



Lehr CEO: THE LEADER SOLVING THE GREEN BOATING PROBLEM

Matching one's passion with one's vocation usually leads to wonderful results. That is exactly what happened when Captain Bernardo Herzer mixed his love for boating with his life's work of developing propane-fueled small engines.

Herzer, a licensed ship's captain, spent his youth at sea. He developed a passion for the water that led him to becoming not only a captain but a ship owner. He's logged over 40,000 nautical miles at sea and his research vessels have done important studies on technology's impact on the world's oceans. Those studies have led him to spend decades developing propane-powered engines for a variety of uses, from mowers and hand tools for landscaping to generators and now marine engines.

"I spent a couple of years working on developing a propane engine for a hand-held string trimmer," Herzer said. "Propane is a great alternative to gasoline for a number of reasons. On average it's about 30 percent cheaper than gasoline. Plus propane burns a lot cleaner, with about 65 percent less carbon emissions than gasoline."

"Propane has taken over many segments of the automotive industry, including powering taxi fleets in some of the busiest metropolitan areas in the country. The conversion to propane has also increased air quality. People don't like being around cancer-causing chemicals if they can help it."

If Herzer's credentials as a sea captain are impressive, his credentials as a captain of industry are equally impressive. He holds over 50 patents and has won numerous awards and prizes over the years for his inventions. As the founder and CEO of Lehr, he produced the world's first propane-powered OEM outboard engine, which he created after he noticed gasoline spillage polluting the water on a voyage in the North Sea. Those spills and how to prevent them were the genesis of Herzer's propane-powered inventions.

"The great thing about propane is it's a closed system," he said. "That means when you have propane powering your marine engine you don't have to worry about your fuel leaking into the water and leaving a sheen on the water. There is no overflow or venting needed."

According to an online poll by Harris Poll on behalf of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI): Findings show that 63% of Americans will use the least expensive grade of gasoline whenever possible. In addition, nearly three quarters (74%) of Americans say they are not at all sure if it's legal or illegal to put ethanol-gasoline blends higher than 10% into small engine products. (Under federal law, it is illegal to use higher ethanol fuel blends in outdoor power equipment.)

We've all been there, and it's somewhat embarrassing when it happens. Even if you did leak propane, it evaporates at -30 degrees celsius so it would be gone before it even touched the water."

While Herzer's vision is still in its infancy, particularly in the marine segment, he's seen growth in other areas of his business. That growth leads him to believe his marine dreams will succeed as well.

"We have our products on the shelves and out for retail now," Herzer said. "It was the perfect time to match what we were doing with my love for being out on the water. I know there will be a great response to propane as a motor fuel. Many boaters are already using propane to fuel other systems on their boat, and it's readily available and can be delivered right to the dock."

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In the near future, the performance of propane-fueled marine engines will continue to develop, driving continued growth in the segment. That is a positive for innovators like Capt. Herzer, for cost-conscious boaters and for the environment.