

EFFICIENT AND PROFITABLE MARINA OPERATION

Practical advice for optimising service provision

presented by



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and scope of the handbook

This handbook outlines opportunities **to improve the efficiency and profitability of marinas**. It **addresses professionals**, who are directly (e.g. owners, operators and managers of marinas) or indirectly (e.g. representatives of local authorities) **involved in the marina business**. Primarily, it is the accompanying learning material for the participants of training courses on the matter in Lithuania and Poland, which are offered within the scope of the South Baltic Programme project “MARRIAGE”. However, interested parties may use it also as stand-alone guidance.

The presented recommendations **base on** field-proven – positive and negative – practices and **lessons learnt by proficient** (east) **German and Dutch marina operators** with long years of experience. They were gathered through desk research, interviews and site visits. **Supervision by an international expert group** composed of marina operators, experts and educators **from Germany, Poland and Lithuania** during its elaboration ensures applicability for today’s situation of the German, Polish and Lithuanian marina business.

The handbook has no ambition to be an exhaustive manual for operating a marina. It merely **depicts fields and aspects that matter the most** for operating a marina efficiently and profitably, according to practical operating experiences. In this context, the **focus** is on optimising the **process of service provision** of marinas, i.e. primarily on “soft” aspects, and only secondarily on physical infrastructure. This makes it helpful and applicable for **optimising the operations of existing marinas** in particular.

The **advice and guidance** is provided in the following way and by the following means:

- **Service blueprints** are the “**main entrance**” to explore the contents comprehensively and in a structured way. **Overview tables** are given separately **for guest boater and resident boaters** and display the steps of the service chains by following the actions of the customers. **Detailed blueprints** delineate the **individual steps** of the respective service chains in more detail. The blueprints enable new insights and give ground for own reflections.
- The **profitability compass** thinks the provided guidance through to the end. It evaluates individual service elements in terms of relevance for customer satisfaction, increasing revenues and saving costs. Provided along with the overview service blueprints and the detailed service blueprints, it creates “side doors” to the handbook. They **enable “short cuts” to finding most relevant and interesting points** to improve the efficiency and profitability of a marina.
- The service blueprint tables and the profitability compass are accompanied by **text blocks with targeted advice** on **customer demands** and **critical issues making the service provision efficient**. These recommendations stem from practical experiences of operators. They directly reflect on the question, how wishes of boaters can be satisfied with lowest possible efforts and / or how they can be used to boost revenues.
- **Tips and examples** found in German and Dutch marinas illustrate the generalised advices and show to what solutions and practices that have led in concrete cases.

The following handbook, therefore, is not a classic reader or course book. It is outlined as **structured pool of practical hints & solutions** that invites to browse and may get you caught here and there.

The handbook was drafted and developed within the project “MARRIAGE - Better marina management, harbour network consolidation and water tourism marketing in the southern Baltic rim”, which provides also related training courses in Lithuania and Poland in 2013/14. The initiative is part-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) within the South Baltic Programme INTERREG IVA programme. Please find further information on the project and the training seminars at www.project-marriage.net.



1.2 Why caring about efficiency and profitability of a marina?

Marinas are much more than just businesses, of course. They are attractive waterfront spots and usually very popular among inhabitants and tourists. As such they can make a city or municipality a pleasant place of living and add an extra to tourism destinations. The constructing and operation of **marinas** is, therefore, **often seen as something that does not have to pay for itself at the operational level**. Especially from the public side, it is argued that they are long-termed investments that are rather to create wider economic benefits. This creates **subtle tendencies to generally exempting leisure boat harbours from commercial considerations**, especially along the “South Coast Baltic” where the short season makes it difficult to yield a profit with them.

Nevertheless, there are important **arguments** that it is high time for turning more towards **enhancing efficiency and profitability** of marina operations in Germany, Poland and Lithuania:

- **Proper incomes are the prerequisite for attractive marina networks:** Germany and more recently also Lithuania and Poland have extensive and attractive marina networks in place thanks to tremendous public investments. But **lack of incomes and profitability may pose serious challenges to maintaining high quality facilities and services in the long run**, especially in times of tight public budgets and in the event of decreasing EU funding.
- **Marinas can create immense financial burdens:** Leisure boat harbours are very **capital intensive operations**. This refers not only to initial investments, but also to the efforts needed for maintaining the infrastructure and services. At the same time, their incomes are relatively small when the season is as short as along the “South Coast Baltic”. **No proper balance between costs and incomes, therefore, can very easily lead to considerable operational losses**. This can pose challenges especially when the marinas are owned by **small municipalities** with limited financial resources. Even if yielding a profit is difficult to achieve with only 2 months of high season, minimising costs and efficient operation appears imperative against this background.
- **Attractiveness and profitability are two sides of the same coin:** Customer satisfaction is the basic prerequisite for proper incomes. High revenues are crucial in the marina business because of its capital intensive character. Hence a marina can only turn profitable if high customer satisfaction, proper revenues and / or low costs go hand in hand. **Introducing commercial considerations** into the operation of a marina, therefore, **strengthens naturally also the quality focus** of the management **and its attractiveness for boaters**. And it may extend the financial scope for further improving services and infrastructure – either by minimising costs or delivering profit.

1.3 What makes service blueprinting helpful in this context?

Service blueprinting allows to picture and to **structure the process of handling boaters from the perspective of the customers**. It follows their steps when visiting a marina and connects them directly to actions that the marina operator has to take in order to fulfil their demands and expectations. More specifically, **service blueprints relate each customer action to:**

- **Front-stage actions** of so-called **contact employees**, i.e. activities that are visible for the client and performed by the staff members, who are in direct interaction with the customers,
- **Back-stage actions** of **contact employees**, i.e. activities that are not visible for the client but still performed by the staff members who have direct interaction with the customers, mostly in their presence,
- **Supporting actions and processes**, i.e. measures that are performed by the marina management and / or other marina employees. Those prepare and complement the former at the operational and / or strategic level and have often tremendous impact on efficiency and profitability.

The **service blueprinting of the marina business** that is delivered by this handbook is helpful for optimising efficiency and profitability operations, because it...

- **...increases transparency regarding individual actions of the operator while keeping a comprehensive perspective.** Experienced and proficient operations affirm: It is not only the general outline, but even more the level of small details of the service provision and the interplay between different aspects that can make a difference in terms of efficiency and profitability. The elaborated service blueprints give comprehensive descriptions of the process of service provision. Breaking them up into individual action taken by the customers and the marina operator helps to identify and explain the details and the interplay of different aspects that matter.
- **...carves out that the operation of a marina is a very specific business.** At first sight, marinas appear similar to a variety of other touristic services (e.g. management of a hotel or a campsite). This may suggest that approaches from other tourism sectors may be applied to the marina business without much of adaption. A closer look, however, makes clear that it has a lot of unique features with regard to the behaviour and expectations of the customers as well as the ways how to deal with them as the marina operator. The provided service blueprints deliver the level of details that is necessary to reveal the specifics of the marina business and its customers.
- **...takes account of the fact that optimisation in the service provision of a marina requires many small steps with reference to practical experiences:** Each marina has specific needs, advantages and disadvantages. There is, therefore, hardly any “grand model design” of a marina to ensure a profitable operation. It rather needs a tailor-made approach to serve the boaters as well as to reducing costs, increasing turnover, getting to efficiency and finding internal and external synergies. Marina operators report that their operational schemes required a step-by-step process over a longer time with a lot of “trial and error” before they were successful and profitable in all details, similar to fixing a complicated jigsaw puzzle. The service blueprinting delivered with this handbook provides a structured pool of field-tested hints and solutions to pick from and may thus show “short cuts” for optimising the operation of a marina step-by-step.
- **...allows looking at the service provision to guest boaters and resident boaters separately:** The demands and expectations of guest boaters who visit marinas for short time and resident boaters who have permanent berth usually for the whole season are very different. But they are served in wide parts with the same infrastructure and staff. Many marina operators therefore only partly or implicitly reflect on and differentiate their service chains with reference to these groups. The provided, differentiated service blueprints, therefore, alter this perspective and enable new insights and (own) reflections already in this way.

1.4 How to use the handbook effectively?

Each marina is different and so are the ways to enhance their efficiency and profitability. The handbook provides information on many measures that can be taken but only few may be applicable to your case. **“Fixing the puzzle”** of service optimisation, therefore, **needs your input to be successful**.

The **service blueprints** for [resident boaters](#) and [guest boaters](#) and the profitability compasses give you an overview and a generalised appraisal on the issues that can matter. Reflecting on your own starting point and plans before you start digging into their contents in more detail can be a further helpful step to filter out the most helpful aspects for your specific marina.

Invest some minutes in **answering the questions below**. This will help you to absorb the provided information and recommendations more effectively and efficiently. You may write down your answer to the last two questions and have a look to it again after reading the handbook. The comparison should give you an even clearer picture of what it really needed and usual to optimise your marina!

Questions to reflect and concretise your starting point:

1. **What are the basic parameters of my marina?**
 - > Number of berths / piers; infrastructural data on buildings in the marina, deepness of harbour basin; number of resident and guest boaters; company structure, operating model (e.g. private, public or club marina)...
2. **Which natural preconditions and general circumstances affect my marina?**
 - > Assess the location of your marina in relation to neighbouring marinas and the surrounding boating area...
3. **How is the current market situation for my marina and which prognoses exist for the future development?**
 - > Take existing market analyses and prognoses into account - both your own ones and those from umbrella associations or touristic organisations...
4. **Why is my marina a good marina?**
 - > Collect the advantages of your marina, the positive details and what is currently working well in the management and for the customers...
5. **In which parts is my marina profitable already?**
 - > Have a look to existing data and materials concerning revenues and costs in your business as well as other relevant documents like business plans, feasibility studies or SWOT-analyses...
6. **Which plans and goals do I have for the future development of my marina?**
 - > Ideal picture of your marina in 5, 10 or 20 years; planned investments and changes; plans concerning improvements of management and service processes...
7. **What are the biggest challenges and barriers my marina is facing today and in the future?**
 - > Risks and obstacles concerning the business in general / the concrete situation in my marina / profitability that need to be minimised respectively overcome...

2 SERVICE PROVISION FOR RESIDENT BOATERS

2.1 Overview service blueprint / Profitability compass

SERVICE CHAIN OF A RESIDENT BOATER STAY IN A MARINA FOR ONE BOATING SEASON								
	Information / Reservation	Contracting / Renting permanent berth	Launching boat	Coming into the marina from landside	Using summer services in the marina	Leaving marina for boating trip	Winter storage and overhaul	
SERVICING THE BOATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing general information Providing customer-specific information, incl. handling of reservation / wait listing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concluding the contract Payment / clearing Providing access to berth and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information / booking / permission Self-launching by the slipway Craning / lifting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrival / access / parking Embarking / loading Information updates for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic summer services Pay-per-use summer services Amenities (also beyond boating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for the trip Temporary check out Returning into berth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information / booking / permission Hauling out the boat / transfer to winter storage Winter overhaul in the marina 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of internal interaction -----							
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborating a targeted information strategy for resident boaters Designing general information offers and materials for resident boaters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract terms for residents – defining the pricing level Contract terms for residents – defining non-financial aspects Providing autonomous access systems for resident boaters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailoring the launching infrastructure and services Adequate pricing of launching for resident boaters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing proper car parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding the right mix and form of providing summer services Financial calculation / Incomes from services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivating resident boaters for trips with overnight stays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pricing of winter services Cooperation with external service providers 	MARINA OPERATOR

RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	PROFITABILITY COMPASS
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.2 Step 1: Information / Reservation

2.2.1 Detailed service blueprint / Profitability compass

STEP 1 / RESIDENT BOATERS: INFORMATION / RESERVATION				
	Providing general information	Providing customer specific information	Handling of reservation / waiting list	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect general information on potential home marinas through accessible materials / channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact suitable marinas and ask for specific information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concretise interest with a reservation If no vacant berth: Ask to be wait-listed 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS			MARINA OPERATOR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand over and communicate general information to the customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give feedback to specific customer questions and inquiries Make a concrete service and price offer for the customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make reservation for a berth If no vacant berth: wait-list the interested boater When berth available: Inform customer on availability 	
	----- Line of visibility -----			
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply customer with general information with the help of various media and channels Keep information offers and materials up-to-date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check if the customer demands concerning berth and / or services can be generally fulfilled Calculate prices and cross-check the concrete availability of berths and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register the reservation Add the customer to the waiting list 	
	----- Line of internal interaction -----			
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic marketing towards resident boaters Efficiently designing and monitoring the effects of information materials and channels 			

Step 1 / Resident Boaters: Information / Reservation > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Providing general information	Providing customer specific information	Handling of reservation / waiting list	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.2.2 Customer actions

Becoming a resident boater starts with finding the appropriate marina and an adequate permanent berth. This process is episodic and rather infrequent from the customer`s perspective: Many boaters stick to the marina for some years or even for their whole “boater’s life”, once they have decided for a home port. To look for a new “home marina” is usually motivated by being a newcomer, having bought a new boat, interest to discover a new boating region or being unsatisfied with the old marina.

In the process of choosing a (new) home marina, the boater may:

- **Collect general information** on potential home marinas (prices, services, infrastructure, accessibility etc.) through accessible materials / channels (e.g. brochures, internet, other boaters).
- **Contact suitable marinas** via phone / email / face-to-face and ask **for specific information**. This may include **visiting the marina** in order to get a personal impression on the spot.
- **Make a reservation** for a berth (if this service is provided by the operator).
- **Ask for being wait-listed** (if no berth available and service is provided by the operator).

2.2.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Provision of general information

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Simply and quickly finding** information about the marina when they look for it in a targeted way.
- ✓ Clear and **comprehensive information** on location, general outline / size, infrastructure, services, prices, availability of berths, contract options etc.
- ✓ Information on the surrounding boating area and **trip opportunities**, beyond the marina itself.
- ✓ Pictures to get a first **impression** of the marina and its surroundings.
- ✓ **Reliable and serious** information, preferably being provided in a modest way and tone. Exaggerations and aggressive advertisements can even be perceived irritating or untrustworthy so that they scare boaters off, rather.
- ✓ **Contact information** and contact persons.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ Resident boaters become aware of a marina and may consider it as new home port through positive word-of-mouth communication or own occasional experiences, most of all. This implies to **consider carefully what is really needed** on top and as complementation. If a marina is well-known, has a good reputation and a satisfying occupancy rate, the need for providing general information may be limited – and efforts and money saved for other issues, e.g. paying more attention to customer-specific provision of information.
- ✗ General **information sources / materials** may still be the first contact between marina and customer, once they are offered and widely accessible. Depending on this first impression, the boater may decide to take the next steps and to contact the marina. **Proper quality** of the information provided, therefore, should be considered **a must**, once it has been decided to provide some in a certain way. An operator should at least provide the quality of an average marina in the sailing region in order not to stand out negatively. Offering better quality of information than average is always a good advertisement for the marina.
- ✗ Develop your information channels slowly and grow with them. Starting too ambitious and not being able to keep the frequency and quality of information will cause negative impressions. Being **up-to-date** is **more important than fancy** technology or design. User-friendliness and enabling customers to easily find what they are looking for is most important.
- ✗ The **main source of information** of potential resident boaters is today the **internet**. Customers are used to find all relevant information in the web. Providing the most important information to potential resident boaters particularly the prices at own website is a **common standard**. Not complying with it may be a serious competitive drawback. Creating a **homepage** got cheaper in the last years so that costs and benefits stay in proper relation even for smaller marinas. But have the maintenance and following costs in mind when you instructed an external company to develop your homepage.
- ✗ **Printed brochures** about marinas or boating areas in which they can find information and impressions **are still effective** and appreciated. Also here the boaters seek rather for concrete information (e.g. about size and prices in the marina, very important: contact information / persons) but also an attractive design is acknowledged. Also the traditional harbour handbooks which usually are on board of every ship still provide many customers with information about potential home marinas.
- ✗ Potential customers do not necessarily look actively for a new home marina, but may also be motivated to consider a change when **discovering alternatives by chance**. Their attention might be caught by advertisements or information about a marina in media that they regularly use (e.g. boating journals,

brochures or websites of boating areas etc.). Using these channels should be seen as complementation to establishing own channels and drafting own materials.

- ✎ Boaters tend to trust themselves, fellow boaters or berth neighbours more than advertisements or official information materials when it comes to the quality of a marina. **Promotion campaigns** may therefore not be fruitful right away, but create wider impact only after being validated by word-of-mouth communication. Hence the marina business is rather slow when it comes to re-orientate customers. Operators should therefore plan for **continuous actions** and efforts **over a longer period**.

➔ Providing customer-specific information / Handling of reservation and waiting lists

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Clear information** where and how (online form, telephone etc.) the inquiry for a berth can be made and **who is responsible** for giving a feedback / contact persons.
- ✓ **Availability** of these information services / contact persons **as announced**.
- ✓ A **pleasant atmosphere** and the feeling of being personally and seriously consulted.
- ✓ **Swift answers** that are adequate, to the point and easy to understand.
- ✓ **Comprehensive and reliable information**, especially on the prices, available berths, infrastructure / services and contract / service options. This includes receiving details, conditions and contract options (e.g. which berth is available for the concrete season) that are as much as possible tailored to specific wishes and expectations.
- ✓ Clear information on the further **proceedings for becoming a resident customer** of the marina, i.e. the single steps that would follow until the contract can be signed (reservation possibilities, wait-listing possibilities etc.).
- ✓ An opportunity to **get an impression of the marina** or the concrete berth on the spot, therefore to make an appointment for a personal visit to be made alone or guided by the contact employee.
- ✓ **Sufficient time to think over** before deciding, e.g. in the form of a fixed term reservation.
- ✓ **Being approached** again by the operator, **in case of vacancies**.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✎ **Every request** of a potential resident customer **should be taken serious**. It is a chance for winning a new customer or at least to leave a good impression that might pay off indirectly or after a while. Keep in mind that changing the home port is not considered very often!
- ✎ The **atmosphere and satisfaction** at the **early stage** of interaction may play an **important** role regarding the decision for or against a marina. Friendly and competent customer treatment is essential from the very beginning, therefore.
- ✎ Be quick and reliable in **answering to written requests**, even though the busy summer season might limit the possibilities. They usually involve some kind of pre-commitment and have therefore a rather high probability to result in contract conclusion.
- ✎ It is good to **know what** potential **residents are usually looking for** and to **have the relevant information** prepared and **at hand** for the contact employee. Often this is a learning process and the most common questions and requirements will be clear after some seasons. But active documentation and pro-active planning can increase efficiency a lot.
- ✎ The **earlier** the customer receives a **concrete offer**, entry in the waiting list, confirmation of the reservation, contract etc. the better this will concretise the obligations between customer and marina and the more it will enhance the prospects of contract conclusion.
- ✎ It is helpful and will simplify the contracting process a lot to invite potential resident boaters to a **personal visit in the marina**. It can be used to show the customer around, clarify further details - and

possibly already to sign the contract. Put a lot of effort into the personal contact and appointments, as these visits are often decisive. If done wrongly (e.g. through unfriendly or incapable personnel) the customers may be scared off for good – and may tell others about their experiences. If done right, even indecisive customers can be won immediately.

- ✂ **Clear communication guidelines** for the contract employees that structure the communication process to a certain extent can contribute to quality of service and avoid unnecessary actions. But keep in mind that boaters see themselves as individuals and appreciate a personal atmosphere. Be professional and simple but do not standardise too much.
- ✂ **Always try to find and provide a solution.** When there is no berth free at the moment, offer e.g. a place on the **waiting list**. If the customer does not want to decide immediately, give some informal or even formal **“respite” to think over** (e.g. in the form of a fixed-term reservation). The aim should be to make the interested customer a resident as soon as possible. If this is not possible right away, try to stay in contact with him and keep him as potential customer.

2.2.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Elaborating a targeted information strategy for resident boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✂ The shape and **scope of strategy can vary a lot**. It can reach from a structured learning-by-doing process in which the operator tries to reflect its experiences and lessons learnt systematically, to comprehensive documents that are drafted with professional help and include scientific and empirical market research. All this can be valuable, but not all of it may represent a good value-for-money for your specific case.
- ✂ It may take considerable efforts to elaborate a targeted information strategy. Making it an efficient instrument, therefore, requires that costs and benefits stay in a proper relation. Find a strategic approach that fits to your marina and concentrate on the main aspects. **Keep it as lean as possible**. But do not go without any structured and clear idea on how you want to deal with potential resident boaters.
- ✂ Most marinas serve both resident and guest boaters. For them, it may hardly make sense to develop a separate strategy only for resident boaters, and another one only for guest boaters. There are a lot of overlaps both with regard to potential target groups and information channels that may be used. Only an **integrated strategy for guest and resident boaters**, therefore, is able to detect and use the synergies that arise effectively – both in terms of the drafting process and the guidance that it gives.
- ✂ Local, regional and national tourist association do usually a lot of **market research** and process it towards general or sector-specific marketing strategies. Before making own studies and drafting own strategies for the own marina, it is wise to **find out what is available** and have a look at the data and recommendations contained.

👉 Designing general information offers and materials for resident boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ Information offers and materials for resident boaters do not only have to be carefully planned, but also be properly implemented and designed. Drafting and design as such may therefore not be done by staff of the marina, but better with **assistance of external service providers**.
- 🗑️ **Clarify your strategic approach** before you start with designing the material. Especially questions like: “Where and how do I want to present my marina?”, “Whom can I reach most efficiently through which channels?” or: “Who is responsible for the information, who will keep it up-to-date?” should be clarified in advance.
- 🗑️ **Concentrate on the channels that are most effective** with regard to the most important customer groups for the marina (e.g. motor boaters > advertisements in special magazines / young sailors > online info / older customers > print media etc.). Pay most attention and allocate most resources to them. PR agencies offer help with this regard, too, that may be very valuable.
- 🗑️ When **new technologies** or offers occur (e.g. Facebook), ask yourself first for which groups and **for which purpose** you can use them in your specific case – and if additional effects in comparison to the old channels justify related efforts and costs. This prevents investments into fashions or nice technologies with little relevance and **added value**.
- 🗑️ Keep an eye on **selecting** and designing **media** that are **easy to provide, maintain and keep up-to-date** in terms of technical, personal and financial effort (e.g. website with CMS, brochures that are valid at least for one season). Keep in mind that out-dated information that still is circulating can be without any value or even counterproductive.
- 🗑️ **Tailor the information** (what is presented and how) to the information channel (e.g. internet and brochures set different requirements) and primarily targeted customer groups. Rely on professional support and experiences from publicity and marketing agencies in this matter, if possible.
- 🗑️ Present your marina, its atmosphere and its services in a focussed way so that a **clear image** of its advantages and special features evolves and creates recognition value. This can include a catchy marina logo / slogan / corporate design or an internet domain through which the marina can easily be found online.
- 🗑️ **Monitoring** the effects and outreach of designed media if possible and with clear, pre-defined criteria. Do not hesitate to abandon or change them if they do not fulfil your expectations.

2.2.5 Practices and tips

👉 Examples: Information strategies for resident customers

- ▶ Drafting **comprehensive strategic documents** and doing detailed **market research** is still an exception in the marinas business, being **limited to very large marinas** or marina groups. Most common is a structured learning-by-doing process, which aims at reusing and optimising of what worked out well in terms of promoting the marina to potential customers.
- ▶ Structured learning-by-doing requires **collecting feedback** from the customers. Common and easy ways to do so are in terms of resident boaters:

- Asking the resident boaters **when signing the contract** how they became aware of the marina and which information sources were most important for them in the process of informing themselves about the marinas. The information can e.g. be obtained during the conversation and noted by the contact employee, without much effort for the customer and without bothering too much.
- Monitoring the effects and outreach of the media that are in use. Easy, cheap but effective proved to be e.g. **website tools** like Google Analytics. They allow following the user flow and seeing which subpages were opened how often. This gives a very good overview and chance for optimising the online information first of all, but may allow also for more general conclusions (e.g. origin of the website visitors may give orientation on fairs to be visited).
- ▶ Many marinas use **cooperation and exchange** to improve their information strategy. Through joint actions and the related dialogue with other marina operators they receive information about standards and levels of competitors as well as their experiences on what worked out and what not. The entry ticket is openness to share own experiences with others. Most marinas do not hesitate to do so. They made the experience that they get with little own efforts valuable hints, which can replace the elaboration of a costly strategy – or a lot of inefficient trial and error.

Tip: Word-to-mouth communication is most important







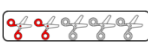
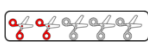
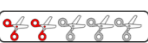
Boaters who want to become resident in a marina can use a variety of media and sources to collect information about harbours that may suit them. **Most important** for making their decision, however, seem still to be own experiences or **reports from** other members of the “**boating-family**”. Boaters are widely available as they visit a lot of other marinas on their trips and like to share experiences with others. They are very talkative and real “chatterboxes”, especially regarding the attractiveness and quality of marinas. The word-of-mouth communication, therefore, plays a very big role for the acquisition of residents:

- **Positive as well as negative talking** about a marina within the “boater community” has **strong impact on the success of a marina**. Good experiences spread fast and without further pushes. In turn, it is very difficult to reverse a bad reputation. Giving the “talks” about the marina a positive or different turn may involve long-termed efforts. It can be only partly and indirectly influenced, which information is exchanged and at which speed.
- A marina operator should have an **open ear for the talking** about his marina in the “boater community” and see it as feedback concerning the success or aspects that needs to be improved. Also actively looking for feedback e.g. through questionnaires is an appropriate way getting to know the customer better. Adjustments, however, should then be implemented carefully as an unsteady marina management with numerous radical changes can again be perceived as suspicious within the “boater community” and will usually not be appreciated.
- The **most effective way to influence** word-of-mouth communication may be to provide a **high quality** of services and **satisfaction for all customers over a long time**. This will make them potential sources and distributors of positive talking. Satisfied own residents will share their experiences when other boaters visit the marina or when they talk with fellows on their trips. But also properly servicing guest boaters is important and can pay back. Their positive experiences may make them considering becoming a resident in the future themselves. This can then motivate others to have a personal look to a marina, too and to follow their example.

