



OUTFITTING A NEW BOAT

Factory options versus local commissioning

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PACIFIC YACHT SYSTEMS

W

e have worked with several boaters who were fortunate enough to order a new boat directly from the manufacturer. While consulting with these boaters on the systems for their new boat, the first question we are often asked is, "What should we have the factory install and what should be installed after we take delivery?" Let's look at the difference between basic factory options and local commissioning when the boat is delivered.

When you order a new boat from the factory, you start with the base model and choose your options. Because the factory offers similar options on most of the boats they manufacture, they have greater buying power with equipment manufacturers. They learn from their hands-on experience and are adept at following plans; this repetition allows them to offer competitive pricing both on equipment and labour. However, this repeatability can be frustrating for an owner who wants to deviate from the standard factory plan.

Factory options are a bit like a checklist and can include items like refrigeration, a generator, a water-maker or a navigation system. With factory options all the potential decisions are already made and, typically, you cannot choose a particular brand or dedicate the specifics of the installation. It can appear a bit cookie cutter, but it is far more cost effective because these options are standardized. We always recommend that if the factory has standard options, and you aren't particular about doing things "your way," it's best to let the

factory install those options for you.

Local commissioning, on the other hand, allows you to customize your boat to your exact needs based on how you are going to use it. So, what are the typical items that are installed after the boat has left the factory? It depends on the boat manufacturer but some of the most common commissioned items are a larger battery bank, an inverter, a higher-output battery charger, a battery monitor, a high output alternator with an external regulator, a large solar array or even a hydronic heating system with on-demand hot water. Each item is personalized for you and your boat. You might even choose to

panel in the galley instead of at the AC/DC panel. If you want to tailor how you like your systems, then local commissioning makes sense.

The middle ground, between a factory offered option and local commissioning, is to have the boat come prewired for certain systems. For instance, it's easier to run cables or hoses through the boat when the boat is being assembled than when it is complete.

As an example, we are currently working with a boater who is building a semi-custom 55-foot (17-metre) motoryacht to be used locally. The owner is working with the factory to pre-run the hydronic hoses to install a Hurricane heating system with on-demand hot water. This is a great way to save labour dollars at the factory instead of having to disassemble the boat when it is delivered. Because the manufacturer is a semi-custom boat builder, it is easier for them to be adaptive.

We are working with another couple who are purchasing a catamaran in France and want to include a very large solar array. The manufacturer only uses one brand of panels and cannot build a large enough array to keep up with the loads on the boat. The clients have chosen the commissioning route and are having the solar array installed outside the factory so they can choose high-end, high-output monocrystalline solar panels and MPPT controllers to maximize the energy from the sun.

Here's a personal example, when my two boat partners and I purchased a new Axopar 28, we deliberated over the pros and cons of



A mix between factory installation and local commissioning is often the best option.

have your navigation system installed locally as well.

This level of customization allows you to collaborate with a local crew by choosing the make and model along with the installation location details. For example, installing a CZone control panel in the front stateroom or installing an inverter remote

choosing factory options versus commissioning these items locally. Having seen the handy work of the Axopar factory I knew I could trust the options that the factory offered. Working on a small boat is always challenging because of the spatial constraints. We decided to leverage Axopar's experience in maximizing the use of available space by choosing many factory offered options.

When the Axopar 28 arrived we chose to commission a few more items that were not available at the factory. For instance, we upgraded the house battery to a Firefly foam core AGM for additional capacity and longer battery life. To make sure the battery bank would never be overdrawn we installed a battery monitor, and to keep the batteries topped-off we installed an EFOY methanol fuel cell.

Another boater we are working with purchased a boat that was made in Scandinavia. The boat was built to be used in the European market but the owner wanted to bring the boat to Canada. A boat that is wired for the European market is not compatible with North American AC electrical standards and will not be able to connect to shore power. The owner started the conversation with the builder to modify the electrical from 230V/50Hz to 110V/60Hz but found the back and

forth too frustrating. In this case, it made more sense to commission the electrical to North American standards locally. On the flip side, the boat came pre-installed with a good navigation system, which was standard from

that factory. There was no need to modify this navigation system as it was done right at the factory.

If you have been boating for years and have owned several different boats, you probably have a pretty good

idea of what works for you and what doesn't. Ordering a new boat with the basic options and then fine-tuning through commissioning allows you to create a truly unique design that addresses all your needs. 🚤



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