

Innovating Safety:

Exploring Shark Seating's
Maritime Solutions



In this exclusive interview, we delve into the world of maritime safety with Shark Seating, a pioneering company revolutionising marine seating solutions. Led by a commitment to ergonomic design and sustainability, Shark Seating has carved a niche in the industry with its innovative approach to marine seating. From high-speed naval craft to tour boats, Shark Seating's products are designed to enhance safety, comfort, and performance for both operators and passengers alike.

Join us as we explore the strategic vision, sustainability initiatives, and future outlook of Shark Seating with Owner, Paul Zwaan, shedding light on how the company continues to make waves in the maritime sector.

Company Genesis and Mission:

Shark Seating began with a focus on ergonomic design in the marine seating industry. Can you share the story behind the inception of Shark Seating and your mission in transforming the industry?

The formation of Shark Seating happened at a time when the NZ Navy faced delays and rising costs from inflexible suppliers dominating a small market. There was a need for agile and cooperative suppliers offering lighter, more adaptable products and services. This challenge appealed to me, having handled over 500 freelance projects with a focus on finding the most elegant solutions and implementing them with the most appropriate and scalable technology.

Design Philosophy:

Your design consultancy started in 1996, leading to Shark Seating’s establishment. How has your background in ergonomic design influenced the development of Shark Seating’s products?

The core principles guiding our work are simplicity, modularity, and versatility. These principles enable us to tackle any ergonomic challenge. It’s a process where all the hard work rests on the designer rather than the user. We work tirelessly to ensure that our solutions are ever more simple, self-adjusting, and intuitive.

Achieving simplicity is like seeking the Holy Grail. Once found, everyone can recognise it but uncovering simplicity is a relentless process of ideation, screening, and refinement. In the words of Michelangelo, ‘The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material.’



shark

GUARDIANS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

A collage of 10 images showing various high-speed naval craft, including patrol boats and speedboats, in different operational settings. The images are arranged in a 3x3 grid with the bottom-right cell empty. The top row shows a boat in a harbor, a boat on a dock, and a boat on the water. The middle row shows a boat with crew, a boat on the water, and a boat with a wake. The bottom row shows a boat with crew, a boat on the water, and a boat on the water. The text '1000 seats. 6 countries, 5 years use, 0 injuries, 0 ejections, all still performing' is at the bottom.

1000 seats. 6 countries, 5 years use, 0 injuries, 0 ejections, all still performing

Impact on High-Speed Naval Craft:

Shark Seating has been recognised for its suspension seating solutions in high-speed naval boats. How do Shark Seating products enhance the safety and performance of these vessels?

Shark Seating’s suspension seating solutions have garnered recognition for their impact on high-speed naval boats. These products play a pivotal role in enhancing both the safety and performance of such vessels.

