

Another first timer was Ian Clark from Gravity International who says that while there was significant interest in his watersport product range, it was a great opportunity to meet people from across the globe and really understand what was happening within his market sector.

"We were not expecting too much from this show but hoped to pick up some distributors to get our product out there. We now have a better idea of the European market and how it is structured," Clark said.

He said people from Poland, Croatia, Latvia and other outlying places, where there are good opportunities for his company, showed interest in his products. "I would say it will take two years to get a good relationship going with the customers. They dip their toes in the water with a small order the first year and hopefully they will see that our products are first rate and our business model is first class. If they do, then we can expect a much bigger order the next time."

Alistair Murray, Managing Director of Ronstan is the stalwart of the Australian contingent. "METS is 20 years old and I have been to every single one," Murray said.

"I first visited when my Dutch distributor at the time told me that there was a promising little trade show they were starting and we should come and visit. We didn't actually exhibit, we just came along to have a look. To see what it has grown into today is just unbelievable. It has now become the international meeting place over the all the other shows in the world."

Ronstan's main aim is to sell their products at METS but do get some lines from other manufacturers in the hope of distributing them in Australia. "Also at all times we are looking to expand our company to improve our position," Murray added. "We look for acquisitions along the way that will help expand our company and this show is the perfect place to have a look at who is doing what and to identify potential targets."

Sean Griffin from GME has attended half the shows of Alistair Murray, but each time reaffirms the importance of being at METS. His object was to meet with existing distributors and introduce them to new products.

"We are not looking for new distributors here as we have our European distributors pretty much sorted, but it is a place where we can see all our clients and major distributors in the one place over three days. But it is a lot more than a European show though, as we also see clients and possible distributors from all parts of the world."



Another long time METS supporter is Tasmanian company Muir Winches. General Manager Matthew Johnston says that once again they had an excellent show with interest in their product range coming from across the globe with particular interest this year from Russia and Scandinavia. Johnston said an important aspect of the show was catching up with existing distributors who are a key success for any export business.



Roger Webber from TMO in Queensland also had great success at METS. He says the show was good for them and he was particularly impressed by the level of enquiry from across the globe, confirming METS was no longer just a European trade show. "METS is now the place to meet suppliers from all over the world. TMO generated significant leads and contacts that would be followed up as soon as we return to Australia."

The 2007 METS was extra special for Shane Faulkhead and Nic Cox from EVRSafe Marine Technologies as they won the 'Life Saving and Safety' category in the annual DAME Awards for their EVRSafe 1040, a sophisticated, innovative, integrated multi-toxic gas sensory device. This award went nicely with the one they won at IBEX a few weeks earlier.



Shane Faulkhead & Nic Cox

"It is certainly a feather in the cap," said Nic Cox, the company's Marketing Manager. "It is almost unprecedented to win both the METS award and the IBEX award. To win them in the same year is something most companies never dream of doing."

The DAME, now viewed as the leading competition for marine product design and innovation, was first held in 1991 and is awarded annually to the best designed product at METS. Over the years it has attracted an increasingly high level of entries making it the most prestigious and competitive award in the industry.

The award was the perfect kick-start to any show, especially when you are using the event to launch your product to the European market. Before lunch on the first day they received unbelievable attention from both the trade and the media which ensured a very hectic couple of days.

"What it does is give you that instant credibility," said Cox. "Winning our category here at METS from the 139 products nominated has put us in the top five products out of Europe and the United States. That sort of recognition you can't buy. What we now have is our peers, the members of the judging panels, recognising the product for what it is and that is a truly innovative product."

Nic Cox and Managing Director Shane Faulkhead had been travelling for five weeks, starting at IBEX

in the States where they started working out their worldwide distributorship. "We now have distributors in the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, the Caribbean - half of South America covered," Cox says. "We also have Spain, Holland, Great Britain and Finland covered, so the aim at METS was really to consolidate that distributorship across the world."

Another company, exhibiting at METS for the sixth time and no stranger to awards, is Marina Protection Systems. Company owner and inventor Brett Maddern has picked up awards in the Annual Australian Marine Awards for his Electrolysis and Maddox Anode as well as a finalist in the DAME awards at METS in 2003 for his Zinc Anode Meter. He also received a special mention for the Electrolysis Blocker.

"I have found now that people come looking for my product at METS", Maddern says. "People who have used one of the products come back the next year to thank me and bring a friend with them to introduce them to me and before you know it you have sold a lot of units."

He says the importance of a presence at METS for his company, is primarily to catch up with previous contacts who are now talking with him about purchasing distribution quantities of his products. "Being at these shows is an indication of market presence. It is not just about selling but letting the market know you are there to support it."



Brett Maddern & Ole Petter Hillestad