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01 Fritz Heidenreich set up one of the most successful online shipping applications — but Heidmar founder Per Heidenreich's son, who developed the tanker pool operator's first web-based systems, had virtually no background in computing.

Today only a little of his programming survives on Q88 and the professionally trained developers who program its current systems are slightly bamboozled by what he did.

"I used a lot of short cuts as I did not have the time to create a complex enterprise system — it was a simple tool," Fritz Heidenreich says of the early online Q88 tanker questionnaire site he developed for the pool partners.

Now Q88's developers do it by the book, so systems can be scaled up in size and complexity, and Heidenreich is keen to encourage co-operation

between web-based software sellers to allow different systems to interact.

The outdoor-loving Heidenreich took a degree in aerospace engineering at the University of Colorado but he built up experience of the shipping business by working most holidays at the Heidenreich Marine (better known as Heidmar) office in Stamford, Connecticut.

His only computing knowledge was one class in Fortran, a numeric programming language first developed in the 1950s, and he is essentially self-taught about the internet. "I only know enough about [website] developing to be dangerous."

And it was not until he spent six months in Heidmar's chartering department that he really understood shipping — and how inefficient it could be. Nevertheless, he knew enough to

River deep,

Fritz Heidenreich had virtually no experience in computing. But he wasn't going to let a little thing like that stop him designing Q88's first online presence. Paul Berrill reports



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mountain high

build some PC-based software for the Pleiades panamax tanker pool (it became Star Tankers) in 1998 that did away with having to courier reports to its partners. "I thought: 'This is insane. It's all right when we only have one pool partner, but what happens when we have 10?'"

So he made the information available to the Heidmar chartering team on a website for the pool partners "and my father loved it".

It took six weeks to write what would become the Q88 website. The biggest issue was not functionality or sales but what to call the site. Tanker owners' association Intertanko

owned the Q88 form but did not want to be a commercial partner, to avoid any potential conflict of interest. However, it gave its blessing for the name to be used.

The other big issue was that competitors were suspicious about Heidmar being able to access their data. It was hard to prove to them that information would be on servers that the company could not access.

Even though software development was still a sideshow from his day job, Heidmar followed up by developing a voyage management system (VMS). "Pool partners really

appreciated that we were upfront with all our information, and we got several contracts with oil majors because they knew they could rely on us."

And then came the dotcom boom. Silicon Valley companies and financiers were casting eager eyes over anything and everything that could be booked online. After one meeting, Heidmar says, "I am shaking my head and my father is shaking his head — these people have no clue how this industry works."

But at the same time he could see that the internet was going to happen, and there was a

Trek star

Walking the walk

Per Heidenreich came to competitive rowing late in life after many years of honing his golf skills. At 54, the Heidmar founder told *TradeWinds* in 1988 that he was feeling a lot fitter after 18 months of training. "Golf is very good for raising your blood pressure but it doesn't do a lot to increase your heart rate," he said.

His son, Fritz, also had a go at rowing but found getting up at 5am to train while bringing up two young sons and working long hours was not for him.

However, Fritz, who remarried last year, does plenty to keep fit. He and wife Diana are into walking their dog, skiing and hiking.

The hiking gets serious: the couple have conquered Peru's Inca Trail and the Atacama Desert, where they braved altitude sickness to climb Chile's 5,592-metre Lascar Volcano in freezing 40mph winds in April last year.

Their dog, Luna the weimaraner, often accompanies them on their treks.

Another sporty pastime is kiteboarding, which Heidenreich took up last year — as a continuation of windsurfing when younger. He also enjoys a spot of fly-fishing.

His day job, needless to say, is a little more sedentary. Heidenreich says finding computer developers who have experience of the shipping business is pretty well impossible but Q88 boasts 190 years of industry knowledge among its senior staff based in Stamford, Singapore and London. Expansion would most likely take Q88 into Athens as the next biggest shipping centre where it is not yet represented.

But what about those sons of his — will they follow their father into shipping or technology? Nils, 17, would like to run his own consulting company, having had work experience at Q88, but 14-year-old Lars' computing interest is currently limited to his PlayStation.

There is time yet, with Q88 having grown from two people (Heidenreich and executive vice-president Catherine Mancuso) at its independent outset in 2008, to 27 staff today.

02 Fritz and Diana Heidenreich celebrate reaching the summit of Chile's 5,592-metre Lascar Volcano (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Heidenreich)

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

need for systems that could change the shipping industry. Q88 was starting to prove as much, with 30-40 owners signing up in its first six months. Now 75% of the tanker industry uses it and payment is still based on the number of ships enrolled, not the potentially much more expensive number of transactions that most websites seek.

However, expansion also meant the online business was taking up more of Heidenreich's time, or he was ignoring its needs when his hands were full for Heidmar. In 2008, two years after his father had sold Heidmar to Morgan Stanley, it made sense to put 100% into Q88 or sell it. "It was a very tough decision, though — I had spent 15 years at Heidmar."

Since then Q88 has developed dry bulk and chemical parcel systems and is looking at one for offshore shipping. In 2013 it revamped its dry bulk system, and Q88 Dry is now used by 90 companies operating 1,500 bulkers, including commodities giants Cargill and the recently signed-up Glencore.

Last year Penfield Marine asked Q88 to develop a new VMS. Heidenreich says it has created a flexible system that allows information to be added

however the user chooses. "We rely on the premise that the user knows what they are doing."

Q88 has signed up more users to the VMS, with up to a dozen other companies seriously considering it. All emails are automatically tied to the correct voyage, and changes are shown immediately.

The dry bulk and offshore sectors are going through a difficult time, but Heidenreich says that means access to timely and accurate information is even more important. Which brings him round to common online application standards.

"It is not necessarily more consolidation that the shipping industry needs, but more automation," he believes. "I am hoping we can form some kind of user group to create industry standards. Chartering departments are overwhelmed by the number of emails they receive."

Standard protocols would allow different applications and systems to be compatible with each other. "The most successful [technology] companies are those with the most user-friendly products."

The idea of developing industry-wide online trading standards for shipping



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applications has been around since the dotcom era but has risen again as owners, operators and charterers seek to combine systems they use regularly to cut down the enormous duplication often involved. Some software developers support the idea, but others do not see a commercial advantage.

Even so, Heidenreich is hopeful. "We need to start with something simple. We are not going to build Rome in a day." ☒

01 Talk about a sporty family. Even the Heidenreichs' dog Luna goes skiing! (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Heidenreich)

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