2.3 Step 2: Contracting / Renting permanent berth

2.3.1 Detailed service blueprint / Profitability compass

STEP 2 / RESIDENT BOATERS: CONTRACTING / RENTING PERMANENT BERTH					
	Concluding the contract	Payment / Clearing	Providing access to berth and services		
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the desired berth and services Define scope and terms of the rental contract for the permanent berth Sign the contract 	<p>CUSTOMER ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay dues for berth and selected services in line with rental agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain access to the marina and its facilities Obtain detailed information about using the marina and its facilities 	CUSTOMER	
	----- Line of external interaction -----				
CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give advice on contract options and service packages Define scope and terms of the rental contract for the permanent berth Sign the contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue invoice on dues / reminder notices Receive the payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to the marina and its facilities Hand out information material about the marina Explain important rules and procedures 		
----- Line of visibility -----					
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-check the availability of berths & services Cross-check contract conditions and options Check previous agreements and offers Prepare the contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register contract in the accounting system Check status of payments and compliance with the rental agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register berth occupancy / provided resident services Prepare / program the access tool / means to the services Prepare the information package for the resident 	MARINA OPERATOR	
----- Line of internal interaction -----					
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract terms for resident boaters – defining the pricing level Contract terms for resident boaters – defining non-financial aspects Proving autonomous access systems for resident boaters 				

Step 2 / Resident Boaters: Contracting / Renting permanent berth > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Concluding the contract	Payment / Clearing	Providing access to berth and services	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	
	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.3.2 Customer actions

After having decided for a home marina, the **customer signs a contract** with the marina operator. It is to secure for the resident boater the permanent berth and the desired services over a fixed period and for mutually confirmed conditions. Rental agreements for resident boaters are usually limited in time (e.g. one season, one year). They have therefore to be concluded periodically by the customer.

The regular case is that the customer renews the contract with its present marina operator. The conclusion of a contract in a new marina is rather the exception, as boaters do not often change their “home port”. If doing so, however, the resident boater would have collected information about possible terms and services as far as possible beforehand. The actual contracting, therefore, starts after the basic decision(s) have been made and implies merely to fine-tune, settle and confirm them.

For the resident boater, the actual process of concluding the agreement and renting the permanent berth involves the following:

- **Selecting** the desired **berth and services**, either by choosing from standards service packages (e.g. full service package including overwintering, only summer season berth) and / or negotiating a specific arrangement (e.g. specific berth).
- **Defining** the concrete **scope and terms** of the rental contract for the permanent berth (e.g. payment terms and methods, contract duration, prolongation procedures etc.).
- **Signing** the contract and in this way agreeing on the execution of mutual obligations (payment vs. service provision).
- **Paying the dues** for the berths and selected services according to the rental agreement.
- **Obtain access** to the marina and its facilities (e.g. permission to enter the area, access code, keys to sanitary facilities etc.), along with detailed information about terms of use (e.g. safety instructions, opening hours etc.).

2.3.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Concluding the contract

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Getting the **full attention** of the responsible marina employees when negotiating and concluding the contract, with as little disturbance as possible.
- ✓ **Negotiating directly** with **authorised and competent employees** who are able to provide all the required information and to take decisions concerning critical issues (e.g. exact berth).
- ✓ **Previous agreements and promises are kept**, also information and agreements that have been made only verbally and before meeting personally.
- ✓ **Options to choose from** that make it easier to determine an appropriate service package.
- ✓ **Individual tailoring** of the service to be included in the agreements, especially the possibility to choose a berth that has as specific features as possible.
- ✓ **Automatic prolongation** of assets from the previous seasons, especially no downgrading.
- ✓ **Being reminded** that the contract terminates but not necessarily automatically prolonged (good balance of push and pull).
- ✓ Getting the **contract for signature as soon as possible**, but also that there is no pressure from operator side to sign and possibly a period of time in which he has a reservation for the berth.
- ✓ **Transparency** especially with regard to costs and provided services, both in the oral consultation process and written documents, in the latter also concerning legal and insurance related aspects and his customer rights regarding the marina operator.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ Ensure that someone is **available and prepared** when an **appointment** was made. Clarify who is able to implement it with understanding and respect of the customer demands in the specific case. You do not have to convince the customer anymore, most probably, but you can still scare off an almost safe one if such basics are not ensured!
- ✗ Create a **designated place for contracting**. The employee should be able to pay full attention to the customer and not be disturbed by other people. Also access to all information and documents (e.g. paper or computer) needed for arranging and signing the contract should be ensured at this place.
- ✗ **Be prepared for contract conclusion anytime**. A respective request by a customer is not yet but almost a safe contract. Processing it a bit further in such spontaneous situations makes the conclusion even safer. In the daily business all employees should be at least able to prove the customer with the most important information (e.g. concerning available berths) and documents for becoming a resident customer.
- ✗ For the contracting of resident boaters it is rather not necessary to adjust or extend the **office hours**. Residents are regularly and often in the marina, also in winter time (e.g. when overhauling the boat). In case of prolongations, written processing plus on-demand dialogue can be an alternative. It is rather not the ideal way but still a satisfactory option.
- ✗ The contact employees have to **consult the customers** concerning the offers and service packages that can be booked and for finding the best individual solution for the customer properly. The situation is in some parts comparable to a classic sales conversation, therefore the contact employees have to serve the potential customers **professionally**. Nevertheless the situation in the marina business is specific as boaters who sign the contract have already more or less decided to become customer of the marina.

- ✎ It is essential to **clarify which employees are authorised** to deal with contractual issues and are the ones to answer customer requests. All employees have to know their role and the steps they can follow when they are contacted by an interested customer e.g. through following prepared guidelines. This contains aspects like knowing how to interact and communicate or knowing the prices or at least where they can be looked up.
- ✎ **Contracting** is usually a task that is performed only by few **specialised employees** that have also other tasks. Contracting has **peak seasons** that should be **considered in the work planning** of and for these employees. The time of year in which the marina operator has to deal more often with berth reservation and contracting usually is the winter half-year, when the customers are planning their next boating season. Generalised statements are hard to make as the popularity of the marina and e.g. if a waiting list for new resident boaters exists can strongly influence this aspect. The best way for planning in this case is usually the adaption to experiences made in previous years.

🔴 Payment / Clearing

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Clear terms** of payments.
- ✓ **Comfortable and flexible payment** conditions and methods.
- ✓ All **necessary information** related to the payment contained **in the request**.
- ✓ Getting **invoices in due time** before the payment dates.
- ✓ Clear **consequences in terms of non-compliance** with obligations.
- ✓ Competent **advice and feedback** in case of unclear issues / clear **contact persons** for that.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✎ Due to the bigger amount of money the resident boaters have to pay, cash-payments are rather uncommon. Operators should basically prepare for and offer possibility to **pay with cash- or credit-card**, receipt and / or an automatic debit transfer system.
- ✎ Offering the **option to pay** the residents' boaters harbour dues **on an (e.g. monthly) instalment basis** may be appreciated by the customers and can be a competitive advantage. But it implies also more efforts in bookkeeping and clearing.
- ✎ Think carefully over to whom and where to allocate the **bookkeeping**. The payment and clearing processes of a marina are very similar to many other companies. It may be most efficient that someone deals with this issue who has some **pre-knowledge**. This may be an own employee with accounting skills but could also be an external accounting company. The later can be an option especially when the marina is small and has no employee with considerable accounting experiences expect of the management. The service fees may turn out to be rather moderate compared to the costs created by inefficiencies of own staff with little qualifications.
- ✎ If dealing with the issue in-house. **Electronic bookkeeping software** is an investment that pays more than back at the most part. Simple solutions may be most appropriate for small marinas as they usually are rather cheap. Despite high costs for purchasing, complex systems should be preferred for large marinas (or companies owning and operating more than one marina) because of considerable scale effects. The ideal case may be if they are part of a comprehensive marina management system and they create synergies of bookkeeping with other processes (e.g. organising berth occupancy or marketing) in a pre-structured and thus very easy way.

➔ Providing access to berth and services

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Getting **access to the marina and the booked services** from the time when the contract period starts.
- ✓ **Receiving the access tools** that are necessary to reach the marina area, the berth and the most important facilities like washrooms and toilets any time they want.
- ✓ Getting a comprehensive picture and **introduction** on how to **use and access the basic marina facilities** that can be used without further charges.
- ✓ Getting some **information on further boating related services** that are available (e.g. repair services, craning, winter storage etc.).
- ✓ Getting **information on further optional services and opportunities** that can make staying in the marina (e.g. opening hours of restaurants) and making seaside (e.g. brochure on the boating area) and landside (e.g. brochure on next city) trips more pleasant.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ In case you have a lot of areas and services that are locked and need **access tools**, it may be the easiest way to provide and **explain them** already **upon signing the contract**. There is no risk in this issue and it is much easier compared to doing this upon the first arrival of the customer in the marina after signing the contract.
- ✗ **Providing** the residents with the **latest available information materials** (e.g. price list, image brochures etc.) on the marina as a **routine step when prolonging the contract** can be an efficient tool to update them about changes. They will with high probability have a look to these documents and contact you in case they find new service offers or changes in procedures that they need or wish more information about.
- ✗ Besides informing the customer about the marina in general the contact employees should use the situation to **inform** the potential customer **about his responsibilities in the marina** (e.g. how to handle access for third persons) and the marina regulations. Clarifying this from the beginning will simplify the relationship to the customer as it is perceived as fair treatment even if the rules are perceived as strict.

2.3.4 Supporting actions and processes

➔ Contract terms for resident boaters – defining the pricing level

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✗ **Resident boaters** often represent shares of 40-60% of the total income in marinas and are therefore an important element for covering costs and potentially also to make profit. High retention rates make them furthermore **stabilising elements in terms of financial balance**. It is therefore crucial to define a pricing level that is both attractive for them and sufficient to generate the necessary incomes for the operator
- ✗ Resident boaters tend to be very price sensitive when it comes to harbour dues, even though these costs are usually quite marginal compared to e.g. the costs for purchasing and maintaining a boat. The **price level in the boating area** and the prices in the marina related to the neighbouring marinas are most important aspects in terms of evaluation if they are appropriate. Resident boater will be willing

to pay a **higher price for clear assets**, especially good location, image, atmosphere, quality, services etc. but only up to a certain extra compared to the average in the boating area.

- ✎ Be **transparent** and clear in the **price calculation** and in the way the prices and calculations are communicated. Any calculations more complicated than necessary may make the resident boaters suspicious and may scare them off, even if the pricing level is not higher than in other marinas.
- ✎ An operator should **think well ahead before implementing any changes** in the pricing system and level. The customers will not appreciate changing systems every couple of seasons and are always suspicious in this respect.
- ✎ Consider not only the current market situation but **have a look** also into the **future when determining the price level**. Guiding question for this could be:
 - Is there a slow or fast, increasing or decreasing market?
 - Is there currently rather an over- or undersupply with berths in the area leading to price pressure and competition among marinas?
 - How will the market most likely develop concerning the number of boaters that can be expected in the area (e.g. demographic structure, future attractiveness of boating)?

👉 Contract terms for resident boaters – defining non-financial aspects

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ **Use contracting** to provide **financial security** for the future planning of the operator. The money paid from resident boaters is usually the most important source of income for a marina. **Long term contract**, perhaps with **automatic prolongation** may contribute best to this.
- ✎ Clarify aspects like the payment methods, the duration and period of cancelation, the access to the marina for the customers or the accounting of services that might be included in the berth fees like water, electricity etc.. **Clear provisions** with these regards **create trust** on the side of the customers.
- ✎ Use the contracts to make “nice-to-have” services offered in the marina (e.g. parking, craning, winter storage or repair) profitable. This can be achieved through **offering “packages”** that combine the renting of a berth with the booking of services.
- ✎ Use the **contract cancellation provisions** to give the residents a push to prolong the contract timely (e.g. defining discounts for early prolongations with regard to the next season, automatic prolongation mechanisms).
- ✎ For some kind operators (e.g. club marinas) it might make sense to **offer long-time contracts** for 5, 10 or 20 years that create planning reliability for the operator and possibly also better conditions for the boater. But operators have to calculate wisely if they want to offer such a possibility as this might, depending on the contractual details, imply that they are bound too much and become inflexible concerning adjustments.
- ✎ The contract sets up the relationship and legal basis between customer and operator. This is related to e.g. insurance aspects or to have a legal basis concerning the payment modalities. The specifications therefore have to be clarified according to the (country-specific) regulations and legal provisions. **Legal advice** may **contribute to security** for the operator.

👉 Providing autonomous access systems for resident boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✘ For the marina operator autonomous **access provision** is one of the key aspects to serve resident boaters well and a measure with considerable **cost saving potentials**.
- ✘ The system should be easily usable, implementable, maintainable and safe regarding misuse at the same time. Only then it makes full potentials of satisfying the customers and saving staff costs. This calls for designing and **selecting the systems with care** and possible also with professional help from outside.
- ✘ The customers have the same interest for **as few access systems as possible** to access all relevant services as the operator has. Have in mind that you have to maintain the systems and provide assistance in case of problems.
- ✘ Also the operator should **clarify** that the customers know how to properly **use** the **access system** and about their **duties** how and when to lock the doors / gates etc., e.g. in “on-spot-conversations” with customers when concluding the contracts. This decreases the need for troubleshooting as well as mistakes by the customers with negative side effects (e.g. access of thieves through a gate that was not properly locked) and may allow saving on expensive technical solutions to prevent this.

2.3.5 Practices and tips

➡ Examples: Pricing systems for resident boaters

There are different practices how **prices for resident boaters** are tailored in practice:

- ▶ The **size of the boat** is almost all cases used with this regard. It is very well comprehensible for the customers that size and required space in the marina makes a difference for the operators. The differentiations / calculations apply various approach, e.g.
 - The classification of the resident boats simply by length. It is mostly done for guest boats but not very often to be found for calculating fees for residents.
 - A very common system is the price calculation through a multiplication of length and width of the boat. This can be done by measuring the most outside points of the boat e.g. 10 m long and 3 m wide, its multiplication ($3 \times 10 = 30$) and then multiplying this number (m^2) with a fixed amount to calculate the price.
 - Another slightly optimised possibility is to charge the boats length and width plus one meter in length and 0.5 m in width to in the end charge the used water space or necessary berth size.
 - The operators calculate their prices also based on the available and necessary berths, e.g. charging a fixed price for a berth 10 m x 3.5 m or 14 m x 5 m.
- ▶ Besides the main “renting” aspect size of boat or berth, marina operators have differing strategies on how to **charge the “additional costs / services”** e.g. for the consumption of water, energy or other services like waste / bilge water disposal, Wi-Fi-access. Differing factor is hereby which services are included for residents, which are paid as “package / flat rate” and which have to be paid according to consumption (pay per use):
 - Some operators charge a “package-price” for the extra costs, charged in the beginning of the season. This could be either a fixed amount or an amount multiplied with e.g. the length of the boat.
 - Other operators have this “package-price” only for some of the services e.g. bilge-pump, waste disposal, bicycle rent and charge others by consumption.
 - The freshwater usage on the pier is often charged with a “package-price” and fixed amount which is often due to the situation on the pier with one freshwater access for all berths in the surrounding. Some operators have installed systems through which a charging per usage is also possible for the water consumption.

- The energy consumption is sometimes also charged with a fixed “package-price” per season or per size of the boat. Here the operators have more often implemented systems that allow the charging of the consumed amount energy. Dutch marinas furthermore make a difference in the electric current (Ampere) provided on the pier (e.g. 16 Ampere is more expensive than 10 Ampere) and include a consumption of up to 100 or 400 kWh into the fixed price. The consumption on top of this has to be paid extra, e.g. 35 ct / kWh.
- ▶ Operators apparently try to **achieve the acceptance of a higher price level** with reference to the **following features**, which refer either to concrete differences in operating costs and / or market potentials and the demand side:
 - The geographical location, the accessibility of the marina from water and landside or the touristic attractiveness of the marina surroundings as central factor for making it attractive for resident customers.
 - The technical infrastructure and services provided in the marina. Providing and maintaining services like craning or winter storage is expensive and might make higher prices necessary.
 - The target groups a marina concentrates on or aims to attract. A marina aiming in attracting the owners of big motor boats has to provide specialised services and may try to make use of the fact that these boaters are wealthy to establish a high price level. But this possibly dismisses customers not fitting into the high-end target group. As only few marinas can build on high end customers this is a thin line, however, and might be risky.
- ▶ In northern and middle Europe, **price sensitivity** of the customers is apparently on a **very high level**. This leads to very small differences in the price level between marinas within one country (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands). In other boating areas like the Croatian Adriatic Sea the situation is very different due to the high demand on berths the prices in one marina can be several hundred per cent of the prices in the neighbouring marina.

👉 Tip: Pay attention to sign and negotiate contracts in a pleasant atmosphere

Boaters do not only refer to “hard facts” (e.g. location, facilities, price) when selecting their home marina but are **sensitive** also for “**soft factors**” like the atmosphere in the marina and especially the communication with the marina employees.

Resident boaters are usually more or less absent during winter time and rather independent during the season – once they have received their berth and access to the marina services. Encounters with the marina staff take place usually ad hoc for trouble shooting, when information / exchange is needed or by accident when meeting on the marina area. The **contracting procedure** is **one of only few occasions** when marina operator and resident boater are involved in an **undisturbed face-to-face conversation**. This makes its setting, atmosphere and course crucial for the general impression that the customer gets of the marina and its staff. The following aspects can make a difference with this regard and thus contribute to customer retention:

- An undisturbed and **comfortable place**: The contract negotiations are a crucial moment from the customer’s point of view. In their course they make decisions that determine the stay quality as well as they may have concrete financial implications. Interruptions, hectic and an uncomfortable setting may be perceived as inappropriate. Hence most of the marina operators hold the contracting negotiations in a dedicated room. It is usually away from the usual “customer traffic” of the marina office (e.g. a back room) to prevent disturbance, with furniture that allows for a proper conversation over a longer period (e.g. conference table and chairs).
- A **relaxed and friendly** but also **serious and professional atmosphere** is important as decisions and agreements are best to be made when both parties feel comfortable. Simple things like e.g.

offering a cup of coffee or cookies or some small talk before starting the negotiation can help to create it. But the seriousness should not get lost by such measures (the negotiations deal with the customer's money, after all!). Questions which are apparently important for the customers should always be thoroughly and professionally answered. A proper preparation for the meeting (e.g. checking previous arrangements with the customer) is a must even if knowing the resident boater personally for a long time.

- The conversation related to the contract conclusion takes place when the resident has already decided for a new contract and most of its terms. Only last details are to be clarified and the customers finally guided to the service packages that suits them (and the operator) best. This should also be reflected in a **modest tone** and style of the conversation. Calm advice may be more appropriate and give better results than aggressively advertising the marina and its services. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to convince the customers anymore but still possible to scare them off at this point!
- The operator should follow a **personal approach** as each customer is different. Responsiveness to the specific wishes, demands and “crankiness” of the resident boater may be appreciated or even expected. A sailor with a small boat who lives nearby and is looking for a cheap berth without many extras has to be handled different than a wealthy motor boater who uses his boat on weekends and expects comprehensive services. Try to find out at an early point what kind of customer you meet. Be sensible for the reaction of the customers and adjust your style of conversation during the conversation.
- Generally the **details play an important role**. Customers may perceive further small details as signs and proof of serious, professional and respectful treatment. This starts e.g. from being in time, having prepared documents as far as possible, showing the customer around and explaining details about the marina without creating the feeling of time pressure or proper clothing.

Creating the appropriate, pleasant atmosphere in this way involves some talent and calls therefore to **select the appropriate staff** for the contract negotiations but it can also be trained. Some marina operators arrange role plays for their employees, in which they simulate common, unforeseen or unpleasant situations with customers. These role plays help to get some experience and routine in the customer interaction and have the side effect to promote the team spirit.

2.4 Step 3: Launching the boat

2.4.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 3 / RESIDENT BOATERS: LAUNCHING THE BOAT				
	Information / booking / permission	Self-launching by the slipway	Craning / lifting	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect information / select launching option Obtain permission to use / access to slipway Book launching service with boat crane / lift Pay for the launching facilities / service to be used 	<p>CUSTOMER ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport boat from winter storage to the slipway Self-launch boat by using the slipway Leave the trailer on the marina area (if desired / possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise / carry out transport of boat from winter storage to crane / lift Make use of craning / lifting service for launching boat Leave the trailer on the marina area (if desired / possible) 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the resident boaters on launching options in the marina or nearby Give access / permission to use the slipway Fix the date / timeslot for craning / lifting Request / receive payment for use of launching facilities / services and issue a receipt / confirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open the slipway for the customer and supervise the process Assist or even carry out the slipping, if desired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out the transport Carry out the lifting / craning 	MARINA OPERATOR
----- Line of visibility -----				
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check available time slots for craning / lifting Register allotted timeslot Register the payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and maintain the slipway Prepare and allot parking for the trailer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise transport means Prepare and maintain the lifting / craning equipment 	
----- Line of internal interaction -----				
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting and designing the launching infrastructure to be offered Internal organisation and preparation of the launching process Define the pricing system for launching of resident boats 			

Step 3 / Resident Boaters: Launching the boat > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Information / booking / permission	Self-launching by the slipway	Craning / lifting	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	
				RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.4.2 Customer actions

In the Baltic Sea Region, leisure boats are usually stored at land during winter time because of the climatic conditions. Every year, therefore, **the boating season starts** for the resident boaters with **launching their boats**. The most common time for putting the boat into the water is April / May / June, with a concentration on just a few weekends or public holidays.

The boaters may launch the boat either themselves by using trailer and slipway or with professional assistance by using craning / lifting services, depending on available facilities and services, size of the boat or own skills. The launching may take place either in their home marina, in the place of the winter storage (if different from the home marina) or at another marina that provides the necessary facilities (e.g. if they are better or cheaper than in the other places).

In more detail, the process of launching the boat involves the following for the resident boaters:

- **Collecting information** about available launching services and facilities, thereby selecting the appropriate or preferred option (e.g. self-launching via slipway, using craning / lifting services).
- **Obtaining the permission** and getting **access to** use the **slipway**.
- **Booking a launching service** (e.g. crane, travel lift) and make an appointment for it.
- **Paying for** the launching **facilities / services** to be used.
- **Transporting** the **boat** from the winter storage **themselves** and then **self-launching it by using the slipway**. The latter may be carried out either with or without help from marina employees.
- Letting the boat be **transported** from the winter storage to the crane / lift **with outside assistance** and then **making use of the craning / lifting service** for launching boat, either while being present on the spot or being absent.

2.4.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

Information / Booking / Permission

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Being **consulted and guided** towards the launching option that fits to the individual needs (e.g. size and weight of the boat) and wishes (assistance / no assistance).
- ✓ **Reliable and up-to-date information** on options where and how to launch the boat.
- ✓ Receiving **all information and explanations necessary** to prepare for the launching, including contact persons / responsible staff for the launching.
- ✓ Getting a **timeslot** for being craned or using the slipway **that fits to** often very **specific personal needs** (e.g. a certain weekend in May), also at short notice.
- ✓ **Certainty** that the chosen / booked service / **facility will be available** as envisaged, especially without much waiting times.
- ✓ That the (additional) **costs** for launching are **not disproportionately high**.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ Launching the boat may in many cases not be the most significant source of revenues for the marina operator, especially if only basic facilities and services are provided. Still, the issue **should be taken serious** by the operator. It is an inevitable and periodic process that repeats every year and that marks each time a little bit of a challenge for the resident boater. If a marina is known for enabling smooth launching this can be a clear asset from the customer perspective.
- ✘ Boaters usually **check launching options** available in their **home marina first** as they may be most convenient to use. They may therefore get in touch with the marina operator of the home marina in this context, **no matter if the marina offers related services and facilities or not**. It creates no disappointment if operators are not able to offer the desired services themselves. But it may be perceived as **bad service** if the **contact employee is not able to guide** the customer to appropriate places and service providers. So it is advisable to prepare the contact employee for this situation and to have relevant contact information or pricing information of other providers at hand. Active support in **contacting another marina** may be perceived as **good service quality**. Cooperation agreements with other providers that ensure special prices for own residents may even be considered as very good service.
- ✘ Especially for **resident boaters who live far away**, the launching can be a time consuming issue as they have to come to the marina and / or transport their boat to it. They may therefore have a very clear wish concerning the **date of launching** (e.g. need to take personal holiday or do it on public holidays). Fulfilling it is **very important** for satisfying the customer. However, as they have the possibility to stay overnight in their boat they usually have some flexibility regarding the time of the day they are served. This scope can be used by the operator to deliver even if the desired day is already overcrowded. Propose an unusual time rather than a new date. Consider prolonging your service time of craning / lifting rather than not complying with the customer wishes.
- ✘ Investing in **proper planning and organisation** of the launching services may pay back with keeping the efforts and costs for implementation as low as possible. The problem is that **demand is very uneven throughout the year**. It has dramatic peaks that usually concentrate on only a few weekends and public holiday in April / May / June, which are usually described by marina operators as “the busiest time of the year”. At the same time, craning and lifting requires quite a lot of staff that furthermore should have some experience. In the peak times the task may occupy the whole staff of a marina

or may make it necessary to hire additional staff. Aspects to focus on / possible measures in terms of planning and organisation are:

- **Define time slots** in which you give **priority to launching** and keep other tasks in the marina at a minimum. This may enable to use the permanent staff for carrying out the launching even in the peak time and prevent costs for hiring additional staff.
 - **Motivate your resident boaters** to articulate their demands and to **define** their preferred **launching dates as soon as possible**. This gives you more time to reallocate your own resources in consideration of demand peaks. But it may also give you the opportunity to level out the peaks a bit. Redirecting customers to other dates may be easier accepted and possible in many cases when asking for it well in advance.
 - Set up a simple **documentation system** that gives you an overview on the requests. So you can process the information directly into a proper planning for the use of facilities and staff allocation. A side effect is that such documentation can help to avoid e.g. overbooking, queuing or forgetting appointments, therefore improving the service quality.
- 🗑️ If you offer launching services, **make your residents use them as much as possible**. They are the target group that can be reached easiest. Contact employees may be instructed to offer them to the residents whenever there is a proper occasion for this.
- 🗑️ **Additional customers** may be acquired among residents of **neighbouring marinas** as well as **guest boaters**. Attracting the latter has the special advantage that they use the facilities and service at other times of the year than residents, i.e. outside the “peak period” in April / May / June.
- 🗑️ Consider **generating revenues also with your slipway** but keep an eye on a proper balance between your risks / efforts and gains. Charging fees from own resident boater may appear inappropriate. The slipway is considered basic infrastructure that should be included in the rent. **Charging external users** may be acceptable and understandable for customers. If doing so, however, it is necessary to find a mechanism that requires these customers to contact and pay the fee before using the slipway (e.g. a chain that can be opened only with the key of the operator or the key of the resident boaters). Monitoring the use of the slipway permanently and collecting the charges at the slipway may already be too much effort considering that the charges to be taken may be rather low.

