The Most Influential Journalism in Shipping

Anil Sharma

Founder, president and chief executive, Global Marketing Systems

When the financial crash hit in September 2008 after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, many companies in the shipping industry were left with little business to conduct as access to credit froze and chartering markets ground to a halt.

But for Anil Sharma, a cash buyer of ships being sold for demolition, business began to boom as owners re-evaluated their fleets and sent aging vessels for scrap.

His company, Global Marketing Systems, established in 1992, is thought to be the cash buyer for a third of all ships sold for recycling.

And with around 1,000 ships sold for scrap globally last year, the volume of vessels he handles is far greater than most company’s fleets, a fact which has prompted comments that he could be regarded as the biggest shipowner in the world.

But comments that were originally light-hearted could ring true in the future as the International Maritime Organization’s Hong Kong Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships, adopted last year and signed by a number of member states already, would make Dr Sharma the official owner of any vessel he bought and sold on, even if it was only his for a week or a day.

Despite non-governmental organisations often targeting and making allegations that Sharma is responsible for the death of workers at breaking yards in the Indian subcontinent, as he sells ships for scrap there, he has been trying to use his influence for good.

One of GMS’ latest ventures has been to join forces with classification society Germanischer Lloyd to help create more ‘green’ recycling yards in south Asia, developing options for owners that will allow their vessels to be scrapped in more environmentally sound and safe conditions.

Originally from India, Anil Sharma was a university lecturer in the US before moving into the ship recycling industry, in which his brother is also involved. He operates offices in Cumberland and Dubai.

Location: USA