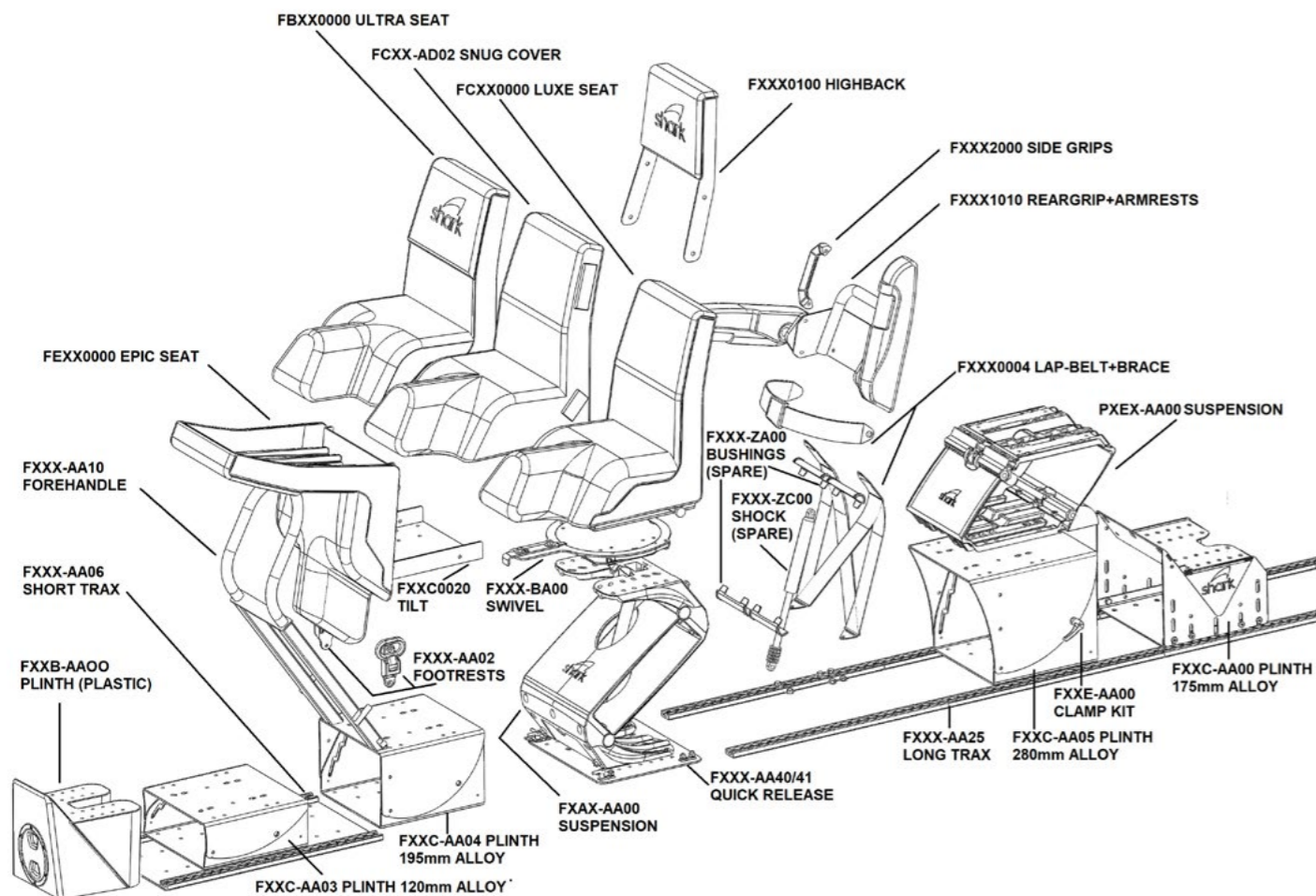
In the realm of high-speed craft, the ultimate goal is to achieve maximum performance with minimal inputs. This entails prioritising safety, comfort, and durability while minimising weight, complexity, and cost. At Shark Seating, we achieve this balance through our three design pillars.

Simplicity lies at the core of our approach, ensuring that each component is streamlined to its essential functionality without any unnecessary elements. Modularity further reinforces this principle by ensuring perfect compatibility among components, thereby maximising safety and comfort for occupants. Additionally, our products offer versatility, allowing various modules to be seamlessly combined to meet diverse ergonomic requirements.

Each of our modules is assigned a NATO stock code, enabling navies to configure suspension seats tailored to their specific needs. This bespoke approach not only ensures unprecedented impact protection but also enhances weight efficiency, crucial factors in the demanding environment of high-speed naval operations.



shark NATO part numbers NCAGE# EBN68



America's Cup Contribution:

Shark Seating's involvement in the 36th America's Cup significantly boosted the brand's visibility. How did this event impact Shark Seating's business, and what was it like seeing your products on all the chase boats?

Shark Seating's participation in the 36th America's Cup marked a significant milestone in enhancing the brand's visibility and impact on the maritime industry. Reflecting on this event sheds light on its profound implications for our business and the exhilaration of witnessing our products on every chase boat. <https://youtu.be/-94T9u5-UHU>



Having followed the America's Cup fervently since its arrival in our neighborhood in 1987, I never imagined, thirty years later, that our seats would grace the decks of every chase boat and media vessel at the America's Cup and SailGP events. It was a moment of pride to see our seats accommodating royalty, sailing legends, VIPs, and support crews—a total of 140 seats, a remarkable feat at the time, though now surpassed by our expanding customer base.

An unexpected benefit emerged five years later, during the 2021 America's Cup in New Zealand, providing an opportunity to assess the wear and tear on 100 seats. Additionally, during the event's visit to Christchurch in 2023, we conducted the 5-year service on 40 SailGP seats, leading to an extension of our product warranty to three years.

