used to it instead of overtly enthusiastic. It takes away an element of hassle. In a previous life, I’ve run other projects using other e-mail programs and in those cases, you had to introduce a level of discipline to save the information. When a project goes bad or if there’s a dispute, if you can’t find that email or documentation, you’re in trouble. So, SEDNA introduces a safety net that we do not have to worry about, anymore.” And that translates into the old adage of ‘whoever has the better documentation always wins – it doesn’t mean you were right – it just means you had your ducks in the row.’

At a base level, Robinson points to SEDNA’s most valuable aspect: “It’s first and foremost; project oriented. There’s got to first be a group of people wanting to share this correspon-

dence. I have roving superintendents that do on board training and engineering fault-finding on board the vessels. They are a tight knit team, but they have to travel and through the SEDNA platform, they can see who’s coming off a ship, who is joining, etc. So there are scheduling benefits as well.” From the transactional aspect of any deal, he says, “You might have three different groupings of guarantee claims. And, guarantee claims can extend beyond one year.”

Manage Today’s Transactions with Tomorrow’s Tools

Data clearly shows that using new SAAS tools – like SEDNA – can reduce the cumulative time of the personnel involved in a single transaction within an organization by 60 minutes. For a company with a 100-strong trading or broking team, the time saved could equate to an annual financial savings of \$1.35m.

What’s more, these are not theoretical calculations. Leading shippers, owners and brokers such as Glencore and Seaspan – not coincidentally both SEDNA clients – are already using this technology to drive new levels of efficiency into their operations. For an industry trading more than \$4 trillion in goods each year, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

SEDNA uses the word ‘transaction’ to describe a voyage, a contract, or project. Today, somewhere overseas in some far-flung shipyard, the builder is hoping that you can’t find that e-mail from 10 weeks ago where they said they would ‘do this but not that,’ as it concerns one particular building project. If you do, it’s going to cost them plenty. Fortunately, you’ve got SEDNA. And, the team with the best documentation always wins. You knew that, right?