

# Member Profile



Green Marine 19 inch AWM monitors installed on a Nordhavn 63.

Photo courtesy of Billy Black

## Green Marine Monitors

### Putting people before profits

**K**eith Grapes, founder of Green Marine Monitors of Export, PA, knows that business success comes from focusing on your core strengths. When Grapes launched Green Marine in 2010, he put this philosophy into action. For many years, he had been working in the marine industry as a high-bright display provider and contract manufacturer, supplying LCD displays for a number of major marine electronics manufacturers.

Recognizing a developing market for premium quality stand-alone displays, Grapes used a small capital loan from another of his

businesses to launch his own marine monitor brand. "The growing popularity of 'black box' electronics and glass bridge systems pointed towards a growing need for displays designed for this purpose," said Grapes. "My background in the industry provided a good baseline of experience, but even more important was our determination that there was not only a product out there, but a better way to build it. It was this idea that gave birth to what would become Green Marine Monitors."

#### What's in a name?

The name "Green Marine" stems from Grapes' idea that marine monitors could be manufactured using design and construction

techniques that reduced the need for raw materials, and therefore, reduced the amount of waste. Green Marine was also the first marine monitor company to incorporate LED backlight systems across its entire product line, reducing the consumption of power aboard vessels.

This was not only an "angle" that helped the startup Green Marine separate itself from other marine monitor manufacturers, it was also an idea whose time had come within the marine industry. From humble beginnings, Green Marine Monitors reached profitability in only its fifth month of business.

Over the ensuing three years, Green Marine has carved out a steady niche, finding ways to differentiate itself and expanding its product line while remaining true to its core values. You could say Green Marine has flown "under the radar" while introducing a string of innovations. In addition to the aforementioned LED backlighting across the line, Green Marine was the first company to introduce 4:3 and 16:9 format monitors built to the same overall height. This allows mixing and matching of monitors across the same bridge console while maintaining a uniform, clean appearance. Green Marine was also first to manufacture a Super Wide (stretched aspect ratio) marine monitor that fits in the tight space of an overhead console. Creating products like this that address the actual needs of boaters is one of the advantages of being a relatively small company, and has helped Green Marine not only build its business, but also a reputation as a company that can respond to market demands and quickly turn new ideas into actual products.

#### Getting feedback

Input from its dealers, sales representatives and customers plays a large part in Green Marine's product improvement and



development. “We are in constant contact with our business partners and end users to gain as much feedback as we can,” said Grapes. “This communication is invaluable in helping shape our product development, as well as helping us improve our company’s procedures and processes. We always strive to get better at everything we do—and really listening to your partners and customers is a big part of this.”

An example of this collaborative approach and response to the needs of marine industry partners can be seen in how Green Marine recently worked with prestigious naval architecture and engineering firm Donald L. Blount & Associates (DLBA). Headquartered in Chesapeake, VA, DLBA was working on a refit of a 50 meter luxury yacht in Europe and found itself facing several unique technical challenges regarding the vessel’s monitors. Chief among these was a custom monitor resolution requirement to facilitate operation with the yacht’s Kelvin Hughes radar system.

“We contacted Keith and advised him of the problem and the urgent need for five monitors,” said Richard Wilkie, Jr., chief electrical engineer for DLBA. “Green Marine was able to write and install custom resolution firmware for its 24 inch Bridge Command monitors and ship them to the Kelvin Hughes facility in England for testing and evaluation. Keith’s personal efforts towards finding a solution resulted in the vessel meeting its aggressive delivery date.”

This philosophy of going “above and beyond” has helped Green Marine attain steady growth that has weathered recent economic downturns. “I doubt we’ll ever be a giant, but then again, that’s never been our goal,” said Grapes. “Our sales have been consistent across most market verticals, especially in the workboat side of the business. We’ve done especially well selling monitors for use on ferry boats, tugs, research vessels, police boats and fire boats,” he added.

As for emerging markets, Grapes is planning for growth in the under 30 meter pleasure yacht business. “The anticipated growth of ‘black box’ marine electronics networks and ‘glass bridge’ helm stations aboard tomorrow’s yachts will drive an increasing need for sophisticated monitors that look at home on these luxury vessels,” said Grapes. “Our product line is gaining traction in this area, and we’re going to focus even more on cultivating this business. Our monitors add value and sophistication to any vessel, and we’re going to leverage this fact to increase our presence in this market.”

Based on current industry trends, Grapes also sees increased use of his company’s monitors on vessels with traditional multi-function displays from top marine electronics brands. For example, he reports an increasing number of vessels installing new nine- or 14 inch display Furuno NavNet TZtouch MFDs and pairing them with Green Marine’s 24 inch monitor. This provides all the functions and easy touch-screen operation of these popular Furuno units, with the ability to view important charting, radar, sounder and other navigation data on a large, wide-format screen.



