



Bob's World

By Bob Davis

All Hands Required

Deciding to do a DIY boat project – as distinct from merely contemplating and procrastinating about it – is a big leap. When that “do-it” decision switch turns on in the brain, it needs to activate a whole bunch of role circuits.

This isn't like the workplace where you're part of a team of people, all playing different roles to contribute to a common cause. In a DIY project, you have to do most of it yourself or, if you're lucky, with the help of your partner.

Talk about multi-skilling and multi-tasking! Planner, outfitter, materials estimator, source researcher, cost and budget accountant, purchaser, relationship manager, driver, storeman – you have to play all of these roles, before your hands get anywhere near a piece of wood or a tool. Stuff just doesn't materialise out of thin air. You have to work out exactly what you need, then find it, cost it, shop around for best prices, negotiate, order it, arrange transport, pay for it – then wait, wait, wait – and then it finally arrives and you have to unload it, stack it in some kind of logical order, and protect it.

The process of figuring out what you need, and estimating how many or how much, is time consuming and demands lots of careful thought. If you buy a stock set of boat plans and instructions, you usually get a bill of materials included – and that takes a whole lot of work out of it for you. However, with an own-design boat project, that all-important bill of materials has to be formulated by the project worker – yes, you.

Actually, it's a bit of fun. Sit down with a blank notebook and start thinking about everything – and I do mean everything – that you might possibly need in a boat. Start making the list. The length of the list might

(will!) surprise you, when you include all the items needed to properly outfit a boat. Now you begin to understand why manufactured and professionally outfitted boats cost you so much. I set my initial list out by loosely grouping items under headings for each “system” in the boat.

The headings included Structure (ply, timber, glue and fasteners), Steering, Fuel, Electrics, Galley, Anchoring, Safety Gear – and so on. Pages and pages later I had a pretty well developed idea of what I wanted/needed.

At this point we should confess that Bob has decided to design and build - from scratch - his very own 8.0m resin saturated, plywood dory, powered by a 60hp 4-stroke outboard. His whole approach is to prove a real cruising fishing boat can still be built for a fraction of 'normal' costs - providing the owner is prepared to roll up his sleeves and do a little hard yakka . . . the Whitsundays await!



Initially, I didn't confine myself to just the must-have items. I also include the not-necessarily-essential-but-nice-to-have items. Once I finished the list, I got hold of catalogues from several chandlers, and started costing the list. Just like me, you'll then find yourself busily crossing a whole bunch of the nice-to-have items off your list, pruning back to the essentials. It's an interesting exercise in reality, believe me.

On my initial wish list I included a whole section on lovely fishing-related outfitting stuff, but once I saw the retail prices – and checked them across several chandleries – they got crossed off the buy-list quick smart! I will devise DIY solutions for a lot of that stuff.

Doing an exhaustive list of requirements, or taking your bought-plan bill of materials, and checking it against chandlery catalogues is a good exercise because it will quickly help you identify items you need that may not be readily available and need to be sourced from other than your favourite chandler. Mine didn't carry the underfloor fuel tanks I want, for example, and they don't normally carry trade sized packs of silicon bronze or stainless steel ring lock nails - but the guys at Bias in Penrith willingly took on the task of sourcing them for me.

Early on, you need to decide which brand of epoxy resin to use. In the major cities and centres, it's relatively easy to source, but you may find that outlets don't always carry the large containers you need, and may have to order them in for you.

For the 30 litre kits of resin and hardener, think in terms of \$500 a lot. It's not cheap and for the Dory project a lot of it is required. Your chandler will probably stock at least one brand, but if it's not the brand you prefer, you'll have to buy it elsewhere. In my case, I decided I'd use Bote-Cote for this project, and sourced it from Trend

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Timbers.

Luckily, I was able to source my plywood and timber locally, from Johnson's in Ulladulla - real timber merchants. As much as I like the big hardware chain stores for some things, alas they're actually not very interested in sourcing what for them are non-standard wood supplies. Nowadays they might not even stock timber like Douglas Fir (aka 'Oregon'), even in construction grades, let alone in the clear grades we need for building boats. Even if you're able to excite the interest of somebody in their timber section, sufficient for them to contemplate a 'special order', their prices are not attractive because they're not doing a bulk buy.

That being the case, with no advantages flowing to you from their usual buying scale economies, you may as well use a specialist timber merchant. Timber is what they do, so you'll find that they're actually interested in your project.

In stark contrast to the response I got from a major hardware store, Adam Matthews at Johnson's happily took on the task of sourcing and ordering my Hoop Pine plywood and the big Merbau post for my stem. To my delight I discovered that they had a stock of Celery Top Pine that they were willing (and able) to cut down to frame sizes for me, and Les, their super wood machinist took to that task with enthusiasm. These guys are allies in my project!

It might be said that my leaning towards Bias Boating is a tad biased

because they advertise in F&B. To any such folk inclined to say such things – you are less than entirely tutored in my ways! Let me say that I went to Bias in my capacity as private citizen, entitled to no different service, and to no different pricing and discounts than every other citizen.

I checked out a number of bigger chandlers, and I went to them because, from my very first contact, they were

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really interested in my project! They fell over themselves to source hard to find stuff for me, and - get this for service – they kept me fully informed of their progress frequently by phone and email throughout the whole process.

The day I drove up to Bias in Penrith and arrived to collect my gear, it was all packed and stacked and

listed, ready to go. Those guys were great – and that sort of special service deserves mention.

Ditto the people at AL-KO in Melbourne, for the undercarriage and braking gear for the trailer for the Dory, and the folks at the trailer repair centre at Dunbier, from whom I sourced the 14 inch galvanised wheels (with 850Kg rated tyres) for the trailer. It is a pleasure doing business with people who – firstly, know about their business – but secondly, seem to take an immediate and genuine interest in what you're doing, and are prepared to go out of their way to help you.

Where I am at Fishermans Paradise on the NSW South Coast, there are no local sources of the gear I needed to create the Dory trailer – other than the steel – so I had to source it elsewhere and freight it in. The people at AL-KO suggested it, and Dunbier were happy to cooperate, to get the AL-KO IRS axles, Sens-a-Brake braking system and the Dunbier trailer wheels together for the same freight shipment to me out of Melbourne, to save me some money. How good is that, eh?

In my professional life, I've had many occasions to observe the service approach of many different types of organisations, big and small, in many places.

In essence I reckon there are three types of organisations – them that don't give a damn about their quality of service to customers, them that want to be seen to give a damn, but just talk the talk and proclaim their commitment to you their customer with silly posters stuck up in customer services areas – and then there are those who actually do give a damn, and walk the talk, and really do try to make your customer experience with them totally positive.

The businesses I've mentioned above all fall into the third group and I'm taking some space here to mention them and praise them because – alas – nowadays businesses that are prepared to offer customers such fabulous support and service are a bit like hens teeth! My special thanks go to those people.

With materials and supplies steadily arriving and piling up in the shed, the biggest reality strikes – gosh, I've actually made the commitment to do this. Better get on with it. There's more ply sheeting to be cut and sealed with epoxy....

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