🔴 Self-launching by the slipway

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That the slipway is **available** and **in proper shape** when needing it.
- ✓ **Short waiting times**.
- ✓ **Clear course** and order of launching.
- ✓ **Sufficient and easily accessible** space for queuing before launching the boat on busy days.
- ✓ **Experienced assistance** on stand-by / available nearby, **in case of problems**.
- ✓ **Sufficient and safe parking space** for car / trailer combinations on the marina area.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- 🗑️ The **slipway is a basic infrastructure** that does not generate (much) additional revenues when being used for self-launching by the resident boaters. It is therefore very important for the operators to keep related efforts and costs low.
- 🗑️ It is **not necessary to have dedicated employees** that take care of and supervise the activities on the slipway permanently. Boaters are quite independent and mostly also experienced in slipping their boat. Problems in this course do usually not occur very often.

- ✘ An exception may be the **peak times** (weekends in May / April / June). The issues to deal with then may be to **organise the queuing** before the launching or leave of trailers afterwards rather than to assist in the launching. It may therefore be enough to provide unqualified (additional) staff.
- ✘ **Trouble shooting** may create **more efforts than preventing** difficulties. It may therefore be a good investment to advise especially the inexperienced boaters how to queue, launch and leave the trailer beforehand.
- ✘ **Queuing and waiting times are** hard to avoid but **acceptable for customers during peak times**. Allotting time slots for using the slipway and making appointments that prevents this would require considerable efforts. They can hardly be balanced with fees that may be considered moderate and adequate. The fact that self-launching by the slipways is usually free of charge for the resident boaters, however, should create some tolerance for queuing and waiting on the side of the customers that allows refraining from such sophisticated organisation.
- ✘ Queuing is accepted by customers but **chaotic queuing may still create discomfort** and frustration that should be avoided. Keep in mind that **queuing needs space** and consider providing dedicated, additional queuing areas in the peak times. They may also help to prevent that the queue gets confusing so that the order is not kept properly, by accident or on purpose, which is another source of frustration of boaters.

➔ Craning / Lifting

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Adequate infrastructure** and **qualified employees** to safely transport and launch the boat.
- ✓ A **smooth process**, especially that the time slot for the craning / lifting is kept and the ordered service is delivered as agreed and desired.
- ✓ That own **efforts** and involvement are **kept to a minimum**.
- ✓ **Craning without presence** of the boater, as a specific further **option**.
- ✓ Adequate and **moderate pricing** but not necessarily getting a bargain.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ **Craning / lifting** is a **high-end service** that requires sophisticated equipment as well as considerable staff effort. It implies high costs for the operators but may also **justify considerable fees** and therefore generate quite a lot of revenues for a marina.
- ✘ As the cost level for craning / lifting is rather high, the **customers** are usually **sensitive with regard to the service quality** rather than with regard to costs. The operator has to pay special attention to offer it in a smooth, comfortable and safe way and whenever it is needed at short notice. This may include also to at least optionally offering the lifting / craning without or with very little involvement of the owner.
- ✘ **Unpleasant** launching / **craning** experiences **can create** a lot of **frustration** on the side of the customer. This should be avoided as it is a memorable process and a popular topic for chats among the resident boaters. Examples of critical issues: Long waiting times for craning services although having made an appointment is already a serious shortcoming. Not keeping or forgetting a launching appointment is a no go, especially if the resident boater lives far away.
- ✘ **Qualified and experienced staff** is **imperative** for providing craning / lifting. Keep in mind that you move usually boats that have a rather high value. Any damage may have tremendous financial consequences for owner and operator – and both the owner and the operator therefore very much interested in avoiding them. Inexperienced and unqualified staff bears extra risks which should and can be

avoided. Not only if there is damage but already if there is the slightest impression of insecurity or lack of safety may be regarded as shortcoming service quality.

- ✎ **Personnel costs** are a considerable cost factor for the operator. But it **should be optimised only**, where it is possible **without deteriorating the service quality** that is so much in focus.

2.4.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Tailoring the launching infrastructure and services

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ **Launching infrastructure and services can be very expensive**, both in terms of purchase / establishing and maintaining. It is therefore **crucial to** orientate their **outline on the concrete demand** and revenue potentials of the marina(s) that they should serve.
- ✎ **Tailor** your facilities and services **towards your core customers**. Those are first of all to be found among your resident boaters. Their needs should be considered in any case, as they are the customers that expect to be served and have been acquired in the easiest way. Offering extensive and various launching facilities but none for the majority of the own residents would be a major economic shortcoming and also make a somehow strange impression for them.
- ✎ On top of that, facilities can also go beyond the demands of the own resident boaters and be made for **attracting boaters from nearby marinas**. In this case, **analyse what is needed or missing in your boating area** and try to find an “unique selling position” / competitive advantage. Choose infrastructure that e.g. can serve the majority but enables better service quality (e.g. more safety, faster launching) or that supplies a specific group not properly served yet.
- ✎ It is essential that the offered services are profitable under consideration of investment costs, personnel costs, and maintenance and will pay off over the years. Although prospects are usually fine for launching equipment and services, there are certain **risks** because of the high investment and staff costs. Minimising it **suggests to always consider the cheaper option, yet not necessarily to choose it**. The market is limited and there are competitors. So you may have to convince with service quality. Do not go beyond minimum standards and orient also on the services and equipment of your competitors.

👉 Adequate pricing of launching for resident boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ The prices need to be determined in a way that the launching infrastructure **pays off in the long run** (e.g. 20 years) and related maintenance and staff costs can be covered. Prices for craning that ensure this can usually be achieved on the market. The service is rather high-end and the customers not very price sensitive, because service quality counts most for them.
- ✎ Usually, different options and service providers are available for a boater, in smaller or larger distance to their home marina. When searching for a **price level** that can attract customers, therefore, not only the services inside the own marina have to be considered, but also those of other launching providers nearby that have to be seen as direct competitive environment. This suggests taking the prices of **comparable services nearby as a basic orientation**. Deviating too much may scare off customers,

even though the own resident boaters usually consider the services in the home marina as the easiest and first option of launching.

- ✎ The fact that launching is a must suggests **considering carefully if** the “low end” option (**self-launching via the slipway**) **should imply any extra costs** for your resident boaters. Also the other options should not be disproportionate to the rent and service fees of the marina. This may create an impression of dubious business practices.
- ✎ The “**adjusting screws**” for **generating more incomes** out of the given potentials are not only the price level of the fees but **also the use rate / frequency** of the facilities and services. It may therefore be possible to reduce prices for own resident boaters and become even more attractive for them if external customers can be attracted in a larger scale.

2.4.5 Practices and tips

➡ Examples: Influencing and directing the launching activities of resident boaters

- ▶ In order to direct the launching activities time-wise, many marinas organise so-called “**season opening**” events at the weekends / public holidays in May / June. The joint launching of the boats is their occasion and central element. It is accompanied by some socialising opportunities and special offers (music, food etc.). Those represent incentives for the residents to visit the marina and launch their boats when they take place. The atmosphere of the events motivates furthermore to mutual help and keeps away the stress and tension from the launching activities. Another positive side effect is that they contribute to the feeling of being part of a “marina community”, which is appreciated by resident boaters.
- ▶ Some marinas **approach** their **residents pro-actively** concerning the launching services and dates instead of waiting for being contacted by them, as this proved often to happen at short notice otherwise. Usually they connect discussing the issue with the contract negotiations / prolongations. Those take place in due time before the start of the season. Re-directing the costumers to launching dates that are favourable for the operator is easier at this point.
- ▶ There are cases in which **marinas define obligatory time spans** in which the boats of residents have to be launched (e.g. 1 April – 31 May). They are announced at the information boards or in mailings to the customers or even fixed in the rental agreements, in order to enhance commitment to them.
- ▶ Other marinas **use rental agreements** with resident boaters **to sell the own launching services**. The most extreme cases are “all-inclusive marinas” that make them a part of their basic service package. A softer and more common form of such cross-marketing is to integrate them into optional **service packages** that extend the basic contract and combine them with other “nice-to-have” offers (e.g. winter storage, WiFi).
- ▶ However, the **most common approach** among marinas is **still to offer launching services** only separately and **on a strict “pay-per-use” basis**.
- ▶ Charging the **use of the slipway** for self-launching can be found only in some marinas, and if then mostly for external boaters that do not have a permanent berth in the port. However, the **common case** is rather that the use is **free of charge**, at least for own residents.

➡ Tip: Does it need own launching facilities and services?

The current situation along the southern Baltic rim is that **not all marinas offer launching facilities and services**. Slipways are rather common even in small marinas and widely spread. Serviced cranes or travel lifts are provided only in a number of mostly larger or specialised marinas that are quite well distributed.

Together, they create a **rather dense network** that can cope with the demand and ensures availability for more or less all marinas nearby.

Using facilities and services in other marinas, therefore, is quite common and usual for the boaters but does not create too much efforts and discomfort. They may therefore not perceive it as disadvantage if a marina has no own facilities and offers. Proper guidance in finding appropriate places and service providers for launching the boat as well as **cooperation** in this matter with other marinas and service providers, therefore, may be a **very proper alternative to** purchasing and providing expensive **own infrastructure and services**:

Under certain circumstances, however, it **can still make sense** and be of benefit for marinas **to invest into the issue** and to provide them. For example:

- The **ambition of being** perceived and accepted as a **full service marina** by the customers and / or certification systems. This may require most probably launching services like cranes or lifts. The economic calculus behind is that necessary, quite considerable investment and maintenance costs may pay back: The superior service quality may attract further customers as well as it can justify higher fees from the residents.
- The intention to **attract resident boaters with larger yachts**. They can be very attractive “niche” customers in terms of revenues both from harbour dues but also of other services / amenities provided in the marina as they are usually wealthy. Large yachts can hardly be launched via slipways. Furthermore, their owners are usually also very much interested that the boat gets into the water in a safe way and without any damage because of their high values. Proper cranes and lifts can therefore be decisive criteria for them to select their home port. But providing launching services for them implies also even higher investment costs, as launching large boats in a safe way requires large, sophisticated and non-standard cranes / lifts, too.
- **Optimising the use of the own winter storage**. The launching services and facilities may attract customers that have their berth in other marinas, especially if they do not offer launching / hauling out and / or winter storage. The competitive advantage of a marina that offers both winter storage and launching / hauling out services at the same place is that this saves additional costs for landside transport. Those can be considerable already for medium-sized boats that cannot be transported over lands with car trailers. The efforts for hauling the vessel from the home marina to the launching place, even over a longer distance, are always lower.
- **To make** the provision of **launching** (and hauling out) services itself an **additional profit centre and source of revenues** for the marina. Craning creates a steady income for the operator as most boaters get their boats out and into the water every year. If there are enough boats and not a too big competition among marinas with cranes, it usually is a good business for a marina operator. Offering sophisticated facilities and services, therefore, goes usually hand in hand with going beyond the own residents as the target groups but to focus also on serving residents of neighbouring marinas and / or guest boaters. But very large marinas may be able to re-finance costs for purchasing and maintaining the infrastructure also without external customers.

To sum up, it can be stated that **offering** launching facilities and especially **launching services** need **careful consideration from an economy point of view**. They may imply considerable investment and maintenance cost so that the pure idea of “pleasing customers” may not be enough of motivation for providing them. A proper analysis and a clear idea how to generate extra revenues with them in the specific marina before deciding to offer them should be imperative.

Own launching services like craning / lifting are **far from being an undisputed “must have”** for marinas. But here may still be potentials and niches for additional offers especially in the New Member States with their growing boating markets. **Slipways**, on the other hand, can be considered as kind of a **minimum standard** for a marina that wants to attract resident boaters if no crane or lift is in place. They are rather

cheap and simple to construct and maintain, ensure self-launching and can even be used for kind of “low end” launching services if using e.g. tractors and trailers to put smaller and larger boats into the water.

2.5 Step 4: Coming into the marina from landside

2.5.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 4 / RESIDENT BOATERS: COMING INTO MARINA FROM LANDSIDE					
	Arrival / access / parking	Embarking / loading	Information updates for residents		
FRONT-STAGE	CUSTOMER ACTIONS			CUSTOMER	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel and arrive to the marina by car or other form of transportation Enter the marina area Park / leave the car or other transport means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embark to boat via the pier Load the boat for the stay and / or trip Get and use facilitation infrastructure for embarkation and loading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick up the latest news on the situation in the marina Look at displayed written information for residents Get in contact with marina employees and ask for oral update 		
----- Line of external interaction -----					
CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trouble-shooting / help in case of short-termed problems for customers Responsive removal of obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide facilitating infrastructure for the embarkation Permit the use of own facilitation devices brought by the boater Provide facilitating infrastructure for loading Assist to load the boat personally, on demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide oral information update on request 		MARINA OPERATOR	
----- Line of visibility -----					
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check if the access mechanisms work properly Check if the parking situation is satisfying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise the provision of the facilitating infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compose written up-to-date information relevant for resident boaters Make it available 			
----- Line of internal interaction -----					
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing proper car parks 				

Step 4 / Resident Boaters: Coming into the marina from landside > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Arrival / access / parking	Embarking / loading	Information updates for residents	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	RELEVANCE FOR
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	



2.5.2 Customer actions

For resident boaters, the landside is the usual direction from which they get into their home marina and to their boat. Almost all resident boaters travel to the marina by car as they often carry equipment, food, tools etc. that would be too heavy for other transport means. Other transport means (e.g. public transport or bicycle) may be relevant only if boaters live very close to the marina.

The arrival of resident boaters is a regular and periodic event as they usually stay only part time on their boats. The boaters can arrive anytime but peaks are to be found (e.g. Friday evening, evening before public holidays, start of longer school holidays).

In more detail, the process of coming into the marina from landside involves the following for the resident boaters:

- **Travel and arrive** to the marina from the place of residence most likely by car, possibly also by other transport means like bicycle or public transport.
- **Access and enter the marina area.** If it is a closed and protected territory this may require using e.g. a key or key-card to open the gates.
- **Park and leave the car** or the other transport means that were used close to the boat, if possible on the marina area.
- **Embark to the boat** via the pier, if available / existing / required with the help of assisting infrastructure / equipment like e.g. stairways.
- **Load the boat** for the stay or the trip, if available / existing with the help of assisting infrastructure / equipment like wheelbarrows or stairways for embarkation of car and loading of boat.
- **Pick up the latest news** on the situation in the marina. This may involve to **look at information boards** that display written information for resident boaters or to get in contact with marina employees in order to ask for or induce an **oral update** on relevant issues.

2.5.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Arrival / Access / Parking

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Access** to the marina **anytime** and **without** the need to **personally contact** the marina **staff**.
- ✓ **Easily reaching** the marina and **accessing the marina area** and **car parks**.
- ✓ **Reliable access tools** and proper guidance how to use them.
- ✓ **Receiving help** from marina employees in case it is needed.
- ✓ Finding parking slots **easily and close to the boat**.
- ✓ Being sure that the **car is parked safely**.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ The **arrival to the marina by car** is a field that boaters attach a lot of attention to. Especially for resident boaters it is a **central aspect for the attractiveness of a marina**. Operators should therefore also pay sufficient attention to this issue, no matter if they provide the car parks themselves or the resident boaters use car park on external territory (e.g. in public space).
- ✗ When operators do not or cannot provide parking themselves they should not leave the issue entirely to its customers but at least assist them. This may imply e.g. **formally cooperating with or providing the contact to the closest public car park**. Often this is done in city marinas with only little available space.
- ✗ The keys to satisfying service quality are only to a small part to be found in the operational handling (e.g. redirecting cars in case of inefficient use of the available parking space). Much more relevant is a **proper design of the parking infrastructure** if provided by the operator as well as a proper cooperation with e.g. the municipality in this issue if the marina area is too small to provide own car parks. This may solve (or create) most of the problems and discomforts that may occur. The resident boaters want first of all to park their cars **as close to the boats as possible** and have short ways for loading their boats.
- ✗ At operational level, the operator should **ensure efficient management of the parking space and situation**. It is crucial to safeguard that the customers will not chaotically park their cars in or around the marina. Such situation can block important access ways to the boats and lead to use scarce parking space in an inefficient way. Both will create frustrations and eventually complaints of the customers if they are directly affected. Also competition between resident boaters and other guests of the marina for parking slots should be avoided, with priority given to the resident boaters.
- ✗ **Car parks can generate** more or less **considerable revenues** if an **adequate pricing system** is in place. Frame setting is first of all the local situation like the marina size, the number of boaters coming by car or the available space in the marina surroundings for parking cars. For example a city marina with little car parking space in the surrounding will have good arguments to charging fees for the car park on its own territory – namely that there are no alternatives. If customers are used to park their car for free on the side of the road or at another place not far away from the marina, however, it will be difficult to convince them to pay money for it. The operator in this case needs a clear asset of its facilities like newly built car parks, a bar that prevents external cars to enter / blocks the car park or a security firm guarding the cars.
- ✗ **Problems of customers with the access** to the marina area are rather **difficult to be solved with a responsive approach**, because resident boaters arrive very often outside the service hours. A 24 / 7 emergency hotline can of course be an effective tool but means a lot of effort and probably also costs, so that only larger marinas may be able to effort it, if at all. Smaller marinas may rather **focus on**

preventive measures, e.g. to have reliable mechanisms for autonomous access and to check them regularly or even to refrain from closing the marina area generally or temporarily (e.g. when night time arrival of many residents can be expected).

↘ Embarking / Loading

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Comfortably transferring** belongings from the car to the boat without much physical effort.
- ✓ **Safely and easily embarking and loading their stuff** from the bridge to the boat.
- ✓ Helpful **facilitating devices** that are in a good shape.
- ✓ Receiving **personal help** for embarkation and loading when required or desired.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ The **proper assistance of loading activities** requires usually only small services and simple devices, even if longer distances need to be covered. They do not imply much use of staff resources or investments costs.
- ✘ **Satisfying customers** can be achieved **without much economic risks** and planning efforts:
 - **Personal assistance** of loading is a rather **rare demand** and can be provided ad hoc by regular employees, usually. Fees that cover the costs may be achieved without problems.
 - **Devices** like wheelbarrows are **cheap in terms of purchase and maintenance** but deliver already a satisfying service standard. They can simply be stored and offered outside and in central places. Charges can be obtained by simple mechanisms that require unlocking them with coins (i.e. like shopping trolleys).
- ✘ In terms of **facilitating devices**, it is very important for the operators to ensure that the provided services **match the needs and requirements of the customers**. It is very easy to find comfortable and fancy solutions that may imply considerable costs and also some revenues but very often questionable if they are really needed. So it may be advisable to employ a **demand-driven approach** to them in a consequent way. **Start e.g. from customers complaints and wishes when selecting what you want to offer** and not from catalogues of manufacturers.
- ✘ An easy but still effective way to facilitate the embarkation of customers and loading of belongings from the bridge to the boat is to **allow resident boaters to use their own devices**. Such opportunity is usually also appreciated by the resident boaters as it enable them to select the form of assistance that suits best to their wishes. For the operator, it may be a bit problematic, however, in so far as the connected individualisation on berths may slightly deteriorate the appearance of the marina and require checks in order to ensure safety. The efforts and costs are very limited but there are also no revenues to compensate them.
- ✘ To provide **more sophisticated devices** (e.g. finger piers) may be worth to be considered especially because they **can justify higher prices** for the berths. But here the operator should be very sure about the willingness of customers to pay extra for them, because the investments costs are high. An intermediate step to find out could be to install these facilitating services only in few berths first and **test the demand before** making larger investments.

Information updates for residents

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Being informed about the **latest and most relevant marina news**.
- ✓ **Comprehensive and reliable** updates by the operator.
- ✓ That the information is displayed in written form at a **well accessible place**.
- ✓ The **possibility to contact marina employees** on the issues in addition, if desired or necessary.
- ✓ The **opportunity to inform and contact fellow boater** if there is a demand (e.g. if a boaters want to buy or sell a boat).

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ Displaying information in a proper way is an important element of service quality for the resident boaters. The task should be taken serious although it may appear as trivial. **Customers** can quite easily be **irritated when they find chaotic, outdated or incomplete information displays** in marinas as they are usually used to proper offers with this regard from other marinas. Putting efforts in maintaining and updating it properly is imperative. The design and shape of information displays is secondary as the expectations of the resident boaters are low with this regard.
- ✗ A **simple information board for displaying up-to-date information** on paper is the **minimum standard**. Even if the operator has very much personal contact with the resident boaters it is still necessary because of the fact the residents may arrive outside the office hours. At the same time it is an effective tool as it allows providing all important information that may be relevant. Also it is an efficient way of displaying information as original documents can be used without editorial adjustments. On top of that, it is usually very much liked and desired by resident boaters as they are used to it over years. To sum up: Actually, it **does not need more than this** for informing resident boaters conveniently and up to their expectations.
- ✗ **Supplying the customers with latest information** during chat with them **in case of an accidental personal meeting** for a short update should also be considered **a must**. It is an opportunity to deliver important information and especially customer specific information with very little effort. Furthermore, the customers expect that the marina operator takes care of them. Not complying with this standard may at least surprise the customers and for sure irritate them if transmitting important news would be missed.
- ✗ **Boaters** are also very **keen to communicate among each other via information boards** that allow them to display own information (e.g. if they want to sell or buy a boat). It is apparently kind of a distinctive and constituting feature of a “marina community”. Operators should provide this option that also implies not much costs and efforts. It may be possible to use the same board for operator-to-boater information and boater-to-boater information. The only form of maintenance that the latter requires from the operators is to clear it from time to time.

2.5.4 Supporting actions and processes

Providing proper car parks

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✗ Car parks **can be arranged properly either on the territory of the marina** and by the operator **or in the vicinity** of it. In the latter case they will most likely be realised and offered in cooperation with the municipality or an external land owner / tenants and / or service provider.

- ✘ Car parks are a **“must have” infrastructure**. But still it makes sense to stick a strictly **commercial and pragmatic approach** when planning and designing them. Car parks **can generate revenues** and this potential should be used as much as possible. If the operators charge money they should pay attention to give them a proper shape and invest into these aspects.
- ✘ A lot of **decisive features** that determine the attractiveness of car parks for resident boaters but also most of the possible shortcomings, **root in the planning and construction phase of the marina** and are **difficult to be changed later on** (e.g. if there is enough space for car parks).
- ✘ A problem of attractive car parks is that they can also prevent increasing the turnover of a marina. The reason is that they are provided at locations close to the berths that may be also attractive for providing services with even higher revenue potentials for the operator (e.g. restaurant or hotel). Parking is an important part and service in a marina but a little bit of **concessions in terms of the service quality may not harm the satisfaction of resident boaters too much**. Whenever the ideal area can be used for create something with more revenue potentials the operator should seriously take the chance to do so and go for the second best option for the car park.
- ✘ The parking should be **located as close as possible to the piers**. The boaters do not want to carry their equipment for a longer distance. If larger areas close to the berths are not available, however, a measure to still serve this requirement is to offer short time parking slots that are to be used for loading / unloading only.
- ✘ Ensure also that there are **no barriers on the way from the berths to the car park**, hindering the access with e.g. a wheel-barrow from the cars to the boats.
- ✘ **Provide sufficient capacities**. Competition for parking slots is very unpleasant especially for resident boaters as they may then be confronted with this situation regularly. The weekend is usually the busiest time concerning the parking situation and the average. Keep in mind not only your residents but also other persons like tourists visiting the marina or guests from the resident boaters who may come to the marina with their car when planning the capacities.
- ✘ The operator should **make the car parks as safe as possible by constructive means**, so that guarding them can be reduced to a minimum. Most important is a clear separation from the areas accessible by car for the general public, e.g. by a gate, bar or fence. A welcome side effect it that this may also prevent competition for slots between the resident boaters and others user of the car park that should be minimised.

