

Marine Group Boat Works Announces New Ownership of San Diego Shipyard, Los Cabos Boatyard and Global Services Superyacht Agency

Entrepreneurs back President Todd Roberts in business buyout, name him CEO, in preparation for new era growth for legacy shipyard

[Release From Marine Group Boat Works](#)

SAN DIEGO – [Marine Group Boat Works](#) (MGBW), a San Diego-based boatbuilding and repair company, has been purchased for an undisclosed amount by Co-Founder and President Todd Roberts, who has joined forces with entrepreneurs Chip Besse, a MGBW customer with successful investments in multiple industries, and Skye Callantine, principal of investment firm [Vigeo Investments](#). Besse will serve as Chairman of the board while Roberts will continue to actively lead the company in his new role as CEO, with a greater focus on growth and expansion plans made possible by the new partners' substantial investment.

The acquisition included the purchase of MGBW's two waterfront facilities and their assets – a shipyard on San Diego Bay in Chula Vista, Calif., and a boatyard in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico. The deal also included [Marine Group Global Services](#), the technical services arm of MGBW that provides specialized consulting and marine services worldwide. MGBW will continue to operate and manage [Fifth Avenue Landing](#), a superyacht marina in downtown San Diego, under the Global Services division.

With roots dating back to the 1970s, the company started off as a small Chula Vista boatyard operation and was successfully relaunched 25 years ago as MGBW, a new state-of-the-art superyacht facility founded by Roberts and members of the Engel family. The company had been approached by several other potential buyers over the years, but they were never the right fit. Roberts and the Engels were committed to maintaining the integrity of the brand and protecting the legacy built over the last half-century. For them to consider a sale, they wanted MGBW to be allowed to grow and reach its potential, and not just be swallowed up by a larger firm that didn't share their vision or commitment to the environment and their people.

"Chip and Skye are young, visionary and willing to take risks when they see opportunity. But they are also extremely selective. They only partner with companies with very healthy financials, a strong company structure and even stronger management team," said Roberts. "My team and I have a bold vision for expanding the MGBW brand and pursuing new market segments, and our new partners share our vision. This investment represents an incredible opportunity for us to make our vision a reality. With the resources that they bring to the table, the sky is really the limit for us now."

All 250 team members across both facilities will continue with the company, and more are expected to be added to support MGBW's growth plans. The entire management team will also remain in place, ensuring continuity and a seamless transition.

Some of the immediate changes people will see include a complete brand refresh; new improvements to the aesthetics, security and functionality of the Chula Vista shipyard entrance (adjacent to the new Gaylord Pacific Resort); greater engagement with the superyacht industry; expansion of its Navy repair capabilities; and growth of MGBW's construction division in support of the revival of California boatbuilding

and U.S. manufacturing.

Company History & Evolution

The Engel family, starting with brothers Art, Herb and David, have operated multiple companies on the San Diego waterfront since 1977. In the early years, the shipyard in Chula Vista was originally Southwest Marine and mostly served the tuna fleet and engaged in Naval ship repair. It quickly outgrew the site and expanded into a larger San Diego facility near the Coronado Bridge while rebranding the original Chula Vista yard to South Bay Boatyard. Southwest Marine expanded to five other locations nationwide. In 1997, the Engels sold Southwest Marine and all of its shipyard facilities, except for the boatyard in Chula Vista.

In 2000, Todd Roberts, a 27-year-old California Maritime grad, was hired as vice president and tasked with shutting down what was then a financially struggling boatyard. However, he had a vision for turning the business around that included pursuing a new market with strong growth potential – large privately owned superyachts. Roberts convinced the Engels to invest \$6.5 million to redevelop the facility and upgrade its equipment.

In 2006, under Roberts leadership, MGBW was founded to pursue Robert's new vision. It has now become the largest superyacht refit facility on the West Coast. In 2010, the company opened a second multi-million-dollar boatyard and drydock storage facility in Los Cabos, Mexico. In 2024, Marine Group Global Services was launched, offering maritime consultation and a variety of ship agent and crew services that do not fit the core capabilities of a shipyard.

Following the sale of MGBW, the Engel family will continue to have a business presence on the San Diego working waterfront, maintaining ownership in its other local companies, [Flagship Cruises & Events](#), [Coronado Ferry Landing](#) and the [Fifth Avenue Landing](#) marina (managed by MGBW).

“This year marks my 25th anniversary with the company and talk about a full-circle moment,” said Roberts. “I was originally supposed to close this place down. Instead, the Engel family took a chance on a young guy with big ideas, and together we built something special. We have come a long way, but I’d like to think we’re also just getting started. I’m incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue the Engels’ legacy and hope to make them proud for many years to come.”

About Marine Group Boat Works

Marine Group Boat Works is a full-service maritime vessel construction and repair company with two waterfront facilities, on San Diego Bay and in Los Cabos, Mexico. Its largest shipyard in Chula Vista, Calif., encompasses 1.25 million square feet, with over 2,000 feet of dockage and a new 820-ton variable-width boat lift, rough terrain cranes, a machine shop, metal working equipment and a propeller shop. Its sister boatyard in San Jose del Cabo features over 300,000 square feet of land and water, with a 150-ton and 75-ton variable-width Travelift. Between the two facilities, MGBW employs more than 250 ABS-certified welders, shipfitters, pipefitters, mechanics, electricians, painters and other boatbuilding and repair specialists. For more information, visit www.marinegroupboatworks.com