Furthermore, the legacy of our involvement extended beyond the event itself, with a majority of New Zealand Coastguard boats now equipped with Shark Suspension Seats, having adopted 26 retired America's Cup RHIBs. This integration underscores the enduring impact of our participation in the America's Cup, solidifying our commitment to innovation and safety in maritime seating solutions."

SEATING and COMFORT are just two of the core supporting pillars of Springfield Marine Company. From luxury upholstered seating down to the hardware that gives them movement—we are your seating solution. Founded in 1952 as an aluminum foundry under the name Springfield Aluminum Company, our founder Garnett Carnahan, quickly found himself in a new emerging marine market. By the late 1970's, the marine industry was the primary customer base that allowed us to develop as a brand of marine seating hardware and accessories.

We have pioneered the marine seating industry with innovative designs that have allowed numerous patents and design acknowledgments that hold our brand strong, remaining vigilant to supply the growing needs of the marine industry while maintaining durability, safety, stability, and comfort. Today, Springfield Marine boat seats, hardware, and RV/boating acces-

sories are installed in more boats than any other brand in the world. The company is respected for quality and reliable products that are sold across North America, South America, Australia, Europe and even Asia. We ensure quality and customer satisfaction by following

multiple testing and quality standards and obtaining certificates of approval from each of the global standards organizations, some of which include International Maritime Organization (IMO), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC). Adhering

to these standards is a fundamental commitment Springfield Marine has to its customers and partners. Our goal is to establish long term relationships that help customers/partners grow and increase their market share, while providing top-of-the-line products

that offer the comfort and safety boaters and RVers demand and expect.

Springfield Marine has been doing business in China since 1990. Our state-of-the-art facility in Jiangsu offers nearly 77,000 M² of in-house product engineering and manufacturing, including our own aluminum foundry, CNC, metal fabrication, blow molding, plastic injection molding, foam molding, and cut-and-sew operations.

Our North American headquarters facility is home to not only our corporate offices, but also our design and engineering team and over 100,000 sq. ft. of distribution and manufacturing space including a full CNC shop and on-site fabrication of fixed-height pedestals and ski tow pylons. In addition to our headquarters facility we also maintain a general fabrication facility, located in Springfield, MO, that offers waterjet cutting, laser cutting, press brake, welding, pipe and

tube fabrication, material surface finishing, and more.

Quality and cost are key to maintaining our position as the leader in marine seating, seat/table hardware and boat/RV accessories. To this end, Springfield maintains an in-house testing lab that allows us to test our products to meet virtually all internal and industry standards. Further, to retain our position as the low-cost leader, we continue to drive global sourcing and have a lean six sigma team focused on continuous improvement, automation, and cost reductions.

Our wide variety of boating and RV accessories, chairs, and seating hardware present an array of combinations that are second to none. We are your seating solution.

YOUR SEATING SOLUTION



NEW! CONSOLE HELM FLIP-UP

Console flip-up helm bolster seat with luxury vinyl. Supported by a durable frame with high-density foam padding contoured for ergonomic support. Cushioned armrests flip up and out of the way with ease.

- Flip-up bolster with a plush cushion for a comfortable leaning position
- Universal mounting bolt pattern: 5" x 12"
- Marine-grade vinyl is UV-treated, mildew-resistant, and water-resistant

1042035-W Console Helm Flip-Up White
1042035-BLK Console Helm Flip-Up Black-Grey

FISH PRO HIGH-BACK FOLDING SEAT

Premium upholstery and cushions are designed to provide maximum comfort and quality. Backrest is fitted with ergonomically molded cushions and extended sides for extra support. A durable injection molded shell with a center pivot point allows seat to fold down flat.

- Weather-resistant marine grade vinyl
- Universal mounting pattern: 5"x12"
- Molded-in seat grab inserts
- Channel for optional armrests
- Concealed pinch-proof center pivot point

1041650 Fish Pro HB Folding Seat White-Char

4" SERIES ELECTRIC MAINSTAY + SLIDE

Made of high-strength anodized aluminum construction for lasting corrosion resistance. The 4" series mainstay has a lift range of 5" - 8" and travels 4" fore/aft.

- 12-volt activated DC rated for 450 lbs
- Available in single pack quantities
- Rated ABYC Class H-31 AD
- Cast aluminum base

1271385-1 Electric AL Mainstay w/Slide 4in

LADDERS

NEW! Stainless steel telescoping and fixed boarding ladders available in polished or black electroplated finishes.