2.5.5 Practices and tips

👉 Examples: Access systems and parking provision

- ▶ **City marinas** with usually only little available space cooperate very often formally with the municipality or provide at least contact to the closest public car park to their customers.
- ▶ **When the car parks are far from being fully occupied, responsive removal of obstacles** proved to be the **most efficient** way to deal with problems and complaints as cases are rare.
- ▶ In the **peak times of parking** (during high season, at weekends, in case of events etc.) when problems are much more likely, some large marinas or marinas with very scarce place for leaving the car consider preventing more efficient than reacting to problems and complaints. They allocate mostly **extra staff to manage the parking situation**, e.g. pupils as they are cheap but capable to manage the situation. Their task is to regularly check the parking situation and take pro-active actions (e.g. removing cars immediately, directing the arriving cars to vacant slots through guides / persons or placing signs or opening / closing certain areas step-by-step).

- ▶ Concerning **how and what to charge for a car park** operators found **very different** and individual solutions. Some have one car park included in the regular fees for residents others charge it generally extra and on demand. Additional places can also be booked and are charged extra.
- ▶ Many marinas provide and **dedicate areas** in which the **cars of the residents** can be parked in the **most attractive parts of their car parks**, especially if the overall capacities are rather scarce. The marina in Heiligenhafen offers the possibility to rent one specific car park reserved for the customers especially close to the piers for an extra fee.
- ▶ There are operators that make a **good and steady income from the parking fees**. Renting the car parks weekly for e.g. charter boat users or for the day or a couple of hours for day guests is used to further differentiate the prices and generate even more income. The income can be calculated as steady flow so that they are able to pay off the investment costs of building the car park in the foreseeable future.
- ▶ Some marinas **minimise the risks of faults and problems while accessing** their usually closed and protected territory and troubleshooting efforts by **opening it e.g. time-wise** (e.g. car park and gate are open longer when night time arrival of many residents can be expected or even the whole night) **or partly** (e.g. opening one gate only that allows persons to enter and get to their boat for overnight stay, whereas the cars stay outside overnight).

➤ Tip: Welcome your residents to their leisure time

It is well proven that product placement in the event of positive feelings can very effectively improve the **image of the product** and therefore contribute a lot to customer retention. The arrival of the resident boater in the marina is an occasion for marina operators to make use of this phenomenon for their own purposes. Coming into the marina is a **moment of happiness** for the boaters. It marks to step out of the daily routine, turn the attention to their hobby and joining the “marina community”, the company which they usually appreciate a lot. With very little efforts and by taking small measures it can be used for effective marketing:

- **Place signs and boards** to the landside entrance of your marina **that display the logo and name of your marina**. This will attach the marina and the name of the operator to positive emotions while arriving and looking forward to the stay on the boat.
- Add a **positive message** to the board. A simple “welcome” can already be enough. This may reinforce the feeling to arrive in the “marina community” and make the operator a part of it in a sublime way.
- Keep an eye on providing a **pleasant** (e.g. fancy design, proper lightning etc.) and **clean entrance** area and car park. This is to ensure that the positive feelings are not overshadowed by a bad impression or anger.
- Consider to set up a **number of signs** and place **them in intervals along the main access roads**. This may intensify the happy anticipation of finally arriving in the marina.



Landside welcome boards in Monnickendam (right) and Naarden (above).



2.6 Step 5: Using summer services in marina

2.6.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 5 / RESIDENT BOATERS: USING SUMMER SERVICES IN MARINA				
	Basic summer services	Pay-per-use summer services	Amenities (also beyond boating)	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use basic services in the marina 	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use further summer services in for boaters and for boats not included in harbour dues Pay for services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use amenities, also those beyond boating Pay provider for amenities 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
FRONT-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS			MARINA OPERATOR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about further summer services for boaters and for boats Provide access to further summer services Take the money paid for using further summer services Establish contact to external service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about amenities in the marina, also those beyond boating Provide access to amenities offered by the marina Take the money paid for amenities Establish contact to external providers of amenities 	
----- Line of visibility -----				
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS			MARINA OPERATOR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calculate prices for basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep information about own and external further summer services up-to-date Calculate prices for further summer services offered in the marina Ensure proper maintenance and quality of own and external further summer services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep information about amenities beyond boating up-to-date Calculate prices for amenities beyond boating offered in the marina Ensure proper maintenance and quality of own and external amenities beyond boating 	
----- Line of internal interaction -----				
SUPPORTING PRO-	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding the right mix and forms of providing summer services Financial calculation / ensuring proper incomes from services 			

Step 5 / Resident Boaters: Using summer services in marina > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Basic summer services	Pay-per-use summer services	Amenities beyond boating	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.6.2 Customer actions

During the summer boating season resident boaters will use all kinds of services that are provided in their “home marina”. Before it comes to the actual usage of services, the resident boaters may have to inform themselves about the terms of use and payment and other formalities. For the basic ones and / or most important ones for the customer, this is usually done already with conclusion of the contract.

From the perspective of the resident boater, the summer services used in a marina can be divided into three groups with reference to terms of use and payment conditions defined by the operator:

- Naturally the resident boater will make use of the **basic services** in the marina (e.g. water and electricity at the berth, toilets and washroom or other provided infrastructure like the children’s playground or a barbecue spot). Their provision by the marina operator is usually included in yearly berth fee. Relevant access tools are usually picked up already when concluding the contract.
- **Pay-per-use services** are accounted separately and in addition to the harbour dues. They can be either **provided for the boaters** (e.g. shower, Wi-Fi access, washing machine) or **for the boats** (e.g. petrol station, repair services, bilge pump). These pay-per-use services will in most cases be provided by the marina operator, but sometimes also by external providers. Booking and payment requires extra interaction / contact with marina staff respectively staff of the provider.
- Furthermore the resident boaters might make use of the **amenities** that make the stay in the marina more comfortable. These amenities like chandlery, restaurant, supermarkets or accommodation are provided and accounted either from the marina operator as part of his service-portfolio or from an external service provider. They may not be directly connected to staying with the boat in the marina and that may go beyond “pure” boating. Booking and payment requires extra interaction / contact with marina staff respectively staff of the provider, too.

The list does not claim to be complete or generally valid but gives an overview and orientation on which services for resident boaters are usually assigned to each of these categories:

SERVICES FOR RESIDENT BOATERS			
Basic services (usually free of charge or integrated into resident boater harbour dues)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity at the berth • Drinking / fresh water at the berth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets / washrooms • Washing-up area • Children’s playground • Place for barbeque 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information displayed in marina / marina office (e.g. weather forecast⁹) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbourmaster / marina office • Infrastructure supporting landing and mooring
Pay-per-use services (are usually accounted separately and have to be paid extra)			
For the resident boaters		For the boats (here: summer and winter services)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showers • Washing machine • Laundry dryer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wi-Fi access • Parking • Baggage transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petrol station • Repair service (e.g. motor, sail) • Oil / bilge pump • Septic dump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management / recycling • Crane / travel lift • Slipway • Boat cleaning site • High pressure cleaner • Winter storage
Amenities beyond boating (operated directly in the marina or from external providers)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter service • Chandlery • Yacht brokerage • Yachting school • Fishing • Water sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar • Restaurant • Supermarket • Shops • Kiosk • Catering • Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting room • Library • Public internet access • Bicycle / car rental • Boxes for locking equipment • Shuttle service • Bread and bakery service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Camp site • Trailer spaces • Sauna / wellness • Beach access / sun-bathing area • Swimming pool

2.6.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

Basic summer services

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Having access to the basic services** that are provided in the marina whenever needed.
- ✓ **Well-functioning** facilities and **adequate capacities**.
- ✓ **Good quality** and especially **proper cleanliness and maintenance**.
- ✓ **Using** the services **without being bothered with details**, with easy-to-use access tools and general information provided by the operator without asking for it.
- ✓ **Transparent information and accounting** of services that have limitations with regard to using them (e.g. amounts for consumption of electricity or water).

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ Resident boaters expect to find the basic summer services in their marina. The operator should make sure that they are not only **provided** but also **in a good shape**. Really good quality can positively influence the image of a marina. New and clean facilities for basic services are much more important for boaters than “nice-to-have” extras they rarely use.
- ✗ Marina operators have to decide whether they want to provide them on their own or sourced out and in **cooperation with external providers**. The basic services, however, are usually not sourced out and **in most cases provided internally**. Exceptions are only certain aspects connected to them, e.g. maintenance of the service infrastructure or cleaning of washrooms. In some marinas external companies are involved and in charge for this.
- ✗ The marina operators should provide the services in a way that the customers have an **easy access** (e.g. through access codes or access cards when facilities are locked) and find a **sufficient number** of e.g. toilets / showers for the number of customers.
- ✗ The marina operators should simplify the processing of the basic services for their employees and prevent the need for trouble shooting as much as possible. A good way of doing so is to thoroughly and **comprehensively explaining all relevant aspects** for the use by the customer already **upon contracting**. This may also involve explaining and showing facilities on the spot.
- ✗ The marina operators should ensure that the basic services **fit to the needs both of resident boaters as well as guest boaters** so that synergies occur and efforts are kept to a minimum. They should also be flexibly and promptly adapted to new market developments.
- ✗ **Basic services** that are not “must haves”, but special or **important for specific target groups** like a children’s playground or barbecue site can **raise the attractiveness** of a marina. When the resident boaters can choose between several marinas, e.g. families with children will most likely choose marinas providing a playground.
- ✗ The marina operators should **ensure that staff can** adequately **provide information and help** regarding the basic services, if required.

🔴 Pay-per-use summer services

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That “**must have**” services not included in the berth rent are provided with as little additional efforts for accessing them and at a moderate price level.
- ✓ An **appealing** scope and mix of “**nice to have services**”.
- ✓ **Clear, understandable and comprehensible information** about the available pay-per-use services including the prices and accounting modalities.
- ✓ **Efficient** organisation of **access and payment**.
- ✓ **Immediately access** and flexible **use on demand** after having paid for them.
- ✓ **Well-maintained** and clean facilities and services.
- ✓ **Help and further information from marina staff** / service provider when needed.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ The operators have to decide **which services for residents beyond the absolute basics they really need in their marina**. Aspects like the necessity, the profitability and the investment or maintenance costs for the services will influence this decision. The profile that operators want to give their marina is another important reference. Also the size of the marina and the number of resident boaters are important as a bigger marina has other possibilities and demands on services than a small marina.
- ✗ The pay-per-use services that will be **appreciated by resident boaters most** or even expected may be parking, showers, Wi-Fi access or a washing machine. Their provision should always be considered and regarded a “must have” for larger marinas.
- ✗ The marina operators should aim at providing the pay-per use services **profitable or at least self-financing**. For those among them that are essential for attractiveness of the marina, however, operators may even take losses into account. Nevertheless the operators have to optimise the prices and calculations for each of the services. Steady optimisation and knowing the prices for these services in the surrounding marina (the customers compare the prices and will not be willing to pay much more than average market prices) are advisable.
- ✗ Both the necessity and the possibilities for providing very specific pay-per-use services in the “home marina” depends also a lot on the marina location and the **availability of such services in the surroundings**. Many services need a certain number of customers in order to be profitable. Finding such services nearby might make a provision in the own marina unnecessary and unprofitable. A significant number of potential users beyond the boaters in the proximity of the boaters may extend the prospects for providing them self-financing (e.g. guest of a neighbouring camp site seeking for laundry).
- ✗ In order to **find the best price level and service mix** marina operators usually follow the “**trial and error**” principle. It often is hard to predict if a service provision works out in a specific location. Marina operators may also orientate at neighbouring marinas in which certain services have worked out and are appreciated by the customers also in order not to fall back behind direct competitors and to make use of their chronological step ahead. It is furthermore important to give the services that are provided in a marina time for development and not to give them up too soon. In the slowly changing marina business services often need time before being accepted and used.
- ✗ The marina operators should not only ensure a **proper maintenance and a good service quality** of the services that are provided by themselves in their own marina. They should also monitor the quality of the **services that are provided externally** and take steps for improvements that are possible or necessary (e.g. quitting the rental agreement of a repair service located on the marina areas that does not satisfy its customers and has therefore a bad reputation).

➤ Amenities (also beyond boating)

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Easy access** to the amenities provided in the marina and externally.
- ✓ **Proper function and service quality** of the services.
- ✓ **Reasonable price level** for the amenities.
- ✓ **Variety of amenities** that increase quality of stay to choose from.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ The marina operators have to **decide which of the amenities beyond boating they need** in their marina. Aspects like the necessity, the profitability and the investment or maintenance costs for the services will influence their decision. The potentials of amenities should be especially considered regarding their potentials to generate extra incomes and also to make incomes more evenly distributed throughout the year (e.g. by providing a hotel or restaurant).
- ✗ Operators have to decide also whether desired amenities are **provided by themselves or in cooperation with external service providers** operating in the marina or in the surroundings. Also arrangements with neighbouring marinas to which customers can be sent for the service provision can be a good solution. Marina operators should check and know, therefore, where else amenities of any kind can be found nearby before deciding if and how to provide them.
- ✗ The marina operators should not only ensure a **proper maintenance and a good service quality** of the services that are provided by themselves in their own marina. They should also monitor the quality of the **services that are provided externally** and take steps for improvements that are possible or necessary (e.g. quitting the rental agreement of a repair service located on the marina areas that does not satisfy its customers and has therefore a bad reputation).
- ✗ The amenities cover a big variety (from small detail to huge investment). Baggage transport or restaurants will be certainly generally appreciated from the resident boaters but **which services concretely work out can hardly be generalised**. However, besides the services and infrastructures that improve the staying quality in the marina, all amenities that bring life into a marina like restaurants, bars, kiosks, fishery etc. can be rewarding for marina operators.
- ✗ The concrete **supply with amenities** has to be **decided with reference to the location** and the **profile** the operators want to give to their marina. Also the **size of the marina and the number of resident boaters** are important as a bigger marina has other possibilities and demands on services than a small marina. Also guest boaters and other visitors should be counted in as possible user of the amenities.
- ✗ Both the necessity and the possibilities for providing amenities in the marina depend also a lot on the marina location and the **availability of such services in the surroundings**. Many of them need a certain number of customers in order to be profitable. Finding such services nearby might make a provision in the own marina unnecessary and unprofitable. A significant number of potential users beyond the boaters in the proximity of the boaters may extend the prospects for providing them self-financing (e.g. guest of a neighbouring camp site that use the restaurant).
- ✗ Marina operators should **consider cooperating** with the local municipalities and local external companies **whenever possible** in order to offer a brought package of amenities. Such cooperation can raise the attractiveness and profit of all involved partners.
- ✗ Also concerning amenities, marina operators usually follow the “trial and error” principle in order to **find the best price level and service mix** in their marina. To find the fitting pieces the operators can ask for feedback from their customers, observe other marinas and their success, read or initiate market analyses or try out service provision on own initiative. Operators of full service marinas might not think

twice about trying out the provision of certain amenities in order to complete their “package” and keep up with the times. For the operator of a small marina related investments are more difficult and need more careful consideration. It is also important to have a concrete plan for a certain service and to give it a chance and to slowly further develop it. Often it needs some seasons until an amenity is accepted and succeeds also economically.

2.6.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Finding the right mix and forms of providing summer services

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✂️ For resident boaters, the **services** that are provided in and around a marina form a big part of the individual “marina-experience”. Depending on the personal needs each of these services and aspects as well as their number, quality and shape **can be highly relevant for becoming or staying a resident customer in a certain marina**. Putting efforts into an appealing mix of services and amenities, therefore, is essential for attracting customers and an important part of the product profile and its marketing.
- ✂️ Service provision is one of the fields in which marina operators can experiment the most. And this may be worth efforts as the **service mix can** create and influence the atmosphere and **make the marina special** and different from other marinas and therefore more attractive for customers. It may even compensate locational disadvantages. A special marina in a rather standard place can be more attractive for resident boaters that keep an eye on specific amenities or a broad scope of service than a standard marina in a special location.
- ✂️ **Finding the right mix** is a **complex and difficult undertaking**. It is important to put a lot of effort into the planning, finding out what makes sense for the own and what does already work out in neighbouring marinas. A good starting point may be to have or to develop a clear vision and picture of the future development and service provision in the marina in a longer perspective. **Related businesses** like hotels or camp sites **can be valuable sources of inspiration** to look at and copy from in this context.
- ✂️ The overall market situation or other aspects that cannot be influenced by the operator may decide about working out or not working out of a service provision, ultimately. Marina operators should therefore not hesitate to **test new things and services** but carefully calculate the risks. They have to be flexible enough to close and change services that did not work out.
- ✂️ For the customers it is more important that and how the services are provided rather than by whom they are provided. If they cannot be provided by the operators themselves, it is always an option to **consider if they may be delivered by external companies** either in the marina or in the marina surroundings. This may give further scope regarding offering services and especially amenities while reducing economic risks for the operator at the same time.

👉 Financial calculation / Incomes from services

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ Before the introduction of a new service, operators should carefully calculate if it is affordable and may pay back and be self-sustaining in the long run.
- 🗑️ Important is first of all a **realistic and comprehensive estimate of costs**. For the necessary investments, not only the construction but also follow up costs for the maintenance of the facilities should be considered. On top of that, costs for e.g. operation and consumptions, personnel, maintenance, controlling, bank interests etc. will have to be calculated.
- 🗑️ Also when **estimating potential incomes**, it is important to be **realistic**. The higher the investment sum and expected running costs, the more careful and detailed the calculations should be. Try to base them on the current situation and real-life experiences as much as possible. Forecasts have always a risk of failure. Do not forget to consider the existing supply and the competitors. Keep in mind especially that offers are not static but may be further developed or extended, too.
- 🗑️ Therefore a **concrete calculation** is necessary concerning general supply and demand and the income that can be expected from the service and how much the operation, personnel costs, maintenance, controlling and possibly credits or bank interests will cost.
- 🗑️ The pricing of services is usually determined by **market prices** in the boating area and surrounding marinas and may only slightly be influenced by the marina operators. Also the number of users may be “naturally” limited in one or another way. This suggests to always **look at optimising cost first** e.g. by synergies, more efficient process design or downsizing the service, when the results of calculations suggest that a service may be unprofitable. This is the **part that can be influenced most directly and certainly by the operator**.

2.6.5 Practices and tips

👉 Examples: Offering amenities (also beyond boating)

- ▶ The **provision of accommodation** in any form directly in or around the marina has been growing strongly in the last years. It brings additional customers and life into a marina and gives them the opportunity to discover the maritime flair even when they are no boaters themselves. As many marinas are attractive places for holidays also seen from landsite it can be a good business for the operator. Accommodation proved very good and profitable way to broaden the service package indeed and also is a way to prolong the season and run the business also during the winter. The operators have very different approaches and forms of accommodation in their marina:
 - Simply a **place for** guests coming with a **caravan or tent** and who can use the marina facilities instead of a camp site.
 - **Simple and small holiday cottages on land or floating** in the marina. In this case the guests have to use the showers in the marina. They are especially popular among family members visiting resident boaters in the marina or by persons taking sailing lessons.
 - More **luxurious floating houses** swimming in the marina, **pile houses** or landsite holiday cottages next to the marina. They allow a unique holiday directly at the water front, which can justify quite high pricing.

- Hotels.** For example “im-jaich” has built a three-stars-hotel next to its marina in Bremerhaven. Besides additional incomes, the hotel creates also synergies, as e.g. the reception can serve both hotel guests and boaters.



Example for providing room for caravans on the parking in Muiderzand (left) and a rather simple and basic wooden holiday cottage in Naarden (right).



Example for a floating cabin in Muiderzand (left) aiming to attract e.g. family members of resident boaters and freely accessible for those, and a floating house in Kröslin (right) both swimming in a berth, freely manoeuvrable and officially not counting as house as they are too small and built on a ship body.



Example for bigger floating houses (left) in Lauterbach that need a building permission and a pile house (right) inspired by houses on the Seychelles.

- ▶ The **charter business** is a growing market that can be profitable. Interesting for marina operators is the fact that today's charter customers are potential future regular guest or resident customers.
- ▶ Operators can also organise a **shuttle services** that makes the boaters more mobile by driving them to and picking them up from the next bigger supermarket, city or train station. This is done e.g. in Heiligenhafen.
- ▶ Some marinas (e.g. Kröslin) provide a **room for events** in the marina building that can be rented for parties, weddings etc. Also a high class meeting room to hold a business conversation with clients is available. Their waterfront location is very appealing and makes them quite popular.
- ▶ **Bike rentals** offering either "normal bikes" or e-bikes / pedelecs can make boaters more mobile. They can either cycle around on the marina area or to the surroundings for a leisure trip.



Example for small bikes that can be used freely to cycle around in marina Muiderzand, a place to store the boaters bicycles in Volendam and a pedelec rental station in Kröslin (from left to right).

- ▶ Providing the **possibility to go fishing** with a fishing vessel moored in the marina with guide and support or on your own is also a growing market. Some marinas also provide a place where the fish can be disembowelled.
- ▶ **Events** taking place on the marina area and / or organised by the operator like e.g. celebrating the beginning and end of the boating season, folk festivals, harbour birthdays, water sport events like regattas or other sport events e.g. beach volleyball can create a positive atmosphere in the marina and are perceived as highlights in the marina calendar.
- ▶ **Providing the infrastructure** and possibility **to learn (water) sports** (is also something that is nice to have in a marina and that will serve the marina customers or local community. For marinas sailing schools are especially attractive as the local children are introduced into boating, sailing and the whole maritime lifestyle. Furthermore interested persons can receive their sailing / boating licence there. Many marinas have to find new young customers. Sailing schools are ways to attract them, especially if events are organised around them.









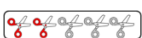


Example for table tennis surrounded by nets on the pier in Volendam (left) and for a surf school in Grömitz (right).

- ▶ Also all **other forms of leisure facilities** might be a good way to satisfy customers. This can be the provision e.g. sunbathing area, swimming pools, sauna or beach chairs.
- ▶ Some marinas even especially concentrate on **servicing the women among the boaters** through offering wellness, boutiques, hairdresser or cooking schools. Women often have a big influence on the decision which marina to visit next or which marina to choose as home marina.
- ▶ **Small shipyards building boats or a yacht brokerage** might cause some additional interest for the marina from boaters or from other visitors, too. Shown high-quality yachts might make the marina more fancy and attractive.

Step 6: Leaving marina for boating trip

2.6.6 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 6 / RESIDENT BOATERS: LEAVING MARINA FOR BOATING TRIP				
	Preparing for the trip	Temporary check out	Returning into berth	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for boating trip Look for and collect trip relevant information 	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary check out Inform marina operator about leaving and planned day of return Mark the berth as free and available for other boaters Leave the marina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to marina and berth 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS			MARINA OPERATOR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide and display information relevant for resident boaters at this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive information from boater concerning leaving and returning If not done by boater, mark berth as free and available for other customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary, mark the berth as occupied before the resident boater returns If necessary, redirect guest boaters mooring in berth of resident boater 	
----- Line of visibility -----				
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compose information relevant for resident boaters and keep it up-to-date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate information about temporarily empty berth into occupancy system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate information about occupied resident berth into occupancy system 	
----- Line of internal interaction -----				
OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivating residents for trips with overnight stays 			

Step 6 / Resident Boaters: Leaving marina for boating trip > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Preparing for the trip	Temporary check out	Returning into berth	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	
	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.6.7 Customer actions

Resident boaters will more or less regularly leave the marina for boating trips. These can last, depending on the free time of the boaters and the distance between their residence and the marina, either for an afternoon, for a weekend or for several weeks during the holidays.

Resident boaters who are in the process of leaving the marina for a boating trip may:

- **Prepare** the boating trip and look for relevant information like the latest weather forecast, about neighbouring marinas or the boating area.
- **Inform the marina operator about** their leaving and the day they plan to return. If and how the boater informs the operator depends on the marina regulations and routines concerning this issue.
- **Mark the berth as free and available** for other boaters. If this is necessary often depends on the length of the boating trip as marking the berth to be free will not make sense when the boater is only out for an afternoon.
- **Leave the** marina.
- **Come back** to berth and marina at the end of his trip.

2.6.8 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Preparing for the trip

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That public message boards or the marina staff **provide relevant information** for planning and implementing the trips (e.g. the latest weather forecast, regional events or the way to neighbouring marinas).
- ✓ That this information is **up-to-date and reliable**.
- ✓ That he has **access to this information** at any time also when the marina office is closed.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✎ **Most important** for the trip preparation of residents is usually **the personal advice by marina staff**. The latter should therefore be prepared to give feedback adequately and customer-friendly. Especially the employees working in the marina office may be trained to provide all relevant information for resident boaters who leave the marina.
- ✎ **Information like the latest weather report** or the way to neighbouring marinas should be regarded a **standard service for resident boaters**, at least in larger marinas. Operators therefore should not stick out negatively by not providing such information. Even though many boaters have nowadays mobile devices that enable to pick up such information from the internet, they still expect to find them also displayed in the marina.
- ✎ For efficiency reasons and limited staff efforts but also for ensuring that it can be picked up by boaters whenever they leave or like to obtain it. The **most usual and important information** should be made **accessible also when the marina office is closed**, e.g. by being provided on a public message board or being displayed on a computer screen inside the office that is visible from the outside.
- ✎ **Crucial is also that materials, devices (e.g. information boards) and information** are properly **maintained and kept up-to-date**. Out-dated or wrong information will be perceived as bad service quality. Inconveniences caused by them may stay in the memory of the boater for a long time and are usually seen as major failure of the operator.
- ✎ **Most of the information** that is desired and requested by resident boaters does not have to be generated or further processed by the operators. It can **easily and conveniently be obtained from well-known and easily accessible sources** (e.g. brochures can be picked up by regional tourist organisation, weather information in the internet). Only some of them and especially sophisticated ones may imply charges (e.g. site-specific weather forecasts).
- ✎ Nautical maps or marina handbooks are usually available on each boat. Hence information and **advice on navigation** may only be **relevant** when **special incidents** may impede safety (e.g. changes of buoyage). But if situations like this occur, it is essential and may be expected that related information is provided, at least passively at information boards, partly even that the marina staff pro-actively informs about them when having contact with the resident boaters.