At top is a 24 inch Bridge Command monitor displaying Nobeltec navigation data. To the left is the company’s new 15 inch AWM Series II monitor.

### Operating ‘smart’

“From the beginning, we focused on the design and manufacturing processes as a way to differentiate our company and our products,” said Grapes. “Every component in Green Marine monitors is designed in house.” All manufacturing processes, including the bonding of the company’s special anti-reflective glass, are completed at Green Marine’s single manufacturing site. “This streamlined supply chain greatly reduces manufacturing costs, and this allows us to offer our monitors at excellent price points.”

Green Marine has also focused its engineering efforts on simplifying the man/machine interface. “Monitors are handling and displaying more and more information as technology is added to today’s boats—a trend that will certainly continue. This doesn’t mean, however, that monitors themselves need to become more complicated. I believe we have designed the simplest and most intuitive interface, with single-button signal switching and a dedicated dimming knob for brightness control. In fact, all commonly used functions can be controlled with a single button push,” said Grapes.

As a lean company, Green Marine has to work smarter and harder to succeed. This is a key reason why Green Marine has been a member of NMEA since it first began. “Being a small company with limited advertising dollars, we rely heavily on our dealers to recommend our products to customers. Since our dealers are so important to our success, we work very hard at treating them well and meeting their needs. Each day, it’s our goal to make doing business with Green Marine a pleasure.”

For example, the company normally has all of its monitor models in stock and ships within one day of receiving orders. Free ground shipping is offered for all orders in the contiguous 48 states, with other expedited shipping options available. Green Marine sets aside several units of each model for the company’s “hot swap” warranty replacement program. “If an end user has a problem with one of our monitors and it can’t be fixed on the boat, a new one is sent out right away,” said Grapes. “We strive to make our customers look good to their customers.”

Perhaps the biggest difference in the way Green Marine does business has to do with accessibility and prompt response to any problems or concerns. “If there is an issue with delivery, product performance, installation, or anything concerning a Green Marine monitor, our dealers know they can call and speak directly with the owner of the company.” In addition, sales representatives Coastar Marketing (Southeast US) and Maritime Marketing (Central and Northeast US) work very

closely with Green Marine to provide dealers with another level of product and technical support.

### Growing product line

Today's Green Marine product line includes the AWM (All Weather Monitor) Series, which features 12, 15, 17 and 19 inch monitors to cover a wide variety of vessel sizes and applications. The AWM Series' reliable performance and rugged construction make it a popular choice for commercial vessels, workboats, government and law enforcement vessels, and smaller pleasure yachts.

Green Marine's Bridge Command Series was engineered for the larger yachting market, but has also enjoyed success in various professional applications, as well. Bridge Command monitors feature all-glass fronts in 19 and 24 inch sizes and "super-wide" stretched aspect ratios. All components are integrated into a central controller for a clean appearance and optimal control of multiple monitors performing in a sophisticated marine electronics network.

Whether it's the company's AWM or Bridge Command Series, all Green Marine monitors are built to high standards of performance, incorporating 9-36V marine grade power supplies, 1,000 nit LED backlighting and bonded panels for sunlight viewability in a range of

marine environments. Multiple signal inputs allow for easy integration with a broad spectrum of sensors and marine electronics to meet the needs of today's technology-heavy yachts and workboats.

The fall of 2013 will see the introduction of a new line of monitors from Green Marine, the AWM Series II. This new series will incorporate a range of key improvements over the original AWM Series, including an enhanced user interface (already a strong selling point for Green Marine), new Picture-in-Picture capabilities for increased versatility, additional signal inputs (now seven on the 15 inch model), and side-by-side mounting that better suits the way these monitors are being installed on today's vessels.

### Looking ahead

Grapes has good reason to be optimistic about the future. "In only a few short years, we've developed a solid product line that gives the industry a choice beyond the traditional monitor brands. And we have some exciting new products on the drawing board. More importantly, we've established a reputation for being a different type of company. Our business philosophy of putting people ahead of profits has resonated well with our customers. We just seem to be the type of company people enjoy doing business with," said Grapes.

As such, Grapes strives to make himself accessible and welcomes calls from dealers and others in the industry. Feel free to ring him up at (724) 392-4092 or visit [www.greenmarinemonitors.com](http://www.greenmarinemonitors.com) to learn more.



Company founder Keith Grapes says Green Marine was in the black financially five months after launching the business in 2010. At left are the Bridge Command Series of monitors, designed for larger yachts, exhibited at last year's Miami Boat Show.

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