- Securing strap included on telescoping models
- Flat treads for added comfort
- Corrosion resistant
- Meets ABYC H-41 standards

1801230-03 Ladder Dive 4-Step SS
1801275-04 Ladder Telescoping Transom 4-step SS
1800250-04 Ladder Telescoping Drop 4-step SS BK

RETRACTABLE SKI TOW ALUMINUM & STAINLESS STEEL

Retractable 27" ski tow made of durable aircraft aluminum with a stainless steel base, welded stainless steel support tube, and passivated deck mount. Designer with the strength to handle most tow sport activities. Available in single pack.

- Brite dip anodized pylon
- Oval base: 3.5" x 6"
- Stows flush with deck
- 1600 lbs static load

1800096-EXSS Retractable Ski Tow Aluminum-SS

3-STAGE TABLE PEDESTAL PACKAGE

Bright dip 3-stage pneumatic table pedestal and locking collars are polished anodized aluminum for lasting corrosion resistance. Available in single pack quantities.

- Pneumatic height adjustment range: 14" - 28"
- Large tabletop mounting plate: 11" x 12"
- 12" round base with 6 mounting holes with 11" bolt pattern

1041650 Fish Pro HB Folding Seat White-Char



PEDESTAL & SLIDE/SWIVEL BLACK ANODIZED

System includes 4" aluminum pedestal with 12" round base, black anodized. Pedestal is sized and pressed into base, then rim welded for stability. Low profile slide with front activated towel bar handle for slide activation mounted to 4" workhorse swivel.

- Rotates 360°
- Multi-location locking

3100656-01B Low Profile Slide/Swivel Black Anodized
1450012-B 4" Elite Fixed Height Pedestal Black Anodized



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shark
SEATING

*Lightweight, Affordable, High Performance
Marine Suspension Solutions*



ULTRA SEAT
with FLEX suspension



LUXE SEAT
with armrests & FIX plinth



FLEX-POD
light & compact suspension



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International Expansion:

Following Shark Seating’s expansion into Europe and increased sales, what strategies have you employed to maintain and grow your international client base?

At Shark Seating, our passion is deeply rooted in our mission: to significantly reduce the number of people affected by spinal injuries on boats. Central to our success is a customer-centric approach that drives our strategies for maintaining and expanding our international client base.

We recognise that our mission remains critical as long as there are customers who lack adequate protection from wave impacts. This drives our continuous efforts to innovate and improve our products, ensuring they remain accessible to all who need them.

Additionally, we are committed to tripling our investment in the 5 P’s (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and People) every three years. This bold strategy has yielded remarkable results, with sales increasing thirty-fold over the past decade.

Looking ahead, we have a robust plan in place to achieve another thirty-fold increase in sales over the next ten years. Our aim is to make suspension seating a standard in the maritime industry, bringing safety and comfort to the forefront. We invite you to stay tuned as we continue to push the boundaries of innovation and accessibility in maritime seating solutions.

Sustainability Initiatives:

Sustainability and environmental responsibility are key concerns for many businesses today. What steps is Shark Seating taking to reduce its environmental impact?

At Shark Seating, we recognise the importance of sustainability and environmental responsibility in today’s business landscape. To reduce our environmental impact, we have implemented several initiatives, with a focus on innovative materials and carbon sequestration.

One notable achievement is the development of our FLEXANITE material, which is used in all our suspension seats. FLEXANITE is composed of 100% bio-plastic, designed to consume its own weight in carbon dioxide. This not only reduces our reliance on traditional plastics but also contributes to carbon sequestration, even if the material ends up in a landfill. Furthermore, FLEXANITE is recyclable, ensuring a circular lifecycle for our products.

To learn more about our sustainability initiatives and how we’re harnessing carbon from the atmosphere to mitigate environmental impact, we invite you to visit our website: [Link to the article.](#)

Innovations in Seating Design:

Shark Seating is known for its innovative approach to marine seating. Can you discuss a recent product innovation that you're particularly proud of?

Shark Seating's commitment to innovation in marine seating design is exemplified by our recent breakthrough in addressing the pressing issue of back injuries among tourboat passengers. Six years ago, reports surfaced of tour boat operators facing severe financial repercussions, including bankruptcy, due to the denial of public liability insurance claims stemming from passenger back injuries. This alarming trend prompted us to develop a solution that would benefit both passengers and operators alike.