↘ Temporary check out

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ To **go out boating fast** and at any time.
- ✓ That **check out obligations** (e.g. indicating berth status) are simple and **kept at a minimum**.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ The best customers for marina operators are residents who leave the marina from time to time and whose berths can be rented out to guest boaters in these periods. So marina operators should be interested in resident boaters that temporarily leave their marinas and ensure to receiving information if and for how long the berth is vacant. Making the most of these opportunities for **double income implies** to find and use a **system that allows easy and effective organisation of optimum berth occupancy**.
- ✘ The main **challenge** is to **get information about temporary berth vacancies** quickly, reliably and without too much effort. The latter implies to pose related obligations to the resident boaters, i.e. by defining them in the marina regulations. Also incentives may help here. But too much of obligation and tasks may annoy and undermine their motivation to help. In any case it needs a clear structure and routine for both, boaters and employees that is widely communicated, known and accepted. Cross-checks by marina staff, however, may hardly be avoided and should therefore be planned for in any case.
- ✘ The **level of effort to be put** into occupancy management, however, may vary a lot. It may be **defined with reference to the number of guest boaters** that can be expected. The more guest boaters are expected, the higher is also the amount of additional revenues that can be generated with a well-functioning occupancy system – and the more likely is also the annoyance of residents when a guest occupies their permanent berth by mistake. Both implications may justify efforts when being frequent.
- ✘ Controlling the berth occupancy by the staff alone will cost in almost all case too much effort in relation to revenues gained. **Sharing the tasks between marina staff and boaters** is therefore the most common solution. A good compromise is to establish the system of “red-green plates” at each berth, which indicate the berth status. It is very common in the Baltic Sea Region and proves to work efficiently and effectively in many cases. But also in this system the information by the boater remains the critical issue. An argument that is widely towards boaters to raise motivation and support to switch their berth signs is that they themselves would appreciate a green marked berth when they are guests in another marina.

↘ Returning into berth

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Finding their berth free** when they come back.
- ✓ Immediate **help from the marina employees** when this is not the case.
- ✓ **Safely landing and mooring** in their berth.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ It is **essential to ensure that the resident boaters** will find their **berth free when they come back** from their boating trip. This is one of the most crucial aspects of servicing resident boaters. Not doing so will cause a lot of anger, discomfort and confusion.

- ✘ The marina employees have to **be available and act immediately** in case any problems with mistakenly occupied resident berths occur. However, such individual troubleshooting may imply a lot of efforts and will not remove the discomfort on the side of the resident boater entirely.
- ✘ Still, marina operator **can rely on the resident and guest boaters to solve the problems themselves** in most cases. Even though the situation is annoying for all involved parties, boaters are usually communicative and sympathetic and will not necessarily need support from the marina employees.
- ✘ The best solution, however, is still preventing such situations as much as possible. Prerequisite is to **establish clear rules and to communicate them both to the guest boaters and resident boaters**. This is necessary as failures that cause such problems can be made on each side (resident indicates the berth as vacant by mistake, guest boater takes by mistake a berth that is indicated as occupied). Regarding the guest boaters, it may be of advantage to establish a widely known system. The most common one in the Baltic Sea Region are “red-green plates”.
- ✘ Even more problems will occur **when the guest boater blocking the berth is not on board**. Then the marina operator has to decide whether to wait for the guest boater to return or to **relocate the blocking boat immediately and personally**. The choice may depend on the level of discomfort and anger that was caused on the side of the concerned resident boater.

2.6.9 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Motivating resident boaters for trips with overnight stays

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✘ The best customers for marina operators are residents who leave the marina from time to time and whose berths can be rented out to guest boaters in these periods. Marina operators, therefore, should have a genuine and string interest to **motivate their resident boaters to stay overnight in other marinas** of the boating areas. The entire **boating area** and both the “giving” and the “taking” marina will profit when the boaters regularly visit other marinas.
- ✘ The most common way to do so is to **promote trips in the boating marinas and to advertise neighbouring marinas** as attractive places to visit. The resident boaters of a marina should be rather pulled by the attractiveness of other marinas than pushed by the marina operator to leave the marina. The marina operators should therefore at least provide information on the boating area and neighbouring marinas.
- ✘ Establishing targeted **cooperation with surrounding marinas** in this matter may be even more effective. Initiatives usually push at open doors on the side of potentials cooperation partners. It should be assumed that the gains from the cooperation in the form of guest boaters are higher than risks to lose resident boaters to a neighbouring marina that is promoted and advertise in this way in almost all cases. The increased additional attention for the boating area as a whole and each of its marinas by such an approach add on top.
- ✘ A **successful example** of an institutionalised co-operation that is to induce more mutual boater visits within a boating area is “**BalticSailing**”. It includes more than 40 marinas from Germany and Denmark. Besides mutual information and joint information materials, even a discount system was established to foster overnight stay in other partner marinas.

2.6.10 Practices and tips

Examples: Recording and marking temporarily vacant berths

- ▶ German **marina operators see** the management of **berth occupancy as one of the main challenges** and problems to solve for **an effective and profitable marina operation**. A resident boater who does not inform the operators about their leaving will cost him potential income from guest boaters. The operators were still looking for optimisation and had **not found totally satisfying solutions** yet.
- ▶ Most operators **set up rules that the residents have to follow** in terms of indicated the status for their berth. Their application is controlled by the employees in order to minimise conflicts. Main points in **communicating** them and in order to get support for them are **gains for the residents or possible negative consequences if they are not followed**. Usually the resident boaters will understand the need for optimisation in berth occupancy and making a contribution through indicating absence when the operators make clear that otherwise they will have to increase prices as the income is lowered.
- ▶ Usually marinas in the Baltic Sea use **“red-green plates”** that clearly mark occupied and unoccupied berths so that guest boaters can identify them without further guidance by marina staff. In most marinas the boaters have to assist the operator through informing when they leave for longer than 24 hours personally, via phone or email and to switch plates themselves from red to green. The boaters will also have to inform the operators about the duration of this boating trip and the exact time of planned return. The operators are in return obliged to guarantee an unoccupied berth when the boater returns.
- ▶ In the Netherlands the red-green plates are not commonly used. The operators **rely on the customers to inform them**, integrate the information about free berths into their management system and assign incoming boats to free berth through communicating with them on the waiting pier.
- ▶ **Crucial** for both approaches is to find ways how to **increase the feedback and assistance** by the resident boaters.
- ▶ The “im-jaich” marinas increased their voluntary feedback rate through **providing the customers with a card (especially designed for this purpose)** in which the resident boaters can fill in their berth number and the dates of leaving and returning. This card can be submitted at the marina office or put into a post-box when it is unoccupied. In addition the customers have the possibility to contact the harbourmaster through telephone or email.
- ▶ Some marinas in the Netherlands provide motivating incentives to the boaters when they inform about their leaving. This can be a bottle of wine for the summer holiday or another gift like a book about the boating area at the end of the year if they informed the operator regularly.

„im-jaich“ card for resident boaters to easily and voluntarily inform the marina employees about their boating trip.

abmeldung von dauerliegern

bitte melden sie sich beim hafenmeister ab, wenn sie mit ihrem schiff den hafen länger als 24 std. verlassen. füllen sie hierzu einfach diesen bogen aus und werfen ihn in den briefkasten

schiffseigner :

schiffsname :

liegeplatznummer :

ablegedatum :

datum rückkehr :

drehen sie bitte ihr liegeplatzschild auf grün bevor sie ablegen. sollte sich ihre rückkehr verschieben, informieren sie bitte telefonisch den hafenmeister.

wir wünschen ihnen einen schönen törn

ihr im-jaich team



Tip: Not all boaters seek for boating trips

- In **almost all marinas some of the resident boaters do not go out with their boat** and leave the marina. They live on their boats during the summer, enjoy the maritime atmosphere and use their boats as “caravan on the water”.
- **Often** these **resident boaters** have been customers of the marina for a long time **who got old** but do not want to leave the marina community that is an important part of their lives. They will stay in the marina on their boat as long as they can. In Germany the demographic change and the increasing number of elderly boaters has led to situations in marinas where up to 20% of the resident boaters do not move their boat any more.
- Economic developments like a financial crisis and rising petrol prices can also lead to an increased number of **motor boaters** who mainly **stay** in the marina as **going out** often has become **too expensive** for them.
- Marina operators have to keep an eye on the number of resident boaters who do not leave the marina for boating trips and be aware of possible **consequences for their further business development**:
 - A problem is that their berths cannot be rented out to guest boaters as they never leave the marina. Also their consumption of e.g. water in the washrooms and other free services will be significantly higher than from an average customer.
 - On the other hand they will most likely use and pay more often for other services in the marina e.g. supermarket or shower coins. This makes them still valuable customers.
 - A large number of old customers who stay in the marina without leaving for boating trips may furthermore point at a considerable risk that big parts of the clientele can break away short-termed when they are no longer able to get on and off their boat. The time until this happens can be prolonged through assisting services like stairways or if they change from sailboats to easier accessible motorboats. But this only gives the operator more time to react and to search for new customers but does not solve the problem substantially.

2.7 Step 7: Hauling out boat / Winter services

2.7.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 7 / RESIDENT BOATERS: HAULING OUT BOAT / WINTER SERVICES				
	Information / booking / permission	Hauling out the boat / transfer to winter storage	Winter storage and overhaul	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect information and select options for hauling out / winter services Book hauling out / winter services Obtain permission to use / access to slipway Pay for the hauling out, winter services to be used 	<p>CUSTOMER ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sail boat to slipway / hauling out facilities Self-hauling out by using slipway Use craning / lifting services for hauling out the boat Organise transport of boat to winter storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use winter storage Do-it-yourself work on the boat during winter Use winter services provided in the marina 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give information on hauling out services in the marina or nearby Allot timeslots for craning / lifting to customer Give access / permission to use the slipway Provide feedback concerning the availability of winter services Request / receive payment for use of hauling out facilities / services and winter services Issue a receipt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open slipway for the customer Assist or carry out slipping, if desired Carry out the lifting / craning, if desired also in absence of the customer Carry out the transport to winter storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out winter services Give access for customers for do-it-yourself work on their boats 	MARINA OPERATOR
	----- Line of visibility -----			
	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS			
BACK-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check the available time slots for craning / lifting / using the slipway Check the availability of winter services in the marina Register allotted timeslots Register the payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and maintain the slipway / lifting / craning equipment Organise the transport means to winter storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and maintain the winter services and facilities 	MARINA OPERATOR
	----- Line of internal interaction -----			
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the pricing system for winter services Cooperation with external service providers 			

Step 7 / Resident Boaters: Hauling out boat / Winter services > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Information / booking / permission	Hauling out the boat / transfer to winter storage	Winter storage and overhaul	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

2.7.2 Customer actions

At the end of the boating season, the resident boaters in the Baltic Sea have to haul their boats out of the water and store them for overhauling and maintenance during the winter season. Because of the climate conditions this is not only common but often an obligation for the boaters. Similar to the launching in spring, the hauling out activities concentrate on a few weekends in September, October and November.

Hauling out the boats is either done by the resident boaters themselves with use of trailer and slipway or by craning / lifting services provided in the marinas. The chosen way depends on the availability of facilities and services, the size of the boat and the own skills and equipment. Hauling out can either take place at the home marina, in the place of the winter storage (if different from the home marina) or at another place where the facilities for hauling out the boat are provided and e.g. cheaper or better.

All boats that are hauled out of the water have then to be **transported to the location** where they are stored for the winter. This is done by the boaters themselves or with external help. The distances that are covered depend on where the boat is hauled out to, where winter storage is located and / or overhaul is being done. The distances may vary considerably. The boaters may choose the home marina, facilities nearby or also places far away from the sea but close to their place of residence. The selected facilities can reach from simple shelters to heated halls in which all necessary work can be done or is offered as service.

In more detail, the process of hauling out the boat and using **winter storage and services** involves the following for resident boaters:

- **Collect information** about the available hauling out and winter services, thereby selecting the appropriate and / or preferred options for hauling out (e.g. using slipway, craning / lifting facilities) and winter services (e.g. storage in- or outside, professionally or private, with included winter services or self-overhaul).
- **Obtain permission** to use the slipway and, if necessary, make an appointment for slipping, either with or without support from marina employees.
- **Book a hauling out service** (e.g. crane or travel lift) and make an appointment for it.
- **Pay for the hauling out** facilities and services to be used.
- **Organise the transport** of the boat to the winter storage by own trailer or with support from marina employees and facilitating infrastructure (e.g. travel lift, trailer).
- **Book the winter storage** of the boat in the marina where the boat is hauled out or at another location along with further **winter services** like washing, painting, repairing or maintenance.
- **Pay for the winter storage** and winter services / facilities to be used.
- Self-hauling-out of the boat via the slipway or getting the boat hauled out with the **help of a service provider** and its crane / lift, either while being present on the spot or being absent.
- **Transport** the hauled out boat on a private trailer **to the winter storage** or let it be transport by service providers to the winter storage provided directly in the marina or at another location.
- **Overhaul the boat** by do-it-yourself during the winter or making use of service providers who overhaul the boat, either while being present on the spot or being absent.

2.7.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

Information / Booking / Permission

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ The issues that matter for the customers regarding information / booking / permission of the **hauling out services match with** those of the **launching services** (see chapter 2.4 / step 3).
- ✓ Issues that matter for the customers regarding the information / booking / permission of **winter services** are:
 - Finding all kinds of **winter services and facilities needed and desired**, provided either by the marina or by others.
 - **Assistance in arranging services in other places** nearby, if not provided in the marina.
 - **Reliability** concerning general arrangements (e.g. date of hauling out) and details (special treatment for boat) agreed with the operator.
 - That the **prices are acceptable** and not disproportionately high.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ The **advices** for the operators to efficiently process the information / booking / permission related to **hauling out match with those of the launching** (see chapter 2.4 / step 3).
- ✗ Advices for the operators to make the process of information / booking / permission of **winter services** efficient are:
 - **Selling the winter services as early as possible** to the resident boaters can make it easier to utilise own services and facilities to capacity. It allows especially adjusting the staff resources in due time and to reduce costs in this way.
 - Systematically **organising and documenting the appointments** for provision of winter services and ensure the availability of employees accordingly.
 - Clearly and **standardly organising the procedures** concerning **payment, receipts, insurance etc.** Provision of winter services has a lot of elements and is very complex. So this may be easily worth the efforts. Cost saving potentials and scale effects may be considerable.
 - Satisfy the customers through **arranging winter services at other locations** if they cannot be provided directly in the marina. The minimum should be to have an overview on available options and to be able to provide contacts. Concrete cooperation agreements that ensure proper prices and sufficient capacities for the own resident boaters in other places would be an optimum service level with this regard and a clear asset in terms of quality.
 - **Carefully monitoring and optimising the profitability** of the winter services as a whole or better of each single service separately. Investment and maintenance costs of facilities and required staff resources can be immense and so are risks for considerable losses.
 - On the other hand, it is important to find and **keep the appropriate perspective for evaluating costs and benefits** of winter services. Significant parts of the latter are of indirect nature and difficult to be clearly measured and proven monetarily (e.g. double use / longer use periods for certain facilities and thus better and faster return on investment, possibility to employ more staff all-year round may enable to get employees with high qualifications and more experience also for the summer etc.). Also patience and a long-term approach is called for as new winter services may require quite a lot time before being known and properly used.

📌 Hauling out the boat / Transfer to winter storage

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That the **boat safely reaches the winter storage**.
- ✓ That the **marina operator organises the package** of providing both services and keeps the appointments and arrangements.
- ✓ That the **passage** to the winter storage is also **provided in absence of the boaters** if required.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✂ The **advices** for the operators to efficiently implement the **hauling out process match with those of the launching** (see chapter 2.4 / step 3).
- ✂ Also regarding the **transfer to the winter storage** most of the general recommendations with regard to e.g. resource planning and process organisation for the launching (see chapter 2.4 / step 3) appear applicable. Additional aspects are:
 - The marina operators can optimise the occupancy rate and better plan the capacities of the own services by **selling packages for hauling out as well as winter storage**.
 - The facilities for hauling out do usually have a rather broad scope with regard to the size of boats that they can serve. This may be different for **devices** needed for **transporting** them to the winter storage over **longer distance** like vehicles and trailers. Here, more **different kinds** may have to **be kept available** with reference to the size. This makes capacity planning for transport services more complex and leads to high investment costs if the ambition is to serve all residents. Flexible provision in **cooperation with specialised transport providers or other marinas** is therefore a **good option** here that should always be considered.
 - If aiming at **attracting also boaters from other marinas** to the own winter storage and service, it may be **essential to care about** and ensure **transportation for a broad scope of different boats**.

📌 Winter storage and overhaul

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That the **boat is stored** for the winter **safely**.
- ✓ That the **appointments and arrangements** concerning winter storage and overhaul are kept.
- ✓ The **possibility to do** as much of the **winter overhaul on their own**, if desired.
- ✓ That it is possible to **additionally and flexibly book services**.
- ✓ That the winter services booked have a **good quality and moderate prices**.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✂ **Winter storage and overhauling** services are very valuable for marina operators **to make their whole business more attractive and profitable**. The main advantage and reason for providing them is to prolong the operating period and to create year round income and work for employees.
- ✂ There is **a lot of economic potential in winter storage and overhauling services** around the Baltic Sea. Due to cold and icy winters in the Baltic Sea Region is not only common but often obligatory for the boaters to haul out their ships before winter. Otherwise safety of the boats cannot be guaranteed and the deterioration of the boats, which can already be considerable in the also rather cold and stormy springs and autumns in the area, would be further increased.
- ✂ **Concrete potentials** for a marina in this matter may be quite **easily and concretely determined** on the basis of available data. The number of boaters in a boating area corresponds with the number of potential customers for winter storage and winter services. Marina operators simply can observe and

evaluate the winter storage / service situation and supply in their boating area to see basic potentials for own facilities and services.

- ✂ This **baseline is usually rather fixed** in terms of winter storage and services and should be taken as orientation when designing the offers and deciding for investments. However, in Poland and Lithuania overall potentials may increase thanks to still growing boater markets. Otherwise, the only chance for a marina to grow in these fields is to win customers from other service providers or to convince the boaters who until now privately organised their winter storage / services to use professional services.
- ✂ Boaters are individualists that put a lot of effort and time into their boats. Overhauling and maintaining the boat by “**do-it-yourself**” is, therefore, **part of** the overall package of what it means **to be a boater**. Most of them, in Germany around 80 per cent, would only unwillingly let somebody else do the major overhauling work. It is **most important**, therefore, that operators simply provide access to their boats for them when they are stored during the winter. Amenities like heated halls are appreciated and can be a competitive advantage.
- ✂ **Boaters enjoy** working on their boats themselves as well as **chatting and exchanging with the other boaters** that also work on the boats themselves. Therefore providing the stage for this exchange sometimes can already be seen as big part of the winter service marina operators provide. Also this time of the year makes out a lot of the atmosphere in a marina for resident boaters and can be used by the operators to strengthen the contact to the regular customers.
- ✂ Even though most boaters work on their boats on their own **still considerable numbers use maintenance and overhaul services** provided by the marina operator or by external companies. Usually they are a very good business and will quickly find its supply and demand as soon as offers are known among the resident boaters. Quality matters a lot for their major user groups (e.g. older boaters, wealthy boaters) so that providers can achieve adequate prices for services of good quality.



Sail service in heated winter storage hall in Kröslin (left) and halls with repair and specialised equipment stores in Muiderzand (right).

- ✂ The **winter services** that are provided in the marina **have to match the customer demands and needs** in order to be profitable. Basic may be first of all to **convince as many of the own resident customers as possible** to also use the marina winter services provided on the spot. Starting point to decide about the service mix may therefore be to analyse the profile of boats and boaters that have permanent berths from this perspective. The efforts for informing the own residents are usually moderate. Especially the personal contact that naturally happen before, during and after the season can be used for promoting own services. This is usually very effective and does not imply a lot of costs.

- ✎ Many of the overhauling and maintenance **services** that are needed **during the winter time** are identical with boat-related summer services (e.g. motor and sail repair) or can as well be provided with available equipment and staff (e.g. painting service). These services do therefore **not even imply to make investments**, but to use already existing facilities more intensively and much closer to their capacity limits by extending the service periods.
- ✎ The times of providing the winter services and the availability of the employees have very good potentials to be organised efficiently. As the **winter season is long** and lasts from November to April, the operator can carefully plan what services are provided when at which boats. Usually this creates as very proper disposition framework that enables to avoid peaks effectively. This may be used for utilising staff and facilities very efficiently time-wise and helps a lot keep related efforts and costs low.
- ✎ Marina operators may have to calculate carefully which services should be provided by own employees and for which kind of services it is **more efficient to have external companies** providing them. If deciding for the latter, special attention has to be paid to **ensure adequate quality of external service providers** as it is very important for satisfaction.
- ✎ It is **appreciated** by the resident boaters **to offer a solution concerning all problems** that may occur with his boat, motor, sail etc. and that may require help and assistance. If this cannot be safeguarded directly in the marina is expected that the operator knows at least a place where to get it. Winter services play an important role in this context, too. Some of them may be seen as essential as much as summer services (e.g. storage).

2.7.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Define the pricing system for winter services

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ From the perspective of most customers, quality counts more than low prices when it comes to winters services. That means that **providers can achieve adequate prices for services of good quality**. And it suggests **rather increasing quality** than to cut costs **for getting to better profit margins**.
- ✎ The pricing of the winter storage and winter service will have to **orientate on the usual market prices** for these services in the boating area, nevertheless. Only when the operators can offer certain specialised services or a quality that is clearly above standard, higher prices will be justified and accepted.
- ✎ Winter services are as essential for boaters as summer services. This should make them very open for **service packages that cover the entire year** and not only the boating season. For the operator, such offers are very appealing as they not only increase customer satisfaction but also customer retention.
- ✎ Also **service packages that cover a number of winter services only** can be considered. They are appreciated by customers as they would not have to care much about details during the winter half-year and possible being far away and usually not visiting the marina for other reason anyway. For the operators they have the side-effect that work planning and thus proper utilisation of staff are facilitated.

👉 Cooperation with external service providers

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ The marina operators should always try to satisfy boaters who request services that are not provided by the operators. **More or less formal cooperation with specialised providers** that either work in the marina as external company or at another location outside the marina is a **good solution** for marina operators for **optimising and completing the own package** and also well-accepted on the side of the customers. This applies for winter services as much as for summer services and especially for the most specific ones (e.g. transportation).
- 🗑️ **Cooperation** in terms of winter storage and overhauling **can mean** that
 - the complete winter stay and all activities related to it are performed in another marina,
 - only parts of the “winter service package” is done in another marina (i.e. hauling out in home marina but winter storage in another one – or vice versa),
 - the winter services are offered in the marina but - either entirely or in parts – performed by external parties and not the marina providers themselves.
- 🗑️ When **comparing** the potentials of building, extending or **renewing own facilities** with the possibility to **cooperate with external parties** in terms of winter storage / service providers instead, the marina operators should consider especially his customer structure, the investment costs for creating or upgrading own service facilities, the available space for the service facilities and that a good service quality need to be ensured. A **comprehensive appraisal** of all these aspects can create a **proper decision basis**.
- 🗑️ If externalising services, it is very important to still keep an eye on service quality and to **ensure high standards on the side of the external providers**. If the service quality is not satisfying and problems occur these will often also fall back on the marina and its reputation.
- 🗑️ The service quality of providers in the marina, e.g. from companies that usually pay a rent to the operators, may be controlled more easily than totally external services because **concrete sanction measure** can be applied without much efforts (e.g. termination of rental agreement). External service providers, which service quality does not match the standards of the other marina services, may generally be prevented to work in the marina.

