

Behind the scenes

BW Pioneer has lived up to its name, from being the first FPSO in the US Gulf of Mexico to setting records for turret technology. Project manager Rolf Normann tells World Horizon what it was like to lead the conversion project.

WHAT IS KEY WHEN MANAGING A PROJECT OF THIS SCALE?

The success of a conversion project boils down to having the best project team in place and achieving the right balance of quality, safety, cost and time. To be on top of one or two of these elements is not really a big problem, but when we have to ensure we meet all the criteria and keep trade-offs to a minimum, it starts to get challenging.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PROJECT MANAGER?

I believe a good project manager primarily needs to attract good people and keep them motivated. Secondly, he or she needs to have a fair understanding of most issues so that it makes it possible to understand, discuss and analyse problems quickly.

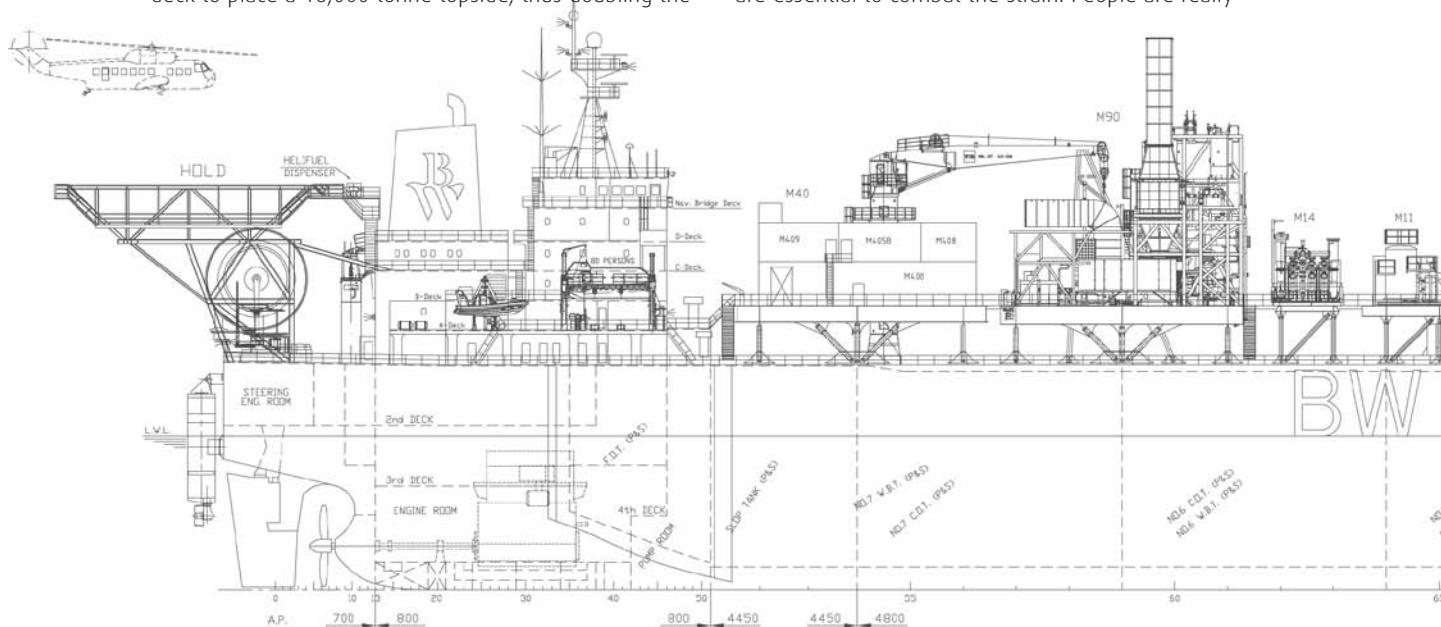
WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR CHALLENGES OF THIS PROJECT?

BW Pioneer is not an exceptionally big FPSO but the scope of conversion work exceeds anything we have done before. As an example, the number of pipe spools and cables on the BW Pioneer is around 20% to 30% higher than on our other FPSO Yuum K'ak' Náab. It also has fairly congested topsides with a "small" Aframax deck to place a 16,000 tonne topside, thus doubling the

dead weight of the ship to more than 30,000 tonnes. To give some idea of the magnitude of the project, it is useful to mention that we used more than 8 million man hours in total at the yards and at our main contractors. Technically, the turret is probably the most complex area of the ship to work on. However, the bigger challenge in this project is managing the stakeholders. Being in the US meant that we needed to meet all US rules, and since the US does not have prior experience with FPSOs, a number of the rules and agreed practices were actually developed as the project progressed. The US Minerals Management Services, the US Coast Guard, Petrobras America Inc., Det Norske Veritas and BW Offshore were all instrumental in the process. Without the contribution and positive will from each party, it would have been impossible to complete this project.

WHICH PHASES OF THE PROJECT STOOD OUT FOR YOU?

The most critical phases of the project are at the beginning and the end. At the start, fundamental judgment calls need to be made, such as team composition and staffing and contracting strategies. Towards the end, before leaving the shipyard, the timelines are always extremely tight, and this is when focus and high spirits are essential to combat the strain. People are really





Project Manager Rolf Norman and Construction Manager Tom Ringstad

stretched in this phase and it is easy to start finger pointing and blaming each other if we do not get the expected progress, so it is important that the team is already well bonded by this time. I have yet to see anyone being worn out by too much work alone – as long as you believe in your contribution and receive positive feedback, most people can take on an incredible amount of responsibility and work load.

WHY IS BW OFFSHORE REGARDED SO HIGHLY IN THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT SPHERE?

I would say the key factor in the BW Offshore approach to projects is working with small, highly skilled teams with diverse backgrounds – from both offshore and shipping. Most of us have worked on similar projects before and are experienced enough to know what is needed to ensure a successful completion. Although a

number of people in the core team have not held these positions previously, everyone has proven to be eager, confident and excellent performers. We have put a lot of work into getting the right team in place and ensuring that everyone is confident and secure in their position – I think this helps us get the output we want.

HOW DID YOU FEEL AT THE END?

Some of us have worked almost solely on this project for nearly three years now, including the tender phase, so the completion was very emotional and rewarding, like giving birth, I guess. One colleague aptly described it as the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. I hope and believe that most people on this project will remember it with a smile – as a successful project that was interesting and challenging, and something rather special to be a part of. ●

