

British Marine venture logs on with all the frills of a weblog

International Transport Solutions blazes a trail on the internet, writes James Brewer -
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IT'S... its.

With a grand electronic flourish, insurer British Marine has launched its professional, personal and intermodal liability subsidiary, International Transport Solutions.

At the same time as, under the brand name of its, its chiefs Sam Ignarski and Zareena Hussain will perform the underwriting, clients and industry friends have been invited to do their own writing — via a weblog.

The company has initiated what it suspects is the first weblog to be used in the insurance world.

Mr Ignarski said there was a need in the fast-moving industry to find ways of communicating with customers and well-wishers without making a huge call on the time of busy people.

The message platform will spice a site which has all the usual documents such as proposal forms, circulars and comment on claims issues and loss prevention.

In addition to his extensive industry knowledge, Mr Ignarski is capitalising on the technological experience gained from running his own e-zine, Bow Wave.

To get the ball rolling, he himself has 'blogged' a selection of maritime news and his own comment on the market, starting, "So farewell then 2006, a quiet year for many insurers".

The its team has added other novelties for an insurance website, such as listing meeting places ideal for shipping people visiting locations where they want to relax with others in the industry, and hotel reviews.

Mr Ignarski recommends among others the Regal Hong Kong, an "eccentric faux frills hotel".

Ms Hussain likes Threadneedles with its plasma screens and duck down duvets, and the Thistle Tower Hotel in St Katherine's Way: "Anyone who has stayed here must know what I am thinking of writing — enough said."

Designed by John Kulukundis in New York in partnership with Peter Andersen of Trigonal, London, the website is seen as an essential means of getting the fixed premium unit off to a good start.

In its field, it is competing with several long-established insurers, but in addition to direct competition plans to develop several niche areas.

It is building a business which is determined to sit comfortably alongside British Marine's historic portfolio of hull and P&I insurance for small and specialised ships and craft.

British Marine has retail broker relationships around the world looking after the 11,000 plus small ships entered.

This means that on the professional liability side, the company will insure marine and transport specialists, and is specifically targeting the shipping and transport markets for directors and officers insurance on behalf of QBE.

Products have been tailored for the small and medium enterprise, so that in the ports and terminals sector, the major ports groups are not on the target lists.

Other new products will include schemes for surveyors, transport companies, and freight transit points.

New wordings adopt the principle of "all risks" rather than the more familiar "numerated risks" more commonly used in the sector.

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