3 SERVICE PROVISION FOR GUEST BOATERS

3.1 Overview service blueprint / Profitability compass

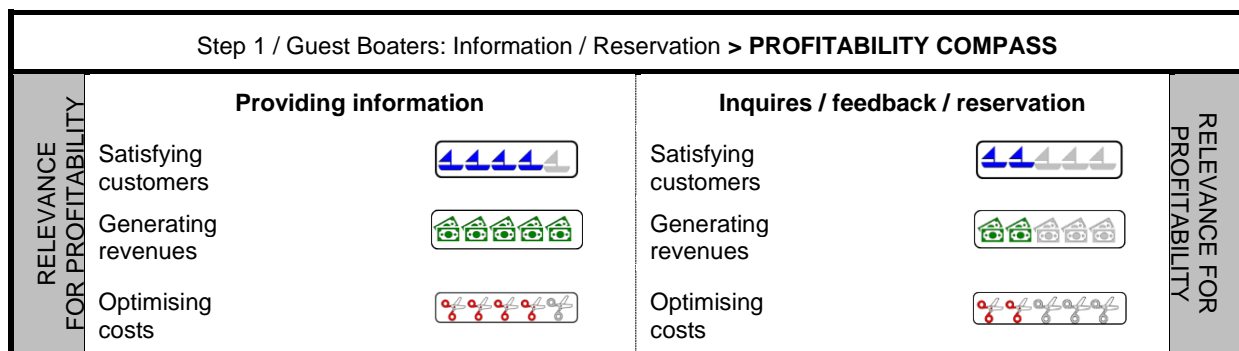
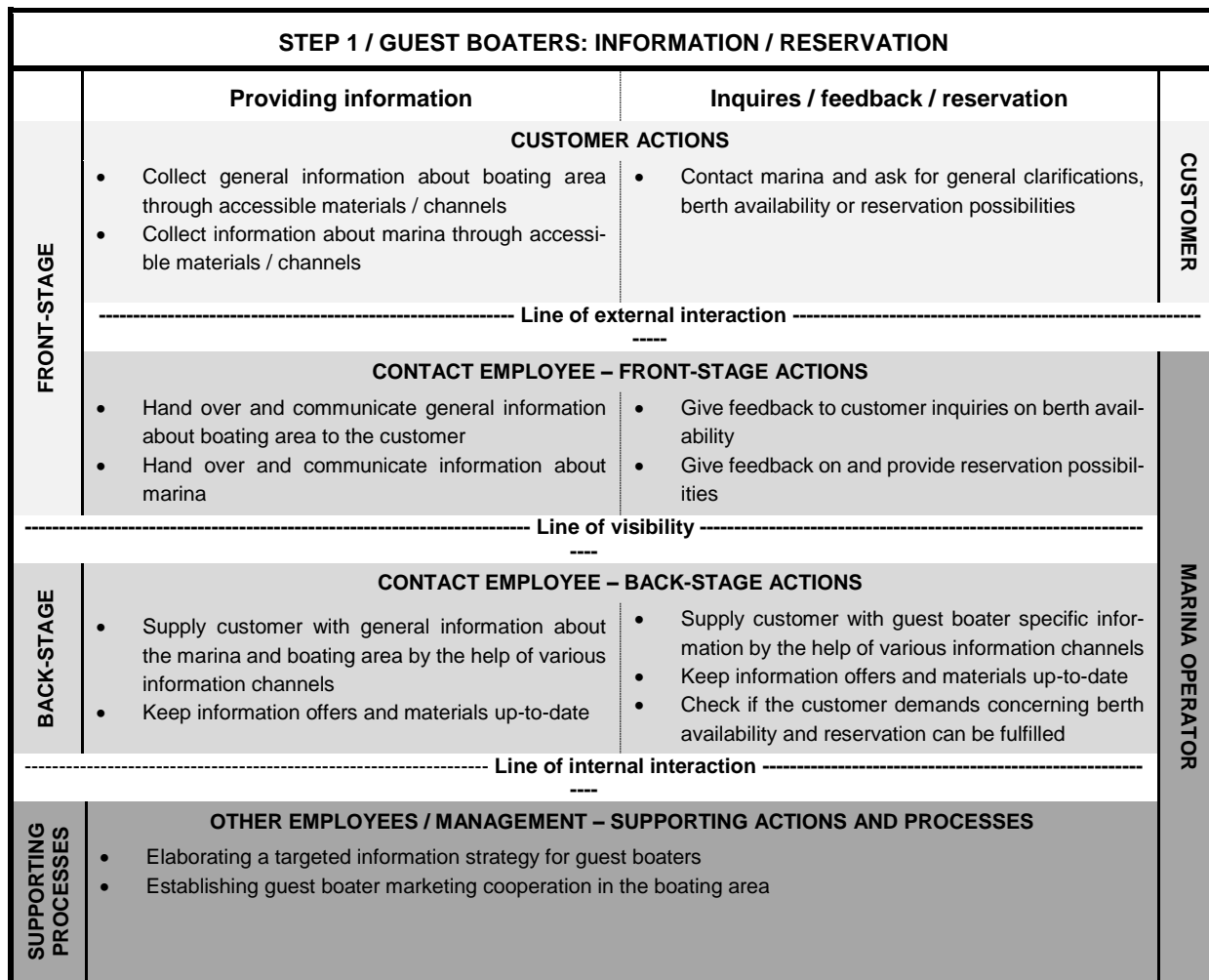
SERVICE CHAIN OF A GUEST BOATER VISIT IN A MARINA FOR ONE DAY						
	Information / Reservation	Coming into the marina	Registration in marina / Renting short-term berth	Using services in marina	Checking out / leaving marina	
SERVICING THE BOATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing general information Inquiries / feedback / reservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding a berth Landing and mooring in berth Disembarking / Orientating on land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying scope and terms of stay Payment Providing access to relevant marina facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic services included in the harbour dues Pay-per-use services Amenities (also beyond boating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing trip-related information for leaving boaters Leaving berth and marina 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of internal interaction -----					
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborating a targeted information strategy for guest boaters Establishing joint guest boater marketing for the boating area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailoring marina shape and design for guest boaters Displaying information for guest boaters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate and competitive pricing for guest boaters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailoring services to specific target groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint management and feedback 	MARINA OPERATOR

RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	Satisfying customers	PROFITABILITY COMPASS
	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	Optimising costs	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.2 Step 1: Information / Reservation

3.2.1 Overview / Profitability compass



●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.2.2 Customer actions

Guest boaters may arrive to a marina either from longer boating trips (with a number of stops and taking a couple of days) or short ones (e.g. for the weekend with only one or two stops). This differentiates their behaviour and actions with regard to seeking for information and selecting a port for a stopover:

- Boaters who are on a shorter trip or **weekend-trip** have limited time and therefore also limited range. The options to consider are the neighbouring marinas of their “home ports”. They usually know at least roughly about the choices they have. When they look for information, their search may therefore concentrate rather on very concrete information on specific marinas.
- Boaters who are on a **longer trip** elaborate usually a rough plan about their entire route and possible stopovers before they start. For doing so, they collect information about a boating area that they expect to be interesting and try to get an overview on the available marinas to choose from. In the course of the trip, however, they may be open to or be forced to (e.g. wind conditions) changes or adjustments fitting into their timeframe. Their decision for a concrete marina for the next evening stop is therefore often made on a short-term basis, usually in the morning when leaving the previous marina.

Motivations for choosing a specific marina can vary a lot. They can relate to e.g. the desired lengths of the sailing stage, the attractiveness of the marine itself or spots nearby (e.g. a town or another sight) from a touristic point of view or specific features found (only) in this marina (e.g. petrol station, water depth).

The process of gathering information and selecting a marina, therefore, is a step by step process that gets more and more specific from the customers’ points of view. While planning and looking for marinas to visit as guest, the boater may:

- **Collect general information** about a **boating area** and its **marina network** through the accessible materials / channels (e.g. brochures, internet, harbour handbooks, other boaters).
- **Collect general information** about a **specific marina** that is considered as (next) stopover through accessible materials / channels.
- **Contact the marina** before getting there and ask for specific information and clarifications (berth availability or reservation possibilities).

A **guest boater who is directly contacting** the marina operator by phone or e-mail prior to its arrival, however, is a rather **rare and unusual case**. The vast majority will only look for information that is provided via brochures, websites, handbooks and other boaters beforehand.

3.2.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Providing information

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Simply and quickly finding** information about the marina when looking for it in a targeted way.
- ✓ Finding **up-to-date information** about the marina in **general publications and information sources** on the boating area (e.g. brochures, websites, harbour handbooks).
- ✓ **Clear and comprehensive information** on features, infrastructure and services **for guest boaters** (e.g. water depths, berth size, number of guest berths, services like petrol stations, guest fees).
- ✓ **Information** about further available **services** (e.g. supermarket) or **places to visit** nearby.
- ✓ Information about the **navigation to and into** the marina.
- ✓ **General information** also about the **boating area** in which the marina is located, especially if it is part of a **marina network**.
- ✓ **Visual information** (e.g. pictures, webcam) to get an impression of the marina and its atmosphere.
- ✓ **Contact information**, especially a telephone number in case of questions.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ **Word-of-mouth communication** with other boaters is the **source** of information that **guest boaters trust in most** when they collect information and impressions about marinas to possibly visit. If the marina is already visited by many guest boaters and has a **good reputation in the “boating community**, it may therefore be **not necessary** to put **much effort** in advertisement and information especially for guest boaters. There are many examples of ports that are very popular without doing much **own publicity**. Especially the need for own information channels and materials for guest boaters should be considered carefully.
- ✗ Trip planning starts usually with having a look to **general information sources for guest boaters** (brochures on boating areas, harbour handbooks, boating websites etc.). Hence it is important to **be present** in relevant materials with comprehensive and up-to-date information and / or advertisements in order to **acquire new customers**. This can **be both, more efficient and more effective than** establishing own channels and drafting **own materials for them**. An operator should at least provide the quality of an average marina the boating area in order to not stand out negatively. Being better is always good advertisement for the marina.
- ✗ Guest boaters become often aware of a marina rather accidentally when they flick through boating journals, websites or brochures on the boating area. The **information** provided on a marina in such materials, therefore, has to be **eye-catching, appealing and specific** to get attention. Provide especially **information about** infrastructures and **services that are unusual** or important for specific target groups among the guest boaters (e.g. petrol station for motor boat users / playground and possible rainy day activities for families with children).
- ✗ **Promotion campaigns** may be fruitful not right away, but create wider impact only after being validated by word-of-mouth communication within the “boating community”. Operators **need** therefore plan for **continuous actions and efforts over a longer period** to re-orientate customers.
- ✗ Also guest boaters **appreciate to get visual impressions** of the marina through pictures or webcams. A marina that can be “objectively” explored in this way beforehand and that apparently matches expectations and needs may be visited with a higher probability.
- ✗ Traditional **harbour handbooks** are still a **usual source** of information for guest boaters. As complement to nautical maps, they can be found on board of almost every ship. Boaters use them to pick up especially basic information (e.g. water depth, available boat-related services like petrol stations)

about marinas to visit. Operators should therefore **ensure the correctness of information provided in them** and inform publishers about any improvements or changes in their marinas. If for example the depth of the marina basin is wrongly displayed, this will spread within the “boater community” very soon and may lead to insecurity that can scare off guest boaters.

- ✘ Be aware of the discussions about your marina on **boating websites and internet forum** like “www.portmaps.com” or “www.portpilot.com”, which today are a common information source for boaters. As the operators cannot defend the open exchange of experiences they should regularly **check the forums and the state of discussion**. The best way to deal with justified negative opinions in the internet is to use them as a reference to improve the own operations.
- ✘ An important aspect for attracting foreign guest boaters is the **provision of the information in foreign languages**. In the Baltic Sea region, command of **English** is widely spread. It is the most important language of communication and **may be sufficient**. For a marina with a high share of visitors from one specific country, however, the provision of information material in this language can make sense, too. It can be a promotion advantage as these foreign guests may prefer a marina providing information in their mother tongue.

🔴 Inquiries / Feedback / Reservation

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Clear information** on how to get in contact with the marina (telephone number or email).
- ✓ **Reaching the marina operator** in the relevant times and **as announced**.
- ✓ Receiving a **quick feedback** and comprehensive, understandable and reliable information concerning specific requests on berth availability and reservation possibilities.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ The **information material** provided should **cover and clarify the usual requests** from guest boaters in order to **avoid unnecessary questions** that retain employees. Nevertheless, personal requests from guest boaters should be expected as never all details can be clarified in advance.
- ✘ **Display the possible ways to get in contact** with the marina employees (usually telephone and / or email) on the website and in all other information material.
- ✘ If a **service-time** is indicated, **always ensure the availability** of staff in these periods.
- ✘ **Every phone call** or other contacting from guest boaters is a chance for the operator to **win a new customer**. Therefore every request **has to be taken serious** even though it is not the first priority in the service provision the marina employees.
- ✘ Be prepared for questions and **provide clear, competent and friendly answers** in order to satisfy the customers. Negative impressions and experiences made by the customers, even if only on the phone, may be communicated with other boaters and fall back (positively or negatively) on the operator and the marina.
- ✘ **Always try to find a solution**. In case of requests for a berth, the employees should always try to lead every customer to the marina. Even if the marina is fully or almost fully booked, no request should be refused. Communicate to the guests that they will find a place for his boat, even if they have to moor rafted up next to other boats. But be honest regarding the occupancy situation, too.
- ✘ Taking **reservations of guest boaters** implies quite a lot of technical and organisational efforts. It may therefore make sense **only for bigger** and very popular guest **marinas** or in case of **events** (e.g. Tall Ship Race) that let expect that the harbour will be overcrowded.

3.2.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Elaborating a targeted information strategy for guest boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ Marina operators should consider **in which way they want to be presented** in which media and **information channels** like brochures, websites or harbour handbooks. It is worth efforts as these are the parts they may influence directly.
- ✎ A **targeted information strategy** can increase the efficiency of promotion activities. It is **especially valuable** if it helps to
 - find out which channels and media are important to reach guest boaters,
 - identify the most important target groups for guest visits,
 - ensure that the relevant guest boater information is available and can be found on the marina website and important other media,
 - clarify the internal responsibilities and organisation of information work,
 - establish certain communication standards for the guest boater information,
 - explore synergies between communication to guest boaters and resident boaters.
- ✎ Targeted information policy does not necessarily imply to have an elaborated, written strategy. What counts is a **clear idea** of how to deal with guest boaters and to organise the communication towards them. The fact that guest boaters are for most marinas an extra rather than the core business calls for keeping it **as lean as possible**.
- ✎ Local, regional and national tourist association usually do a lot of market research and process it towards general or sector-specific marketing strategies in order to promote the region as attractive boating area. **Before making own** studies and drafting own **strategies** for the marina, it is wise to **find out** if **available sources** and studies are usable for the won marina and if it may make sense and be possible to join their campaigns. Check especially their marketing studies and strategies to attract foreigners and their channels and media to inform about the (boating) area.
- ✎ Not only the information provided on the **marina website** and in own information materials shapes the marina's image. Equally important is the communication by tourist associations or websites and brochures on the boating area. Keeping in touch and actively supporting the production of common information material, therefore, can influence and improve image and recognition of the own marina quite effectively and **without the need to produce own materials**.
- ✎ Most marinas serve both, guest and resident boaters. For them, it may hardly make sense to develop a strategy only for guest boaters, and another one only for resident boaters. There are a lot of overlaps both with regard to potential target groups and information channels that may be used. Only an **integrated strategy for guest and resident boaters** is able to detect and use the synergies that arise effectively – both in terms of the drafting process and the guidance that it gives.

Establishing joint guest boater marketing for the boating area

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ Guest boater marketing becomes more efficient when the marina operator is **cooperating with other marinas in the boating area**. Each marina benefits from such cooperation as a well promoted and developed boating area will increase the number of guests for every marina in the area.
- ✎ The **scope of possible cooperation** can be to
 - simply exchange information.
 - mutually inform about the other marinas in a region.
 - offer discounts on berth fees or services for customers visiting several marinas in the region.
 - provide incentives for guest boaters through group memberships that offers advantages or discounts on marina services in the region.
- ✎ It is important to **clarify which target groups should be attracted** through the marketing cooperation. When focussing on guest boaters the goal can be to increase the inner regional boating activities. Also a specific bigger source market or neighbouring region / country could be targeted.
- ✎ It is essential to clearly **define the strategy for the cooperation and the roles within the partnership**. Every partner should perceive the marketing cooperation as equally important and valuable for its business. Efforts and gains should be fairly distributed among the members. Also the possibility to **involve** e.g. **regional actors** that coordinate the activities and take the work load from single marinas should be considered. They may have genuine interest to perform tasks that no single marina would be interested in and can be a good complement of the partnership in this way.

3.2.5 Practices and tips

Examples: Marketing cooperation between marinas focussing on guest boaters

Existing marketing cooperation between marinas in boating regions show a broad variety of goals and approaches. For example:

- ▶ “**BalticSailing**” is a cooperation and network of currently 42 marinas in Germany and Denmark. The cooperation was initiated by an EU project. It aims at promoting a rather small-scaled boating area (Lübecker Bucht and the islands of Fehmarn, Lolland and Falster, to be steadily extended north- and eastwards). Target groups of the cooperation are primarily resident boaters from Germany and Denmark. They shall be motivated to visit other marinas in the region. Main activities and outputs of the cooperation are for example:
 - A discount system (10% in member marinas / discount on services of partner companies),
 - A member card (can be bought also by boaters not holding a berth in a member marina),
 - An information brochure and a website about the marinas and the boating area
 - Further joint marketing activities like fair visits.



Further information can be found in the internet (www.balticsailing.de).

- ▶ The “**Hafenkring Randmeren**” is a rather loose and small scaled cooperation of 11 marinas located around the island of Flevoland in the Dutch IJsselmeer. Target group are the resident boaters in the participating marinas. They shall be motivated to visit the other marinas of the cooperation. The main tool for this is a discount system. Resident boaters from one of the cooperating marinas get the fourth night of stay as a guest boater in any of the other



marinas of “**Hafenkring Randmeren**” for free. Further information can be found at www.havenkringrandmeren.nl/home.php?language=en.

- ▶ The “**Yacht Card**” cooperation is formed by more than 40 marinas all over the Netherlands. Its target group is very broad. It includes both resident boaters from the Netherlands as well as all foreign boaters visiting the Netherlands. Card holders get discounts on dues in the participating marinas as well as a variety of other, mainly marina related services (e.g. hotels, boat suppliers, petrol stations etc.). Other aspects are a 24/7 emergency hotline for boaters and the possibility to use the “Yacht Card” as money card to pay for services in marinas (e.g. harbour dues, showers, fresh water). Each marina and customer can design a personalised card. It can be purchased for 25,-€ by any boater or interested person. So it can be seen as rather general discount card related to and especially designed for boaters and the boating business. Further information can be found in the internet (www.yachtcard.nl/).



- ▶ Also companies who operate more than one marina implement joint marketing. The company “**im-jaich**”, for instance, operates 9 marinas in Germany, mainly at the Baltic Sea. The “im-jaich” head-quarter deals centrally with financial planning, controlling, price management for berths and services, superior personnel management and marketing aspects. The latter cover the development and provision of everything from general corporate design to brochures for single marinas. This creates a lot of synergies. At the same time, it ensures harmonised service standards and recognition value across all the marinas. This may be appreciated by customers. A member card and discounts for the resident customers visiting another “im-jaich” marina are to further encourage choosing an “im-jaich” marina when doing trips with overnight stays. Further information can be found in the internet (www.im-jaich.de)



3.3 Step 2: Coming into the marina

3.3.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 2 / GUEST BOATERS: COMING INTO THE MARINA				
	Finding a berth	Landing and mooring in berth	Disembarking / Orientating on land	
FRONT-STAGE	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigate into the marina by boat Orientate and look for a free berth or a place for landing provisionally Land and moor in berth Use offered facilitating services Orientate in the marina and look for contact marina staff 			CUSTOMER
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of external interaction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---</p>			
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance into marina Guide customer to free berth Assist landing and mooring the boat Welcome the customers personally and give information 			MARINA OPERATOR
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of visibility</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>			
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide signage for berth occupancy Keep the occupancy information and system up-to-date Provide facilitating services for guest boaters to land and moor in berth Provide guidance and orientation for guest boaters 			
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of internal interaction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">--</p>			
OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing dedicated berths for guest boaters Displaying information for guest boaters 				

Step 2 / Guest Boaters: Coming into the marina > PROFITABILITY COMPASS						
	Finding a berth	Landing and mooring in berth	Disembarking / Orientating on land			
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers		Satisfying customers		Satisfying customers	
	Generating revenues		Generating revenues		Generating revenues	
	Optimising costs		Optimising costs		Optimising costs	
						RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.3.2 Customer actions

When coming into the marina, guest boaters have usually had a look to nautical maps and into a harbour handbook for clarifying the navigation into the port as well as the basic shape of the basin. Depending on how planned and targeted they enter a specific marina, they may also have collected further information on the marina and its services (e.g. opening hours, available services in the marina, supermarket or restaurants in the surrounding etc.) beforehand.

When entering the marina with their boat, guest boaters may:

- **Orientate in the marina** and look for a place to land. In this course they may search either for a provisional landing place or directly for a berth that is dedicated to short-term stays of guests.
- **Land and moor** at a free berth / place for the boat. If there are no vacant berths available, boaters may look for possibilities to moor rafted up next to other boats.
- Use offered **facilitating services** (e.g. ropes or fenders) for landing and mooring and / or being assisted and supported by other boaters or marina employees in this process.
- **Orientate on the pier** and look for information (e.g. signs, maps, information boards) on how to register and how to get in contact with the marina staff.

3.3.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Finding a berth

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Clear instructions** where to go and **what to do as guest boater** when arriving in the marina.
- ✓ **Clear information** where to land provisionally (e.g. waiting pier) and how to clarify the further steps with the marina employees, if handled like this in the marina.
- ✓ **Clear guidance** where and how to find the berths for guest boaters.
- ✓ **Easy and safe navigation** when steering to and into the berths for guest boaters.
- ✓ **Clear and correct information** about berth occupancy status (e.g. red-green signage at the berth).
- ✓ If having made a **reservation, clear and prompt guidance** to the reserved berth.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- 🚫 **Guiding incoming guest boaters matters** also – in some cases even primarily – **for the resident boaters**. Visitors are usually very flexible in searching for and finding a place to moor (e.g. rafted up to another boat). And they may also not have too high expectations towards guidance in this matter. But for the resident boaters, the process implies a lot of potential annoyance (e.g. finding their berth mistakenly taken by a guest when arriving back from a day trip, fear for collisions with guest searching for free berths etc.). When deciding if it is necessary to establish related rules and guidance, therefore, the operators should consider not only demands of by guests but also the probability of conflicts with the resident boaters.
- 🚫 The arrival of guest boaters may not have to be controlled and directed completely, as boaters have a strong culture of helping each other and organising themselves in such situations. It can be assumed that many marinas can well do without sophisticated guidance. Hence marina operators should **carefully consider** if own efforts are really required. This is not only determined by the number of guest boaters that can be expected. Also the profile of the visitors (one-time visitors need more guidance than frequent visitors), the general occupancy rate (a lot of vacant berths are easy to find), the degree of difficulty of orientation and navigation in the marina (may be higher in large marinas) as well as the ratio between guest and resident boater berths (guest-only marinas have no risk of conflicts between guest boaters and resident boaters) have impact on the necessity of organising the process.
- 🚫 Nevertheless, marina operators should observe the landing of their guests and **immediately react to any problems** that occur in practice. Major difficulties can make a marina less popular not only among guest boaters but also among resident customers. Adjust the displayed guiding information and its location if misleading or apparently not clearly understandable. Think even about constructional adjustments or relocating guest berths if safety and security in the marina is affected due to the difficult navigation for visitors.
- 🚫 The **specific rules** for arriving guest boaters (e.g. a designated area where they should look for a free berth or a waiting pier where they should land provisionally and contact the marina employees) should be **clearly communicated and displayed** already in the entrance of the marina. On the one hand, this is convenient for the customers. They know what is expected from them and how they can quickly find a free berth. On the other hand, it reduces the efforts for the operator. The guest boaters may need less personal guidance. The work for redirecting already moored boaters to other berths may decrease. Less “searching traffic” inside the marina enhances safety for all boats.
- 🚫 The **need for guidance** and assistance can be further **minimised by unifying** the own **handling of guest boaters with** the systems that are common in **other marinas of the boating area**. In the Baltic Sea, guest boaters are used to search for free berths on their own and to find them either in the form

of separate guest berths or indicated by reversible “red / green plates” at the berths that indicate their occupancy status.

- ✎ If there is a special **area reserved for guest boaters only**, it should be located with **easy access and navigation** from the port entrance. This alone can avoid most of possible complications and needs for assistance.
- ✎ If available berths are indicated by “**red / green plates**” alone or in addition, it is of **utmost importance to keep the information** on berth occupancy **correct and up to date**. If berths are indicated as vacant by mistake and thus occupied by guests, it will for sure annoy residents. If berths are indicated as occupied by mistake, this will block (additional) capacities for guests and thus potential further incomes for the operator.

🔴 Landing and mooring in berth

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Smooth and stress-free landing and mooring**, either provisionally or for the entire stay.
- ✓ **Quick support** and help by the marina employees, if required.
- ✓ **Calm and friendly guidance** in case the place for landing was inappropriate.
- ✓ Finding a **berth in appropriate** size, good shape, well-sheltered from wind and waves, not too far from marina services and facilities.
- ✓ **Assisting infrastructure** like supporting ropes or fenders offered in the marina.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✎ Guest boaters are used to moor and land independently. If necessary, fellow boaters are used to provide help. Hence guests do **neither need nor expect** any **support** by the marina staff when they moor and land under **normal conditions**. Also supporting infrastructure provided by the marina (e.g. ropes or fenders) is regarded rather as “nice to have” and not as a must.
- ✎ **Unrequested assistance** in the process of landing and mooring **can even lead to irritations** on the side of the guest boaters. Many boaters perceive accepting from marina employees as confession for weak boating skills and getting help without asking for it as distrust or patronising by the operator. The marina staff, therefore, should carefully consider if and how help is offered case-by-case in response to reactions of the boaters when doing so. Some boaters (e.g. inexperienced charterer, seniors) might be more open to accept help. Also in difficult weather conditions it is appreciated.
- ✎ In case concrete problems occur and **marina staff is nearby**, however, **assistance is expected**. Ignoring difficulties or leaving it in such situation to other boaters to provide help to the incoming guest may be perceived as insufficient service. Staff should therefore be advised to be helpful.
- ✎ The **assistance during landing** may be only a small detail among expected services. But the way it is performed can still be very **important** for the **impression** that customers get (and keep) from the marina. In many cases, it is the **first personal contact** between guest boaters and marina staff. What makes it even more delicate is that it is quite often connected to some kind of difficulties or trouble-shooting (e.g. redirecting the boat to another berth, preventing damage to other boats etc.). It is therefore of utmost importance that the marina staff **the customers with patience and friendly** and **avoid any impression of patronising** – whatever problems occurs. Such behaviour of the staff can add a lot to a good reputation – as it is quite far away from being standard, unfortunately.
- ✎ Helping all guest boaters while landing mooring **can nevertheless be a service asset** and even **contribute to efficiency**, under certain circumstances. Prerequisite is that it is effectively connected to other steps of the service chain of the marina (e.g. welcoming and guiding them, re-directing them to

an adequate berth right away, charging their harbour dues, etc.). When being clearly recognisable as a common routine, it may also lose much of its potential to be perceived as patronising.

