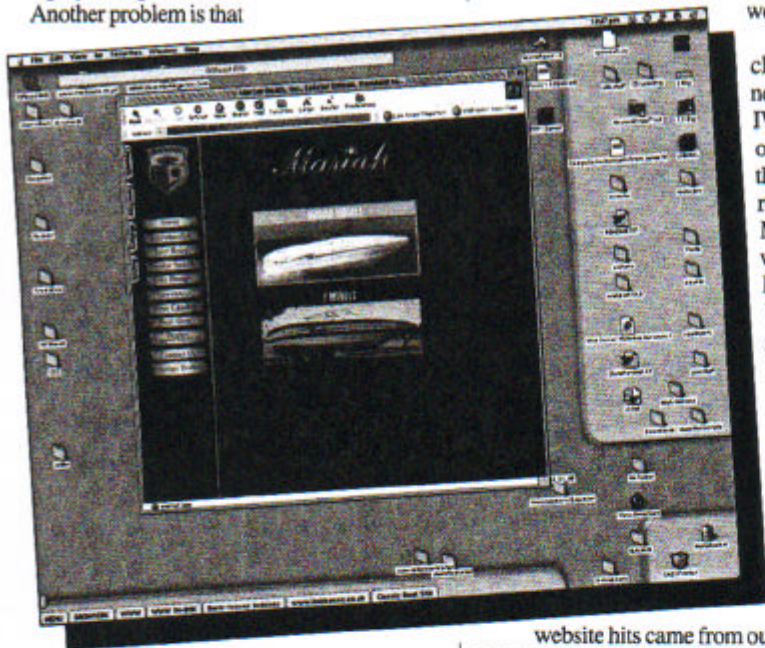


## MANAGEMENT: WORKING THE WEB

This highlights a location problem that many websites have. The solution is simply to register with the search engines and take out banner ads so that when consumers search by entering certain keywords, your banner is at the top of the category listings.

Another problem is that



websites are growing faster than English-language ones. Although non-English speakers are usually most comfortable communicating in their mother tongue, most English speaking web-developers have not yet invested in translating or localising their websites.

Andy Aweida claims there is no need to change IWOL's English only website as there have been no requests to do so. Mercury's website is in English only because it's geared to the North American market. There are no plans to translate the website yet because of time and resource issues.

Although 12 per cent of its

website hits came from outside of the US,

OMC's Fred Bode admits his company's website is not international yet. OMC Online is working on approaching Mexico and South America, yet it doesn't plan to translate it.

Mariah reports 15 per cent of hits are international. Although they print catalogues in German, French, Spanish, and Italian as well as English, its website is English only and there is no thought to translate it into other languages in the future. According to Jack Swan: "People who can afford our boats speak English. The use is not worth the squeeze. To add different languages to the website would just add clutter."

A Regal representative endorsed this: "People would like us to translate into different languages, but costs are prohibitive."

Crownline Boats appears to have overcome the problem of remoteness of websites from their potential audiences and has made its a medium for one-to-one communication.

Marketing manager Dave Sundin claims: "Our website is unique in boating sites in offering a forum and bulletin board where users can post complaints and get answers. We had 2,000 messages posted in

six months. For example, a thread of 20 messages about wax generated business for a wax manufacturer.

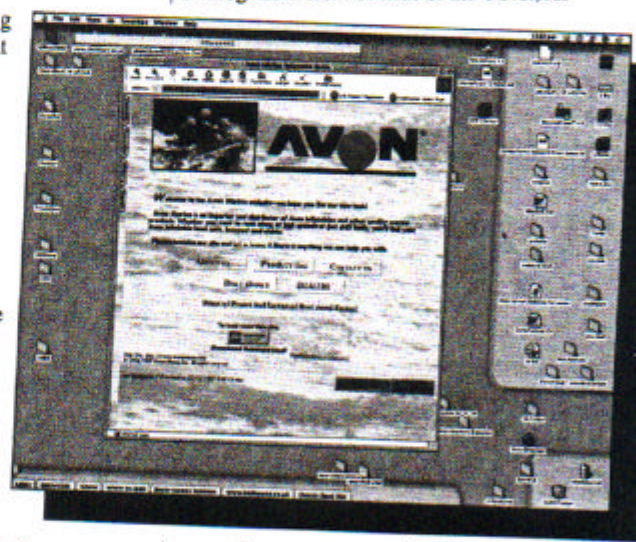
"We get 150 messages to reply to every day. It builds loyalty. Customers buy because of how they were treated on the web. We believe we're exceptional with respect to web strengths and weaknesses and working them into advertising and sales lead processing."

Sundin adds: "The web is no place for a boat dealer to sell. Most don't have a website because they can't do the product justice. We've created a database to sort leads so that we are able to provide sorted leads to our dealers. Dealers should have a website to which we could direct customers. About 10 per cent of our dealers are web literate."

For those whose first language isn't English, translations don't seem to be important he adds. "(Spanish) translations in Argentina don't work in Mexico. Also, the language in Miami differs to that in other parts of the US."

He concludes: "It's more of a push than customer pull. The local dealer will put content into his own local language if the company doesn't have the resources to translate."

Not all follow that line of thinking, however. Several boating companies believe it's worthwhile customising their message to suit specific customer groups. For instance, Baja will translate/localise its website into Spanish for a dealer in Mexico. So too will Avon Marine in the US, which gets 10-20 per cent of its website interogations from outside of the US. It, for



example supports a new dealer in Mexico in Spanish.

Bell & Howell is also updating its English-only website. The company's Linda Archibald said: "The office in the UK will Europeanise the software, but I don't know how long it will take to customise it."

Italian deck hardware manufacturer Kong SpA plans to add French and German versions of its website to existing English and Italian versions in the next six months.

Of all marine companies, Zodiac offers one of the most international boating/marine sites, providing content in English, French, and German. Explains Edward Washburn: "The US organisation started its own website, then the French headquarters took over, which makes it all act in concert. The separate US and headquarters sites are now linked. Europe can still see the chairman's daily agenda."

It's good to see at least one boating market firm is using the internet for the market for which it's best suited — the world

many companies use the internet, which is clearly a global communication tool, with a local perspective.

It's important for non-US surfers, for example, to be able to find local contacts in their home countries on the web. But few companies offer this facility. Baja, for example, offers a dealer locator with US addresses only. Another US builder of small powerboats, Crownline Boats of West Frankfort, Illinois (<http://www.crownlineboats.com>) has a dealer finder which is listed by US zip code only. OMC's dealer directory includes North America only. Outboard engine company Tohatsu names distributors online, but has no international dealers listed.

However, Mercury is going through country by country to list dealers geographically. And Mariah website visitors can search through all dealers world-wide.

Although the US market is the largest in terms of internet users and websites, foreign language

