A heavy load

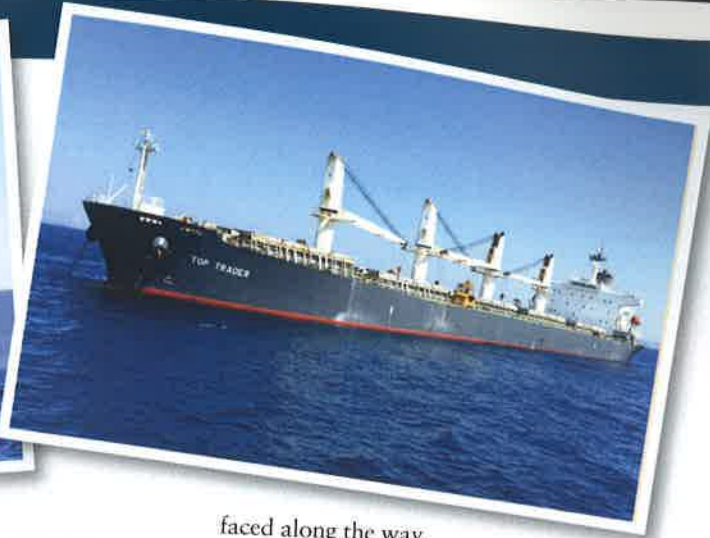
Founded in 2009, Load Line Marine S A is only in its sixth year of operation, but the team at the helm of this flexible and innovative company has managed to prove that the company is an expansive and dynamic player. Holding extensive experience in the areas of ship and project management, founder George Souravlas and co-founder Costis Calfoglou combined their expertise in order to be able to deliver the best service possible under Load Line Marine's banner. To do this, the company decided to focus on managing ecotype geared bulk carriers from Handysize to Ultramax, equipped with greener and economic engines and an innovative design.

Since it was previously featured in *Shipping & Marine* magazine in December 2014, Load Line Marine has spent the last nine months scanning the market for business opportunities that have surfaced due to the extremely low prices in the S&P market and in June 2015 the company added to its fleet M/V Top Trader, a 52,403 DWT geared dry bulk carrier.

"The Top Trader was built in Japan and is the second largest vessel in our fleet. She is in the Supramax category and is geared with four cranes of 30 tonnes each and grabs which facilitate the loading and discharging of cargo at ports. She is now on a long term time charter with Cargill, a major grainhouse that controls global movement of grains. We are very happy to be working with Cargill as they are very selective about their counterparts and the tonnage they use for the transportation of their grain cargoes," George Souravlas, Managing Director and Founder of Load Line Marine highlights.

Beginning with the management of its first vessel in January 2010, the company grew steadily over the first four years, with two Handysize newbuild dry bulk carriers as well as a third Ultramax newbuild added to its fleet by 2013. Following further acquisitions, the majority of which took place over a period of less than six months in 2014, the company today manages seven bulk carriers: M/V Charlie and sister vessel M/V Delta, M/V Golf and sister vessel M/V Foxtrot, M/V Horizon, M/V Top Trader and M/V Eco which was added in October 2013. Boasting a fuel-efficient and eco design, the Ultramax M/V Eco offers huge benefits to customers as it carries 15 per cent more cargo and consumes 17 per cent less fuel in comparison to an average Supramax vessel. That means a combined advantage of 25 per cent of reduction of fuel costs is gained per tonne.

With its fleet doubled in less than six months, Load Line made the strategic and inevitable decision to relocate; as of October 2014 the company began operating from its new premises Athens, Greece. Designed by AK Praxis, the new premises have



enhanced internal communication and helped promote the company's vision.

Despite these positive developments for Load Line Marine, the turbulent shipping industry and extremely poor market conditions have resulted in new challenges for the firm, as George continues: "We have faced problems due to the bankruptcy of a operator company called Copenship of Copenhagen, which has been in operation since 1978, but has now been liquidated. As a result of this, the charter party we had with this company was terminated before its completion; this was a major drawback for us all as the vessel we had built and delivered in 2013 was based on the five-year charter we had with this firm. The financing we got for the vessel from HSH Nordbank was also based on the strength of the long term charter, however, with the company going bankrupt in the first quarter of 2015 we had to pick up the bills and pay for Copenship's expenses, such as port dues and bunkers."

Far from the only casualties within the shipping industry, many organisations have fallen through the net due to the worst ever market for dry bulk shipping taking place in early 2015. Commenting on the market George says: "Current dry bulk freight rates are also significantly affected by the low cost of oil; with the oil prices falling, consumers are buying the cheapest and most convenient form of energy. Because of this, a lot of firms are moving to oil over coal; I read that in the first six months of this year 42 per cent less coal has been imported to China. Moreover, the Chinese economy has significantly reduced its growth, resulting to a further decrease of imports. As a result of the dry bulk crisis, the scrapping of vessels reached an unprecedented amount in the first six months of 2015."

On top of this, the financially challenged industry faces further costs as the ratification of Ballast Water Treatments looks to come into force in early 2017, as George notes: "This is a major expense that not many companies can afford right now, however, by 2017 or 2018 these systems will need to be installed on all vessels."

Although the market remains incredibly challenging for those in the dry bulk market and despite all the adversities Load Line Marine faced along the way, the company managed not only to survive but even to expand further, based on its excellent reputation, high quality vessels and strong relations with first class charterers that were built on trust, professionalism, hard work, advanced technology and an unrivalled service.

Load Line Marine S A
www.loadlinemarine.com

- 53,000 supramax vessel now under management
- Seven vessels managed
- Specialise in operating and managing dry bulk carriers