➔ Disembarking / Orientating on land

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Proper guidance** (signage, maps etc.) for orientating and getting an overview on the marina.
- ✓ **Easily and safely finding the way** to marina employees / marina office.
- ✓ Clear **information on registration requirements and routines** (e.g. expected time of registration, opening hours of marina office, availability of / ways to get in touch with marina staff otherwise)
- ✓ **Information** on / signs to **basic marina services** that matter when landing (e.g. toilets, washrooms)
- ✓ **Information** about the marina **surroundings**, e.g. how to get to the next city or restaurant.
- ✓ When arriving **outside service hours**: Instructions on **what to do**, being able to **get on land** and **use services** without prior contact to marina staff.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ It should be a basic interest of the marina operators to **avoid irritation and annoyance** among guest boaters who visit the marina for the first time – and who are thus on the way to become new customers. **Collecting comments** and complaints of first time visitors can be an easy but effective tool for **optimising the marina** with this regard.
- ✗ Operators should to **be pragmatic** concerning **guidance systems and signposting**. The necessity for them can differ a lot and the means should be adapted to the concrete situation on the spot. A small marina with a very clear structure and one central building for marina office, sanitary facilities etc. need much less guidance than a big marina that is big and has several potentially places for getting in contact with the marina employees or to find the washrooms.
- ✗ The guest boaters receive most of the information and explanations they need when registering personally. Displaying **general information** (e.g. on maps, info boards) may therefore **focus on matters** that can be relevant **before** having **contact with marina staff** (e.g. way to marina office and sanitary facilities). Also issues that need **explanations repeatedly** (e.g. explanations on access mechanisms) or information that is requested **in a hurry** (e.g. emergency numbers) may best be provided in this way.
- ✗ **Visitors** arriving **outside the normal service hours** of the marina office can be quite frequent. They may need **further and special treatment**. Information boards in central locations or close to the (guest) piers can provide special instructions for them, e.g. regarding how to register in this case, phone numbers to contact marina staff (if 24/7 service is existing) or sanitary facilities that are accessible all night and without keys. In case piers are locked with gates, also mechanisms that enable them to go on land would have to be found (e.g. provisional mooring places without gates, possibility to unlock the gates from the pier side).
- ✗ Keep in mind that guest boaters might not only need **guidance** to find the marina office and facilities, but also **for the way back to their pier and berth**. This can be achieved e.g. through consecutively numbering or naming the piers and clearly displaying these numbers or letters. However, these problems may be applicable only for larger marinas.
- ✗ Many guest boaters may not visit the marina itself, but first of all the **surrounding and specific spots nearby**. They can therefore feel much more welcome and well-treated if such information needs are explicitly considered and met. If the marina is close to a city, the operator could e.g. provide some explanations or maps pointing out what could be explored in walking distance.

3.3.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Providing dedicated berths for guest boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✂️ **Guest boaters are only an extra income** for most marinas, whereas the resident boaters are the core business. The provision of guest berths should therefore always **be seen in connection to** – positive and negative – implications for serving **the resident boaters**.
- ✂️ Most of the marinas generate most and more stable revenues with resident boaters. This implies to **consider carefully how many berths should be dedicated to guest boaters**. Finding the optimum relation between residents and guest requires usually some years of trial and error.
- ✂️ An **optimum level of revenues** would be achieved when renting berths of resident boaters berths out to guest boaters whenever they are absent. But even if such complete occupancy may be possible in terms of the demand, it may **not necessarily be the most efficient way of renting out berths** as the efforts for management berth provision in such way would be considerable.
- ✂️ Main considerations when designing and organising berth provision for guest boaters are, therefore: (1) **Guest boaters should easily find and reach a berth** without much inconvenient searching. (2) **Resident boaters** are to be **disturbed as little as possible** through chaotic navigation and busy “coming and going” of guest boaters. (3) The **effort** for control and management for the **operator** should be **kept to a minimum**. (4) The marina should be able to accommodate **as many guests as possible**. (5) But **capacities for hosting resident boaters** should still be **kept at a maximum, too**.
- ✂️ **Not all marinas may require dedicated berths** and sophisticated routines **to handle guest boaters**. Especially if a marina is not (yet) well occupied or guests are a rare case, it may be sufficient to deal with them individually or to leave the issue to the self-organisation of boaters within the marina.
- ✂️ **Dedication of guest berths** is often **started** when the self-organisation of boaters in the marina does not work properly (anymore). Justified and frequent **complaints** from resident boaters **about guest boaters who blocked their berth** should be taken as clear signs for the operator that interference and management are necessary.
- ✂️ Many marinas dedicate and **reserve certain berths, piers and areas for guest boaters only**. This applies for small marinas that are (almost) fully booked by residents as well as for big marinas with many vacant berths and a high rate of visitors. The main advantage of this solution is that strict and clear designation enables guest boaters to moor in the marina without much guidance and control. This keeps efforts for the operator at a minimum. The disadvantage, however, is that such berths for visitors cannot be rented out to resident boaters anymore. Defining the number of guest-only berths carefully is therefore imperative when choosing this option.
- ✂️ If such **dedicated guest-only areas** are provided, they should **preferably be located close to the port entrance**. Thus, the disturbance of resident boaters and risks for accidents can be further decreased. Furthermore, this gives the marina operators the opportunity to keep the especially remunerative berths that are closer to land and marina facilities for their resident boaters.
- ✂️ Some marina operators **assign each incoming guest boater individually to a specific berth** upon arrival. This solution is quite usual and can be efficient in small marinas. For larger ones, however, it may only make sense, if the operators anyhow maintain a rather complex (electronic) occupancy system and do exactly know the occupancy status of each berth. Large marinas applying this procedure have usually dedicated provisional **landing places for guest boaters at the port entrance**, where they have to get in contact the marina staff over the phone for being assigned to a berth.
- ✂️ A system that can often be found in the Baltic Sea is the use of **red / green plates displaying the occupancy status for each single (resident) berth** (green > vacant and available for guest boaters,

red > occupied). It can either replace or extend the dedicated areas for guest boaters. The main advantage for the operators thereby lays in the potential double income gained from each berth. Also guidance efforts are low as the guest boaters are able to look for and find a free (green) berth on their own. Disadvantages are that searching guest boaters may cause a lot of traffic in the marina and keeping the system up-to-date requires a lot of work and attention. It may therefore be considered mainly by marinas with high occupancy rates and considerable numbers of guest boaters.

- ✎ Whatever option marina operators chose for providing and dedicating berths to guest boaters, they need to remain **flexible to adapt to the wishes, complaints and expectations of their customers**. Avoiding inconvenience and complications with and between resident and guest boaters is most important. Rules that have to be communicated clearly to and to be known by all involved parties.

👉 Displaying information for guest boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- ✎ The **information** that **guest boaters** need overlaps in great parts with information to be provided for the **resident boaters**. **Displays and boards**, therefore, may be designed and placed in a way that they can **serve both groups**. This saves efforts and costs for both creating and maintaining them.
- ✎ **Displaying information** is a **central aspect** when it comes to serving customers and **making the marina an attractive and interesting** place. Presenting it in an appealing way and proper design can positively influence the atmosphere of the marina and the impression guest boaters get from it. Most important, however, is still to ensure that the information is correct and up to date and that the used symbols, maps or signposts are clear, universal and easy to understand.
- ✎ Guest boaters usually perceive the **marina as part of bigger or smaller touristic destination** that is connected to its surroundings. The operators should comply with this perspective to see the marina as “window” or “entrance” to a destination or spot nearby. Besides advertising the marina itself (e.g. provided range of services, certificates and service standards) and “selling” the own services of the marina, therefore, also the touristic attractions of the surroundings should be advertised and displayed in an appealing way.
- ✎ Not only the contents but also the **locations where specific information can be found** are of central importance. Guest boaters expect to find the most relevant information like a map, contacts information, emergency numbers or opening hours (and very important: what to do and how to get access when arriving outside the opening hours) at central spots in the marina that can be reached without any access tools and that they often pass by. They may appreciate to find additional information like the latest weather reports, the navigation in the surrounding waters or about a map of the landsite surroundings on such public message boards outside the marina office, too. More detailed and specific information (e.g. information about services in and around the marina, leaflets on touristic attractions nearby, marina regulations, environmental requirements), however, may well be presented inside the marina office only.
- ✎ It can make sense to have a **corporate and consistent design concept** that is used throughout all communication channels (e.g. signposting, information boards, website, logo, advertisement etc.). But such sophisticated approach has to match the marina “spirit” and expectations of customer. Very “fancy” design in an otherwise not well-kept or “down-to-earth” marina might be as inappropriate as neglected information boards in an otherwise well-maintained marina. Design can also become old-fashioned over the years and negatively influence the appearance of the marina also in this way. Fancy design, therefore, means also continuing efforts and costs that need to be considered.
- ✎ Marina operators should try to **learn from the feedback** they get from their customers where to place which information and flexibly adjust it step-by-step to their needs and expectations.

3.3.5 Practices and tips

Examples: Information and guiding systems for guest boaters

The effort that operators put into providing information for guest boaters and guiding them mainly depends on the size, structure and management approach of the marina:

- ▶ **Personal welcoming** of arriving guest boaters partly replaces “passive” guiding systems, as employees can answer customer questions and help with orientation. But also in these cases some signposting is provided, e.g. for customers arriving outside the service hours.
- ▶ **Information** about how to find and contact marina staff **outside the service and opening hours** is generally provided.
- ▶ Marinas with a lot of **foreign guests** pay generally attention to making their guiding system comprehensible also for them. This is done either through using self-explaining graphic symbols and / or providing multi-lingual information.
- ▶ Some operators use the guidance and signage to actively implement a **corporate design concept** (e.g. through colours on signs).
- ▶ Most of the marina operators try to use **synergies** between the information and guidance provided for guest boaters, resident boaters and other visitors of the marina. They use central information spots / boards to inform all of them collectively.
- ▶ Some larger marinas (e.g. Heiligenhafen, Kröslin), however, have established **specific “contact-point” only for arriving guest boaters**, where they can get in contact with marina employees, register or pay the harbour dues. These are sheds or smaller buildings that are located very centrally and easily accessible from the piers, separate from the main marina office. Arriving guest boaters get clear information on the existence and location of this “first place to go” as well as their opening hours.



Signpost in Jachthaven Waterland in Monnickendam (Netherlands)







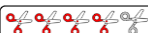
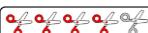



Overview plan / map in the marina in Kröslin.

3.4 Step 3: Registration in the marina / Renting short-term berth

3.4.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 3 / GUEST BOATERS: REGISTRATION IN MARINA / RENTING SHORT-TERM BERTH				
	Clarifying scope and terms of stay	Payment	Providing access to relevant marina facilities	
FRONT-STAGE	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform operator about location of berth and technicalities Obtain information about conditions of stay, services in and around the marina Pay harbour dues for berth Obtain the permission to stay / a receipt for payment Obtain access to the marina and its services 			CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
FRONT-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check availability of chosen berth and relocate boat if necessary Inform about scope and terms in the marina, available services in the marina / the surroundings and organisational details Take the money paid for staying in the marina Make out a receipt Issue permission to stay Mark boats having paid Provide access to the marina and the services 			MARINA OPERATOR
	----- Line of visibility -----			
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold information material available and keep it up-to-date Manage the availability of employees / service hours Calculate the price for the berth Provide payment methods for guest boaters Register the customer Manage access provision to marina and services for guest boaters 			MARINA OPERATOR
	----- Line of internal interaction -----			
SUPPORT-ING PRO-CESSSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate and competitive pricing for guest boaters 			MARINA OPERATOR

Step 3 / Guest Boaters: Registration in marina / Renting short-term berth > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Clarifying scope and terms of stay	Payment	Providing access to relevant marina facilities	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	
	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.4.2 Customer actions

One of the first actions after having landed and moored guest boaters will want to contact the marina employees and clarify the scope and terms of their stay. Usually the first direct contact between guest boaters and marina employees will take place when the boaters come to the marina office which they are obliged to do. Here the marina employees / harbour master welcomes the guest boaters, registers them and deals with financial and contractual issues. The look and design of marina office can, depending on the size and service approach of the marina, be anything from a complete customer reception to a simple room with a desk.

During the direct contact with the marina employee the guest boaters may:

- Provide the marina employees with the relevant information (e.g. berth location, boat size, length of stay) to calculate the **guest boaters' harbour dues**. One of the unique characteristics of the marina business (e.g. in comparison to the hotel business) is that the guest boaters usually firstly find and land in a berth on their own and only secondly inform the marina operator about where exactly in the marina they have moored.
- Be informed about the financial conditions for their stay and about the usage regulations **of basic services** like water and electricity on the pier. Also the terms of usage / prices for **pay-per-use services** like showers, petrol station, Wi-Fi access or the available **amenities beyond boating** like restaurant and shops in the marina and touristic attractions in the marina surroundings will be clarified.
- **Pay the harbour dues** for their stay and the required services. In response receive a receipt for the payment and the **permission to stay** in the marina.
- Obtain **access to marina** and buildings by receiving, depending on how this is organised in the specific marina, keys, key cards or the like. Often the guest boaters have to pay a deposit to receive these.

3.4.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

🔴 Clarifying scope and terms of stay

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Find the marina office **manned in the displayed times**.
- ✓ When the marina office is closed **find information about when it will be opened again** and what to do in case of a late arrival.
- ✓ **Clear and comprehensive information** about scope and terms for staying in the marina as guest boater. This includes the information about the amount of money / harbour dues that has to be paid and how the services like water, electricity or Wi-Fi are charged and if they are included into the harbour dues or not.
- ✓ Comprehensive and up-to-date **information about services and infrastructure** from a bread delivery service, the latest weather forecast, restaurants or supermarkets in the marina to touristic attractions in the surroundings.
- ✓ A level of **friendliness and professionalism** from the marina employees that matches the guest boaters' expectations and comfort.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ Guest boaters will in most cases stay in the marina only for one night. As the dues for staying in the marina are fixed (depending mainly on boat / berth size and time of the year) the marina employees' effort should **concentrate on generally serving the customer well** through e.g. competently and quickly dealing with customer inquiries so that they will visit the marina again and spread their positive impression among other boaters. Also the marina employee should try to make additional income and to promote and sell the services in the marina that have to be paid extra. A **good service quality** and customer satisfaction becomes double important as the customers who did not feel comfortable in the marina will talk about his experiences and possibly scare off other boaters.
- ✗ Generally the marina employees should be **sensible for customer demands** and what exactly the individual customer sees as a good service. As boaters can be both, very talkative and very close-lipped, it is important for the marina employees to be prepared and trained well for different scenarios and forms of interaction.
- ✗ When the guest boaters came to the marina office and are already in direct contact with the marina operators they will usually stay in the marina and pay the harbour dues. Guest boaters who leave the marina after they already have landed and moored are hardly seen. Even if they are not satisfied or think the marina is too expensive they will usually stay for one night, leave the next day, take their negative impressions with them and spread them among other boaters. For the operators this means again to focus on serving the customer and aim in making him a returning and regular guest boater.
- ✗ Also aspects like the **shape and appearance** of the marina, the marina office (with the displayed information material) and the employees can positively or negatively influence the guest boaters opinion of the marina and should be optimised by the operator.
- ✗ At this point the effort that has been put into an **occupancy system will pay off** as boats that have been mistakenly moored in the wrong berth due to a badly managed berth occupancy will lead to extra work and discomfort for boaters and employees. The operator has to decide whether such a system makes sense for his marina as it requires a lot of effort to maintain it. Especially in bigger marinas an electronic system can provide structure and will pay off. In most marinas a traditional paper based or mixed system with a map providing the most important information at a glance will be efficient enough.

- ✘ The **opening and service hours** of the marina office is another aspect through which the marina operator can raise the efficiency. At which times employees are available for the customers in the office or how they can otherwise be reached has to be planned and managed regarding to the marina size, the operational concept, the number of guest boaters coming to the marina, the time of the season etc. The operators have to find their balance between financial effort for personal costs and the customers' needs for a manned office.
- ✘ The opening hours and contact possibilities have to be **clearly communicated and displayed** at the marina office door, at other spots in the marina and on the marina website. A manned marina office has to be guaranteed at the displayed times as the guest boaters will rely on them.

Payment

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Quick handling of payment process** with a minimum of payment transactions and ways / contact to the marina office.
- ✓ Not being surprised by exorbitant high prices, especially in comparison with the neighbouring marinas in the same boating area.
- ✓ Being able to use the **payment methods** the guest boater wants to use. This can be cash, visa-card etc. and also flexible and customer friendly dealing with common foreign currencies.
- ✓ **Friendly and competent contact employees** who can answer all possible questions.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ Important for the marina operators and the operational efficiency is first of all to **ensure that all guest boaters pay their harbour dues** and that bilking and cheating is limited to a minimum. Closely linked to this is efficient organisation and keeping overview of which guest boaters have already paid their harbour dues. Generally it is the easiest and necessary to provide and communicate clear and transparent rules concerning the payment dates and times.
- ✘ As the **payment process** is usually the occasion with the **most intensive contact** between marina employees and guest boaters, customer satisfaction and service quality should be central. The opinion guest boaters form about a marina and communicate to other boaters also depends on the smooth processing in the marina office and friendly and competent personnel.
- ✘ By using an **accounting and administration system** (e.g. accounting berth location, boat size and name, length of stay, customer name and address) the marina operators can make the payment process more efficient for their employees and for their customers. Whether setting up an accounting system and customer database makes sense at all and if it should be electronic or paper based depends on the marina size, the number of boaters and the effort that has to be expected concerning the changeover from the current system. The marina operators have to consider how to ensure the security of the customer data.
- ✘ **For the marina employees** the automatically set up customer database will simplify the registration when visiting the marina for the second time, as the relevant data is already in the system. Also long term effects when looking at guest boater data will become visible. Furthermore the information about the **payment status** of single customers and the harbour dues and extra services that have been paid can directly be integrated into a **financial management system**. Other advantages lie in the **synergies** for guest and resident boater management.
- ✘ For the guest boaters it is relevant to find the common **payment methods** provided in the marina. Guest boaters will usually pay cash and in their national currency. The possibility to pay by credit or cash card has become more important. If provided the marina operators have to calculate with service

costs from the credit card companies for each booking. If necessary, the operator should also provide solutions for foreign guest boaters who want to pay cash in their national currency and who have no credit card.

- ✘ Another aspect that has to be organised internally when dealing with the payment process is the **auditing of the financial accounting** and the honesty of the employees cashing the money. Any misuse and suspicion of personal advantage has to be strictly prosecuted by the operators.

🔴 Providing access to the marina

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ Generally smoothly and **problem-free access to boat and pier** when gated. Also when arriving outside the opening hours.
- ✓ Finding a self-explaining, **technically functioning** and properly maintained systems (e.g. keys, key-cards, pin-numbers) for access provision provided.
- ✓ **Easy access to washrooms** and other relevant buildings / facilities at any time.
- ✓ **Easy access to all further services** the guest boaters have paid for and want to enter and use.
- ✓ Knowing that the boat and all the belongings on the boat **are safe** and that only authorised persons have access to the marina, the piers and the facilities.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ Above all the provided access system (e.g. keys, key-cards, pin-numbers) has to be **functional**. Thereby easy access is more important for the customers than the latest technical approaches. A **robust, durable and adaptable** (to possible changes in the access provision system) access technique will reduce maintenance efforts.
- ✘ When deciding for an access system, marina operators should ensure that it is integrated and flexibly usable and **for guest and resident boaters** at the same time.
- ✘ The marina operators have to find a good **balance between safety and effort** for their access system. Avoiding access for unauthorised persons is especially important in bigger marinas or in marinas with many visitors from landside as it is impossible for the operators to directly control and keep overview about who is in the marina and on the piers. Important in this case is to ensure safety (which is often related to the individual impression of the customers especially during the night), by not letting the financial and organisational effort for installation and maintenance of the access systems becoming too big.
- ✘ The access systems should be **easy to use** for marina employees and customers.
- ✘ For the guest boaters it also is important to **get back the deposit** they possibly had to pay for receiving e.g. keys or key-cards. The marina operators have to find and communicate clear and transparent procedures how and when this is ensured.

3.4.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Adequate and competitive pricing for guest boaters

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ Naturally guest boater visits have a **peak in the short summer season**. In the Baltic Sea these are mainly the months July and August but also public holidays, weekends in summer or bigger boating events can be seen as local / regional peaks concerning visiting guest boaters. Due to this very short period of time an adequate and competitive pricing is in any case important for marina operators.
- 🗑️ Resident boaters are usually the main business and source of income for most marina operators. Nevertheless **guest boaters are an important source of income** that is included in the overall calculations, even though their seasonal appearance makes the generated income less predictable and reliable than from resident boaters. Up to a certain threshold / level (depending on the marina capacities and the number of guest boaters) the marina operators can create additional income from guest boaters without much effort, as the marina employees are able to handle the work load. When the guest boaters become economically more important for a marina and their handling causes additional effort or hiring additional employees for the season the operators have to pay more attention in optimising and calculating their prices for guest boaters.
- 🗑️ The importance of guest boaters for the income of a marina is very site specific and related to its general attractiveness for guest boaters. When it comes to the calculation of harbour dues for guest boaters the marina operators have to **orientate on the prices in the neighbouring marinas**. This market orientation will also secure to not make the prices too cheap and not too expensive as boaters are very price sensitive. Marina operators should have good reasons to increase prices and be more expensive than the neighbours and increase the prices only carefully.
- 🗑️ Guest boaters **will accept higher prices for a marina in an attractive location** even if the service standard is relatively low. Marina operators should optimise and adjust their prices related to their attractiveness for guest boaters which can mean that the marina has a good accessibility from water side or strategic location within the boating area. Also it can mean that the marina itself is a place guest boaters want to visit because of its beauty, attractive surroundings (e.g. in city or nature) or good reputation.
- 🗑️ The **concrete calculation of the harbour dues** for guest boaters will be mainly based on the size of the boat and on the length of the stay. Furthermore the average running costs marina operators have for the **guest boater consumption** of e.g. water and energy and also a share for the operation and maintenance of the marina will influence the price. Other aspects are the time of the boating season (more expensive in the busy month) and the location of the used berth in the marina (more and less expensive areas). On top of this amount, summing up to the guest boater harbour dues, the marina operators will include the planned revenues.
- 🗑️ The **basic services** for guest boaters like water, electricity and washrooms **are usually included** in the harbour dues accounted with an amount that covers the operators' expenses and adds further revenues. Other services like showers or bread delivery service and the amenities beyond boating have to be paid extra. As the margins in the basic services are small usually the pay-per-use services and the amenities beyond boating have better potentials for increasing profitability.

3.4.5 Practices and tips

Examples: Opening hours of the marina office

- ▶ An example for concrete opening and service hours can be found in a checklist provided by the “International Marine Certification Institute” (IMCI) that includes indicators for the opening hours of a marina during the boating season:
 - generally naming contact persons (1 Star)
 - availability 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon (3 Stars)
 - availability 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon (4 Stars)
 - availability from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. plus 24 hours emergency service (5 Stars / maximum)
- ▶ Basic and frame setting for the organisation of opening hours is firstly the seasonal aspect as a marina office has to be manned longer in the busy summer seasons than in winter. For guest boaters the marina office it is most important during the main boating and holiday months (July and August). Resident boaters also need a lot of support and assistance at the beginning (March and April) and end (October and November) of the season, causing peaks in labour effort e.g. to get the boats in and out of the water.
- ▶ In most marinas the customers will find the opening hours displayed at the office door and at the most important spots in the marina. When the employees had to leave the office during the opening hours usually an “out of office” note and the time when they will be back or their telephone number are displayed. Anyhow the harbourmasters today usually can be contacted via mobile phone. Most marinas have set an answering machine in place, for the times the office and the telephone are unoccupied. Displaying a contact email-address, telephone number and the office opening hours on the homepage today is a standard service.
- ▶ In the “im-jaich” marina in Gustow a flexible form of organising the marina office opening hours has been found. The full time marina employee also operates the marina bar / restaurant in the evening and can therefore deal with issues like handing out shower coins to the boaters etc.
- ▶ Often marinas have security personnel working in the evenings and nights in the marinas. The marina in Kröslin found synergies here by providing fixed service times in the evening in which the security personnel is available in the office to cash harbour dues, hand out keys or shower coins.
- ▶ The marina in Heiligenhafen sets high priority in communicating its 24 / 7 available phone number that customers can call any time with any request. The responsibility for this service is shared among the marina employees. The employees are trained to be service orientated and customer friendly. In summer season it is used frequently and highly appreciated from customers. Due to the size of the marina (~1000 berths) the operator sees it as efficient way to serve his customers and as possibility to offer an extra service that makes a difference even though it costs a lot of effort.
- ▶ In many smaller marinas, especially on smaller islands in Denmark, a **machine (“electronic / automatic harbourmaster”)** provides the basic services to the customers like harbour due payment or handing out shower coins. The opinions of other marina operators were very controversial concerning the instalment of such machines in marinas. Some saw it as efficient and positive way to provide services for 24 hours, others saw it as negative and too impersonal.








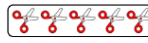



The phone number in Heiligenhafen is displayed at every pier.

