

NAPA Ship Design Software Company Looking to Expand in North America



Mikko Forss, NAPA's executive vice president for Design Solutions (NAPA photo)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – A major ship design software company is focusing on expanding its customer base in North America, especially in view of the U.S. government's increased shipbuilding initiatives and substantial industry investments.

The company, NAPA, based in Finland, designs software

applications for ship design, safety, and operations.

“We basically provide 3D CAD [computer-aided design] and engineering software for the shipyards’ engineering offices,” said Mikko Forss, NAPA’s executive vice president for Design Solutions, in an interview with Seapower. “With the help of our software, our customers are able to make critical safety- and naval architecture-related divisions during their design process.

“Our customer base represents 90% of the annual shipbuilding output,” Forss said. “If we measure it in terms of compensated gross tonnage, we have a very strong position in the key shipbuilding markets in Korea, Japan, China, Europe, and, we have quite a few customers in North America.

“North America is a very important territory to us,” he said. “Your government has announced the Maritime Action Plan that comes with substantial industry stimulus and investments. We believe we can help the U.S.A. to deliver good quality vessels on time, on budget. So, we’re very much focusing on the North America market at the moment, and we are working with all the key stakeholders... “For the moment, our main focus is on the Navy and Coast Guard. We see ourselves as a really good partner for the U.S. shipbuilding industry to ramp up productivity and efficiency during these unprecedented times.”

Forss said the NAPA ship design software is “off the shelf,” so without any customization you can start to apply it for your design work. Most of our customers have actually tailored and customized our software for their needs. That has proven to be a really, really powerful way of solving the specific challenges they have at hand.”

He cited South Korea’s HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, the world’s largest shipyard, as using heavily customized NAPA software to match with their design process.

“With that approach, they can gain more productivity, they can draw more design iterations in less amount of time, and that leads to quality products – ships, in this case – while maintaining the delivery schedule and budget,” he said.

Forss noted that all the major companies designing and building ice-going vessels are using NAPA software for multiple different design disciplines, including hull structure and stability management.

He also said that NAPA is emphasizing skilled workforce development. NAPA has partnered with universities in the United States that offer curricula in naval architecture “to build together a program, a curriculum where our software is included and there we have a mutual and shared vision to produce talent and skills that the industry needs because our industry is having, actually, a very exceptional moment, high order books, political-level attention toward our business that is almost unprecedented. But one major challenge we are facing is that skill shortage, that same thing I’m hearing when I’m traveling in Korea, in Japan, in the U.S. and in Canada. One way to solve this challenge is that we are partnering with academia to offer skills for the future graduates that are readily usable in the industry.”

Founded in 1989, NAPA has offices in ten countries and has 230 experts on board.

Forss, a graduate from Helsinki University and a naval architect for almost 20 years, explained his enthusiasm for his profession.

“Ships are the largest man-made objects that move,” he said. “It’s just a remarkable effort of engineering to design and build those and that is still fascinating me every single day. ... Naval architects are one big family, globally, and the relationships and connections are really tight in our business.”