To meet this challenge, we set out to create a suspension seating system that was compact, lightweight, and cost-effective enough to be installed in large numbers on tourboats. The result of our endeavor was the development of the ULTRA-lite and EVO suspension seats, crafted using injection-molded technology. Weighing in at a mere 7kg each and priced comparably to standard unsuspended jockey seating, these seats offer unparalleled comfort and safety for passengers without imposing significant financial strain on operators.

Our innovation has not only revolutionised the tourboat industry but has also paved the way for enhanced safety standards across marine transportation sectors. For a detailed account of this groundbreaking development, we invite you to explore the full story in our article: [Link to the article.](#)



Challenges and Achievements:

Every business faces its set of challenges, especially when it comes to innovation. Can you share a significant challenge Shark Seating overcame and what it taught you?

Every business encounters its share of challenges, particularly in the realm of innovation. One significant challenge Shark Seating faced underscored the importance of rigorous testing and adaptability.

As Albert Einstein aptly stated, 'If you've never failed, you've never tried anything new.' A decade ago, we embarked on the ambitious endeavor of crafting all our suspensions from plastic, fully aware of the immense forces they would endure—nearly 1 tonne. Despite subjecting prototypes to rigorous lab testing, simulating up to 1 million full impacts, we recognised that real-world conditions would provide the ultimate test, especially in defense and rescue boats.

The reality soon set in as we encountered variations in plastic batches, highlighting the need for meticulous quality control measures. Embracing Shane Parrish's wisdom that 'it's not the failures that define us so much as how we respond,' we made a pivotal decision to implement 100% testing of all production parts six years ago.

This decision was not without its challenges, as we faced the necessity of recalling a batch at considerable expense, requiring personnel to travel to Iceland on two occasions.



However, this proactive approach proved instrumental in averting potential safety hazards. Despite thousands of our seats being subjected to harrowing conditions—such as boats free-falling up to 6 meters in rough seas—our commitment to quality assurance has yielded an impeccable safety record: zero injuries in ten years.

This experience has taught us the importance of resilience, adaptability, and unwavering dedication to safety and quality. It serves as a testament to our ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in maritime seating solutions.



Customer-Centric Approach:

Shark Seating emphasises a strong connection with its customers. How do you ensure that your customer service stands out in the industry?

At Shark Seating, we recognise the dual layers of customers inherent in our mission to safeguard backs across the maritime industry. Our customer-centric approach extends beyond boat owners and operators to encompass boat builders, forging symbiotic relationships that drive mutual success.

We pride ourselves on fostering exceptionally strong connections with boat builders who integrate our seats into their vessels. This partnership is founded on a shared commitment to excellence, where we enhance their offerings with cutting-edge technology, and in turn, they amplify our brand recognition.

In our experience, boat builders fall into two categories: those who prioritise offering the best and safest technology to their customers and those who only consider safety options upon request. Fortunately, within the realm of professional boats—such as government tenders, sea rescue, and defense—the specification mandates the inclusion of suspension seats. Leveraging the weight and cost advantages of Shark Suspension Seats, we’ve observed that whenever boat builders opt for our seats in tenders, the resulting vessels not only meet safety standards but also benefit from enhanced range, capacity, and performance, to the delight of end users.

To reflect our unwavering dedication to achieving tangible outcomes for both boat providers and end users, we’ve rebranded our customer service as ‘customer success.’ This shift underscores our commitment to delivering results and ensuring the success of our customers at every stage of their journey

Future Outlook:

Looking ahead, what new markets or innovations is Shark Seating exploring to continue its growth and influence in the marine industry?

While we have ambitious plans for the future, we recognise the importance of strategic discretion. Rest assured, Shark Seating remains dedicated to our core principles of affordable performance, usability, lightness, simplicity, and customer success. These values will continue to drive our growth and influence in the marine industry, enabling us to achieve our goal of a thirty-fold expansion every decade.

As Forrest Gump famously said, ‘and that’s all I have to say about that.’ Rest assured, our commitment to innovation and excellence remains steadfast, propelling Shark Seating into exciting new markets and pioneering groundbreaking innovations. We invite you to stay tuned as we embark on the next phase of our journey





Shark Seating designs and manufactures premium seating solutions for marine, automotive, and aviation industries, focusing on ergonomic comfort, innovative design, and high-quality craftsmanship to enhance passenger experience and safety.



www.sharkseating.com