3.5 Step 4: Using services in marina

3.5.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 4 / GUEST BOATERS: USING SERVICES IN MARINA				
	Basic services included in the harbour dues	Pay-per-use services	Amenities (also beyond boating)	
FRONT-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use basic services in the marina included in the harbour dues 	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain information about pay-per-use guest boater services & boat related services provided Pay for services Use services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain information about amenities, also those beyond boating Pay service provider for amenities Use amenities 	CUSTOMER
	----- Line of external interaction -----			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to basic services 	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about pay-per-use guest boater services and boat related services Provide access to services offered in the marina Take the money paid for using services Establish contact to external service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about amenities in the marina, also those beyond boating Provide access to amenities offered by the marina Take the money paid for amenities Establish contact to external providers of amenities 	MARINA OPERATOR
----- Line of visibility -----				
BACK-STAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calculate prices for basic services 	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep information about own and external services up-to-date Calculate prices for pay-per-use services offered in the marina Ensure proper maintenance and quality of own and external services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep information about own and external amenities up-to-date Calculate prices amenities offered in the marina Ensure proper maintenance and quality of own and external amenities 	
----- Line of internal interaction -----				
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailoring services for certain target groups 			

Step 4 / Guest Boaters: Using services in marina > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Basic services included in the harbour dues	Pay-per-use services	Amenities (also beyond boating)	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	
	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.5.2 Customer actions

From the perspective of the guest boater, the services used in a marina can be divided into three groups with reference to terms of use and payment conditions defined by the operator:

- **Basic services** can be used free of charge by guest boaters once they are registered. Their provision by the marina operator is included in guest boater harbour dues. They are essential for guest boaters during their stay and taken for granted when coming to a marina. Examples are toilets, washrooms or playgrounds for children.
- **Pay-per-use services** are usually also provided by the operator but accounted separately. Boaters have to pay extra for using them. They can be either boater-related (e.g. WIFI-access) or boat-related (e.g. bilge pump) and are directly related to staying with the boat in the marina. Some of them are “must haves” and / or used frequently (e.g. showers). Some of them rather “nice to have” and / or used rather episodically (e.g. bread delivery service in the morning, repair services).
- **Amenities** are further services that may not be directly connected to staying with the boat in the marina and that may go beyond “pure” boating. They have to be paid extra, too. Most of them are general services that make leisure time more pleasant (e.g. restaurant, library, sauna). Others are provided in or around marinas because they more or less loosely connecting to the stay of guest boaters (e.g. baggage transport, bike rental). These services may be offered and operated by the marina operator or by external and specialised providers.

The list does not claim to be complete or generally valid but gives an overview and orientation on which services for guest boaters are usually assigned to each of these categories:

SERVICES FOR GUEST BOATERS			
Basic services (usually free of charge / included in guest boater harbour dues)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity at the berth • Drinking / fresh water at the berth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets / washrooms • Washing-up area • Children’s playground • Place for barbecue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information displayed in marina / marina office (e.g. weather forecast) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbourmaster / marina office • Infrastructure supporting landing and mooring
Pay-per-use services (are usually accounted separately and to be paid extra)			
Services for the guest boaters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showers • Washing machine • Laundry dryer • Wi-Fi access • Supermarket • Shops • Kiosk 		Services for the boats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petrol station • Repair service (e.g. motor, sail) • Oil / bilge pump • Septic dump • Waste management / recycling • Crane / travel lift • Slipway • Boat cleaning site • High pressure cleaner • Winter storage 	
Amenities also beyond boating (offered and operated directly by the marina operators or by external providers)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yachting school • Fishing • Water sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread and bakery service • Bar • Restaurant • Catering • Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting room • Library • Public internet access • Bicycle / car rental • Boxes for locking equipment • Shuttle service • Parking • Baggage transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Camp site • Trailer spaces • Sauna / wellness • Beach access / sunbathing area • Swimming pool

3.5.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

Basic services included in the harbour dues

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Having access to the basic services** that are provided in the marina whenever needed.
- ✓ That **service provision, accounting, payment** are **done as usual** in the boating area.
- ✓ **No surprises with handling** the infrastructure **or** with the charged **prices**.
- ✓ **Well-functioning and well-maintained** facilities and **adequate capacities**.
- ✓ **Using** the services **without being bothered with details**, with easy-to-use access tools and general information provided by the operator without asking for it.
- ✓ **Transparent information and accounting** of services that have limitations with regard to using them (e.g. amounts for consumption of electricity or water).

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ **Care first and most of all about the basic services for guest boaters:** They relate to essential needs and expectations of customers. Operators should therefore first of all make sure that the basic services are provided in a good quality and concentrate on this issue before starting other projects. But that should not keep the marina operator off from finding the best mix of “must have” and “nice to have” services and trying out new things that generate further revenues or enhance service quality.
- ✗ Marina operators are well advised to **carefully look after both the scope and the quality of provided basic services**. Those should be permanently checked against wishes and demands of guest boaters. Boaters expect certain basic services to be provided in the marina. But decisive impression of the marina will be the service quality. Shortcomings in quality of services may make a worse impression than not providing them at all. “Bad news” with regard to the provision of basic services spread fast within the boater community and deteriorate the reputation of the marina.
- ✗ **Making use of synergies:** The basic services used by the guest boaters are usually based on infrastructures and services that are provided for resident boaters and that are therefore available in the marina anyhow. This usually keeps the investments and extra costs for creating guest boaters services relatively low. **Incomes are well invested** when being used by the operator **for proper maintenance** of the basic services.
- ✗ **Proper capacity planning:** The operator has to hold available e.g. sufficient number connections for electricity or washbasins. Overcrowded facilities that are paid for with the harbour dues are always perceived as bad service quality. Capacities may be oriented on the peaks of guest boater arrivals in July and August.
- ✗ **Implement a clear and transparent tariff system that enables to cover costs and generate revenues:** The accounting and pricing system should be comprehensible for the guest boaters and easily applicable by the marina employees. Difficult calculations instead of general or all-inclusive tariffs would unnecessarily complicate this issue.
- ✗ Make sure that fees are high enough to cover costs related to basic services and to create surplus from harbour dues of guest boaters. The **price calculation for guest boaters should consider all costs** of water and energy consumption as well as personnel efforts for basic services that are free of further charged. On top of that costs for operating and maintaining the marina infrastructure are to be included. The goal may be that the operator makes a plus with each incoming guest boater.
- ✗ It is quite **common that water and electricity consumption are included in the harbour dues** for guest boaters marinas but **not a must**. Accounting and charging the consumption of electricity or water on a per-use basis is a serious alternative. It will make the boaters feel responsible for their behaviour

and thus reduce the total costs and costs per guest of the marina for electricity and water. The savings may be used for reducing port fees or providing “nice to have” with the harbour dues that can form a competitive advantage.

➔ Pay-per-use services

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ That “**must have**” **services** not included in the harbour **dues** are provided with as little additional efforts for accessing them and paying for them.
- ✓ An **appealing** scope and mix of “**nice to have services**”.
- ✓ **Clear, understandable and comprehensible information** about the available pay-per-use services including the prices and accounting modalities.
- ✓ **Efficient** organisation of **access and payment**.
- ✓ **Immediately access** and flexible **use on demand** after having paid for them.
- ✓ **Well-maintained** and clean facilities and services.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ Marina operators have to **decide which services should be provided** for guest boaters on a **pay-per-use basis**. When looking at the efficiency and profitability of the marina those should be either
 - **essential elements** of the service provision but better provided on a pay-per-use basis in order to keep consumptions and costs at a minimum (e.g. showers, nowadays also WIFI).
 - **profitable in themselves** (e.g. repair services),
 - **important to attract guest boaters** to the marina so that the incomes from other services and the marina as a whole are increased (e.g. petrol station),
 - **held available for resident boaters anyway** so that the extra costs and effort to provide them also for the guest boaters is low (e.g. WIFI access, supermarket).
- ✘ Marina operators have to ensure that the pay-per-use services they provide for guest boaters are **clean, in proper shape and well-maintained**. Providing pay-per-use services is a good chance to attract guest boaters. But it is the quality of the service provision that can make a difference and create most positive communication about the marina.
- ✘ Many marina operators see the pay-per-use services as part of their business that should create some income. Direct incomes are often not big and regarded satisfying as long as the expenses are covered. More important is the creation of a **nice and attractive atmosphere** in the marina that can create further customers. Some operators even provide services for their guest boaters that create financial losses when they add a lot to provide an attractive marina (e.g. kiosk). They calculate with growing income through increasing number of guest boaters in the long run.
- ✘ All processes related to the provision of pay-per-use services should be organised efficiently as they can be considerable cost factors. This applies for the **payment** as well as for personal information provide by marina staff or the **information material** that is kept available.
- ✘ This implies also to decide **how the service provision is organised**. For some of the pay-per-use guest boater services it might not make sense for the operator to provide them with own staff and directly in the marina in any case. This applies for example external boat repair services are already located in the marina surroundings. Relying on and cooperating with specialised service providers can not only simplify operations and reduce costs, but also increase the service quality.
- ✘ When **cooperating with external service providers** the marina operators can find ways to create extra income for them (e.g. through renting areas / buildings in the marina for their service provision or charging a share of income / revenues from the external service providers). It should also be easy

for the customers to find and use the external services. Guidance and information provided by the marina staff and handing over the boaters may contribute to this.

➔ Amenities (also beyond boating)

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Concrete and comprehensive information** about available amenities on information boards, on the website, in information brochures and / or in the marina office, including prices.
- ✓ **High service quality** from the marina operator or the external provider.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✗ The amenities have usually only minor significance concerning the decision of guest boaters to visit a specific marina. Nevertheless they are an important part of the “service portfolio / touristic attractiveness” of a marina. They can make a difference once the boaters have arrived as they may **strongly affect the atmosphere in a marina** (e.g. public beach access or bars).
- ✗ Service quality is even more important and in the focus of the customers in terms of amenities. The basic requirement is that they **are clean, in proper shape and well-maintained**. But what can make a difference and create most positive communication about the marina is if they are special, unique and fancy.
- ✗ The marina operators should **consider carefully how much efforts** they want to put into amenities that are only loosely connected to boating and far from being essentials (e.g. restaurant, bread delivery service). They are not directly related to the core business and may create considerable additional efforts and costs, therefore also be risky. Offering them means for the operators to consider how large and complex their business should get and if diversification is really desired.
- ✗ Their **profitability in themselves** can be the **criteria of selecting amenities beyond boaters** that are offered. In this case, combined revenue potentials from guest boaters as well as from resident boaters and other visitors should be taken into account. Outsourcing and provision by external service providers or cooperating with specialised companies or the municipality in their provision is a common way to optimise costs and reduce operating risks.
- ✗ But also indirect effects by making a marina more attractive may be taken into account and a proper motivation to offer amenities. Similar to pay-per-use services, even the provision of unprofitable services (e.g. restaurants) can make sense, if they add value to the service portfolio, the atmosphere in the marina and attract further guest boaters to the marina or make them return with pleasure.
- ✗ Amenities beyond boating **can even have higher turnovers than the core business and become a very important source of income** for marina operators (e.g. hotels). They may also be used to extend the season further into the winter month where there is otherwise little income.

3.5.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Tailoring services to specific target groups

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ Marina operators should try to **satisfy all frequent customer groups** with the services they provide, although they may have differing and sometimes even contradicting expectations.
- 🗑️ For efficiently planning and designing the services towards key target groups it is indispensable to **know the customer structure** of the own marina and **specific expectations**. Those may be investigated in a structured way (e.g. by feedback questionnaires or online surveys). But also careful observations and reflections during the service process may give already a lot of insights and inputs. Marina operators may put themselves also into the position of the boaters in order to optimise their own service portfolio. This may be easy if the operators or employees are boater themselves.
- 🗑️ The main **sub-groups** that show differences with regard to their requirements but usually **still have to be considered simultaneously** are guest boaters as well as resident boaters, motor boat users as well as for sailors or families as well as for elderly boaters.
- 🗑️ The situation of renewing or inventing services and facilities may be used to **stronger or additionally attract certain groups of guest boaters**, by tailoring their profiles and design their specific needs. Priority should be given to those who can be expected in a considerable number (e.g. foreign boaters from a specific country) or those who generate high incomes per capita (e.g. owners of large boaters). Also specific marketing campaigns and materials can support this process.

3.5.5 Practices and tips

👉 Tip: Synergies between guest and resident boater services

A marina operator should wisely plan the services that are provided in the marina. They have to fit to the size of the marina and the number of boaters as well as to the customer structure and their expectations and needs. Furthermore they make out a lot of the marinas attractiveness, character and atmosphere. Looking for and making use of possible **synergies between services for guest and resident boaters** can be a very important way for the marina operator to **increase the efficiency and profitability** of the services and to optimise their utilisation rate:

- A starting point is to **analyse the customer structure**, especially the share of guest and resident boaters and the possibilities for service synergies. Pure guest and pure resident marinas need very specific and totally different approaches concerning provided services. But operators of most marinas can usually plan with a certain number / share of resident boaters staying in their marina and a more or less considerable number of guest boaters on top.
- The **needs and expectation** of guest and resident boaters, however, **do not differ a lot**, especially **concerning basic services** in a marina. Guest and resident boaters expect e.g. likewise proper supply with electricity and water or clean washrooms with sufficient numbers of washbasins. Here, synergies are most probable and worth being exploited. They can directly result in increasing cost / revenue ratios. But also potential conflicts of double use (e.g. washrooms overcrowded with guest







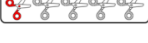
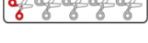

boaters and annoying residents during the summer) should be kept in mind. The need to be prevented effectively in order not to turn the use of synergies into a cause for decreasing incomes and deteriorating customer satisfaction among both groups.

- Synergies can occur also with regard to specific or “**nice-to-have**” **services and amenities**. Craning, wheel barrows or parking are more directed towards resident boaters whereas others like grocery stores or restaurants focus rather on guest boaters. Nevertheless most services will also be appreciated and used by the other group. The guest boaters will make use of the possibility of craning and boat repair in case they need it. The resident boaters will visit a restaurant in the marina that could not survive without guest boaters. The gains with regard to such kind of services are that the synergies are the prerequisite for offering them at all and extending the service portfolio.
- **Some services** may give a surplus not even when being offered to both main customer groups. For example restaurants or shops may be **offered only** if they succeed to use further synergies and **attract also landside users** and visitors that have no boat.

3.6 Step 5: Check out / Leaving marina

3.6.1 Overview / Profitability compass

STEP 5 / GUEST BOATERS: CHECK OUT / LEAVING MARINA					
	Providing trip-related information for leaving boaters	Checking out	Leaving berth and marina		
FRONT-STAGE	CUSTOMER ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare their further boating trip and look for relevant information (e.g. latest weather forecast, about neighbouring marinas) Check out of the marina Return e.g. keys / key-card and regain deposit Give feedback to marina employee concerning the satisfaction / quality of stay 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave berth and marina 	CUSTOMER
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of external interaction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---</p>				
BACK-STAGE	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – FRONT-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant information for leaving guest boater Process formalities Answer to / collect feedback from guest boaters 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer / provide help for boaters leaving the berth Mark berth as free for next guest boater or as occupied for returning resident boater 	MARINA OPERATOR
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of visibility</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p>				
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	CONTACT EMPLOYEE – BACK-STAGE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compose relevant information for leaving guest boater and keep it up-to-date Check customer out in the documentation system Evaluate feedback from guest boaters 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise occupancy of vacant berth 	
	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Line of internal interaction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p>				
OTHER EMPLOYEES / MANAGEMENT – SUPPORTING ACTIONS AND PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality management through complaint management 					

Step 5 / Guest Boaters: Check out / Leaving marina > PROFITABILITY COMPASS				
	Providing trip-related information for leaving boaters	Checking out	Leaving berth and marina	
RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	Satisfying customers 	RELEVANCE FOR PROFITABILITY
	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	Generating revenues 	
	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	Optimising costs 	

●●●●● – generally rather high relevance, ●●●●○ – mostly rather high relevance, ●●●○○ – very greatly varying relevance, ●●○○○ – mostly rather low relevance, ●○○○○ – generally rather low relevance

3.6.2 Customer actions

The stay of guest boaters in a marina ends when they leave to continue their boating trip and sail to the next marina. Depending on specific requirements and service routines in the marina, the guest boaters may either **simply leave the marina** without getting in any further contact to the marina operator or will have to **go to the marina office** to check out. In any case, they may look for information that can be helpful for continuing the boating trip.

During the process of checking out and leaving the marina the guest boaters may:

- **Prepare their further boating trip** and look for relevant information for continuing their trips and planning the next stopover (e.g. weather forecast, navigation to next marina, provided infrastructures and services in marinas nearby, inspiration for visiting alternative spots they did not consider yet).
- **Check out** in the marina office and inform the marina staff about leaving, if necessary return keys or key-card and regain deposit if provided upon the registration in the marina.
- **Give feedback** to the marina staff concerning their satisfaction and the quality of stay.
- Finally, **cast off and leave the berth and the marina**, possible with assistance from the marina employees or supporting infrastructure.

3.6.3 Interactions between contact employee and customer

✚ Providing trip-related information for leaving boaters

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date information** that is relevant for continuing the journey (e.g. latest weather forecast).
- ✓ **Getting also inspirations** for further stopovers nearby (e.g. by a map of the boating area or brochures on tourist attractions, also beyond boating).
- ✓ **Access to this information at the time when leaving**, also when the marina office is closed.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✘ **Most important** information and / or constituting for good service level may be latest **weather forecast**, maps and other information **material about the boating area** and neighbouring marinas. Also general tourist information that is not boater-specific (e.g. event calendar or tourist map for the next city) may be appreciated by guest boaters. This should be regarded as **standard service**.
- ✘ For efficiency reasons and limited staff efforts but also for ensuring that it can be picked up by boaters whenever they leave or like to obtain it, the **most usual and important information** should be made **accessible also when the marina office is closed**, e.g. by being provided on a public message board or being displayed on a computer screen inside the office that is visible from the outside.
- ✘ **Crucial is also that materials, devices (e.g. information boards) and information** are properly **maintained and kept up-to-date**. Out-dated or wrong information will be perceived as bad service quality. Inconveniences caused by them may stay in the memory of the boater for a long time and are likely to be widely spread within the boating community.
- ✘ **Even though** many boaters have **mobile devices** that enable to pick up e.g. weather forecast or tourist information from the internet, they are used to and still expect to find them also displayed in the marina.
- ✘ Most of the information that is desired and requested by guest boaters does not have to be generated or further processed by the operators. It can easily and conveniently be obtained from well-known and easily accessible sources (e.g. brochures can be picked up by regional tourist organisation, weather information in the internet). Only some of them and especially sophisticated ones may imply charges (e.g. site-specific weather forecasts).
- ✘ Nautical maps or marina handbooks are usually available on each ship. Hence information and **advice on navigation** may only be **relevant in case of special incidents** that may impede safety (e.g. changes of buoyage). But if situations like this occur, it is essential and may be expected that related information is provided, partly even that the marina staff pro-actively informs about them.

✚ Check out / Leaving the marina

What matters for the customers?

- ✓ **Being able to leave** the marina whenever desired and **without waiting time**.
- ✓ **Not having to deal** more than necessary **with the marina staff**.
- ✓ Possibility for simply dropping **keys or key-cards**, especially outside the office hours.
- ✓ **Getting back deposits quickly and flexibly** (e.g. special solutions when leaving outside office).
- ✓ **Possibilities to give feedback** to the marina employees on liked or disliked.
- ✓ **Help** from the marina staff **while leaving the berth**, if necessary.
- ✓ **Steering the boat safely out** of the marina.

How to serve boaters efficiently:

- ✎ **Leaving and checking out** are not the most central and demanding part of the marina operation. They require very little assistance by the marina staff, with only few exceptions (e.g. collecting access tools back and handing out deposits). Operators may therefore easily neglect them. However, it should be kept in mind that they may be the **last interaction between guest and marina staff** and **can constitute** a final and potentially **long lasting impression from the marina** on the side of the customer. **Good service quality and friendly treatment** in this very last step of the service chain for guest boaters are therefore **even more important**.
- ✎ Efficient **check out** process for guest boaters means **keeping the necessary actions** for the marina staff **as few as possible**. This is achieved best if as much as possible of the necessary interaction with the customers during their stay is already done during the registration so that there is **no general need to process them twice**. **Especially payment** should be done already **upon the registration** as regular practice and only in special cases during the checkout (e.g. unexpected prolongation of the stay). This may be achieved effectively by making and communicating advance payment as explicit requirement for guest boaters. Also all-inclusive offers instead of dues with pay-per-use elements for guest boaters may decrease the efforts for the checkout.
- ✎ The main reason for obligatory interaction between guest and staff during checkout and leaving are the **keys / key-cards** that are given back from leaving guest boaters and the returning of **related deposits**. Minimum requirement for customer satisfaction and reducing efforts for the operator is first of all to find a way to avoid complaints and complications on both sides in this context. This may be achieved by creating and communicating **clear procedures** (e.g. when or where to drop a key or access card).
- ✎ It may be even better and more efficient, however, to **avoid deposits and personal return of access tools at all**. This is quite easy today with the help of electronic access systems that are common today. Handed out access cards can simply be deactivated after a certain time. Establishing uncontrolled drop off routines is fine as to buy new cards in case of non-compliance is cheap. Access codes do not need any return process and may simply be changed regularly to avoid unauthorised entries.
- ✎ For improving the own operations, the marina operators **should be interested in receiving feedback** from the customers concerning their satisfaction with the services and stay in the marina. The collection of customer opinions and complaints may be planned and done systematically. The best occasion for getting them may be upon checkout and leaving, when experiences are made and complete. Either personal conversations or questionnaires may be appropriate tools, depending on checkout routines.
- ✎ If **red-green signage** is used, the operators should establish routines to check and if necessary change their status after the guest boater has left. It would be insecure and require a lot of explanations to leave this task to the guests. Usually the guest boaters will leave a berth that is marked as green and thus free for use by next guest boaters. The **operator** would have to **check** if the **plates** can stay green. When resident boaters are coming back to their berth the operator has to mark the berth as red and reserved in due time.
- ✎ Providing **personal assisting for leaving guest boaters** at the berth as a common standard is **neither usual nor necessary**. Most of them will not need any help. Without being asked it may be given if staff is on the pier anyway and can easily give a hand to the leaving boaters. But the employees should always help and serve customers who actively ask for it.

3.6.4 Supporting actions and processes

👉 Quality management through feedback and complaint management

How to contribute to efficiency and profitability:

- 🗑️ **Guest boaters** will have formed an **opinion** about the marina they have stayed in and if it fulfilled their expectations concerning services, atmosphere, service quality or friendliness and competence of the employees. Collecting them is the **most valuable evaluation and feedback** that operators can get. They will receive valuable information and insight into the customers' view, the things they already like in the marina and where they see possibilities for improvement. This will help the operators concerning the future planning of the marina development and optimising the investments and changes to come.
- 🗑️ If the guest boaters were more or less satisfied they will often not actively tell the marina operator. Direct contact and complaints will reach the operator mainly when the customers were not satisfied. **Getting the complete picture** about what works well and what not, therefore, may **require a proactive and structured approach to collecting feedback** from boaters. Tools for that may be to ask them for feedback during personal contact, handing out questionnaires to fill in during or after their stay, e-mail surveys or online tools.
- 🗑️ If collecting feedback in a systematic way, however, it should also be ensured that the marina staff is **prepared to provide an adequate feedback**. This is to demonstrate that complaints are taken serious and the operator actively works on their removal.
- 🗑️ **Advanced complaint management** may imply to establish a **permanent system** that collects incoming complaints, evaluated them and filters out the ones that are most important and / or urgent.

3.6.5 Practices and tips

👉 Examples: Complaint management and feedback

- ▶ Measuring the quality of the own services through **asking for comments and feedback** from customers is something that a lot of service providers and also many marina operators do.
- ▶ Marina operators try to receive the feedback from their customers either rather **actively or passively and more or less structured**. Most of them do this both among guest and resident boaters.
- ▶ Common practices and tools are:
 - At first sight very simple is to get feedback or comments from the boaters by **listening consciously and carefully to their comments given in the marina office**. As the customers often expect immediate reaction from the marina employee, however, some operators have advanced this method and established standards for their employees how to interact with unsatisfied customers and how to handle their complaints.
 - An also **rather passive way** to gain feedback is either through e-mails or a standardised feedback section with templates on the own **website**. It is advanced by some operators through answering each written feedback / complaint individually. In this way they can get in dialogue with the customers, which is an advantage especially for dealing with complaints.
 - A more and more popular form of feedback and communication with customers are **forums or web 2.0 platforms**. They are based on user-generate contents and allow also direct exchange

among boaters. In other tourist branches, they are already very important (e.g. www.tripadvisor.com) and appreciated by customers because being perceived as independent, reliable and transparent. In the marina business, however, they are still in the start-up phase.

- ▶ Especially large marinas and marina groups implement quite sophisticated and advanced approach for collecting feedback from their guest boaters and / or resident boaters, which are directly connected to internal quality management:
 - The Dutch “Thuishavens” marina group regularly evaluates the satisfaction of their resident customers with their marinas and provided services every couple of years. They made it an instrument to also internally communicate the companies’ development. They do this by sending out a questionnaire to their customers via email and got very good respond rates of 40% even though there are no prizes that can be won by the customers.
 - The German “im-jaich” marina group implements a system inspired from hotels for measuring the customer satisfaction. They lay out short questionnaires in their marinas and also hand them out to guest boaters. They can fill them out in patience and put them in a specially installed letter-box in the marina. The letter box is then opened by the head office that evaluates the questionnaires and can easily compare the different marinas and also their development. The customers give school grades for the condition of the piers / berth, the condition of the energy- and water supply, waste management, sanitary facilities, marina office, competence and friendliness of the employees, touristic attractions, price performance ratio, the general impression of the marina. Furthermore, they are asked to name aspects they would like to be improved and aspects they missed in the marina. In this way, the operator of each individual marina of the group gets a very good overview about the specific situation. The average school grades that result from the evaluation are used to create a competition among the 9 company marinas, also providing prizes for the employees. The questionnaire is provided in German and Danish, which are the most common languages of the im-jaich customers. The implementation of this service quality management is valued as very successful from the operators’ perspective.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Literature / further reading

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- Marina Hotele / Szczecin
- Sopot Marina
- Den Daas Group / Thuishavens: Marina Muiderzand, Jachthaven Naarden
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