

Gil Ofer

Eastern Pacific takes the tech track to zero carbon

○ Gil Ofer, one of the new tech-savvy generation of the Ofer family at Eastern Pacific Shipping, has made it his mission to transform the company into a trendsetter in green maritime technology.

The son of Eastern Pacific owner Idan Ofer represents the generation working their way up the ranks of a family-owned dynasty founded by the late Sammy Ofer.

His industry peers believe Gil is being primed to take the helm eventually.

After graduating from Harvard in 2017 with a degree in economics and sociology, he co-founded tech-media company IMGN Media, before joining Eastern Pacific as head of open innovation.

“When we run a business of [Eastern Pacific’s] size and standing, it becomes part of our duty to be proactive and show the industry what can be achieved,” he tells *TW+*.

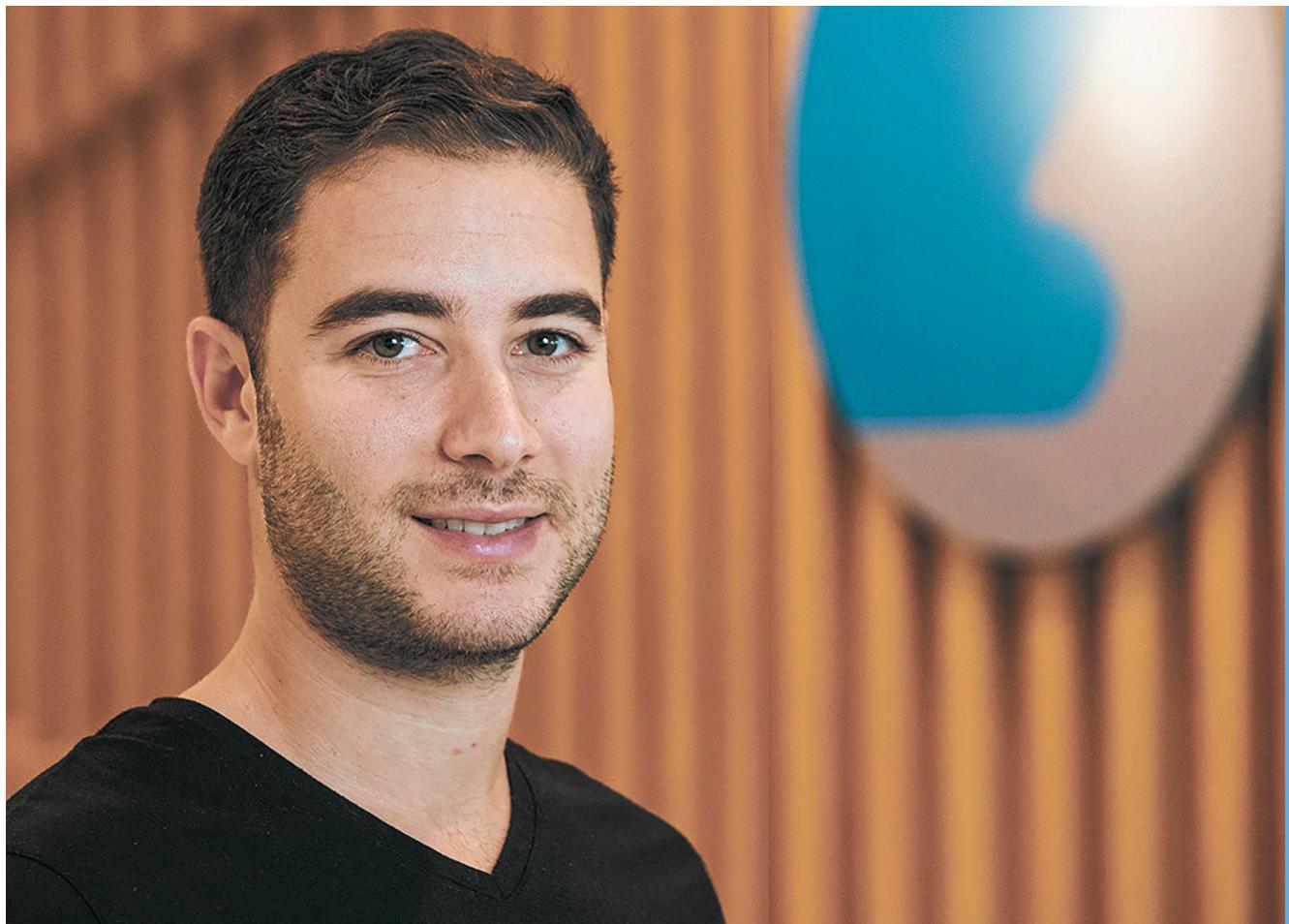
“The drive to zero emissions is our ultimate objective, but how we exactly get there is unclear. What we do know is that technology, such as the Internet of Things, big data and software, will play as big of a role as cleaner alternative fuels [in] getting to zero.”

Ofer stresses that industry-wide collaboration is needed for shipping to thrive over the next few decades.

“We saw a glimpse of this in action with our accelerator programme, where over 150 industry leaders came together to mentor start-ups. They did this not for financial gains but rather for the greater good of the industry, which was rewarding and inspiring to witness.

“This creative mindset and entrepreneurial spirit are needed to attract the next generation of workers at sea and shore.”

Over the next two years, Ofer will be enrolled in the London Business School’s MBA



Photograph: Eastern Pacific Shipping

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Programme, while simultaneously serving as special advisor for innovation at Eastern Pacific.

He will provide the company’s innovation and IT team with objectives and guidance on its digitalisation journey and technology strategy.

Upon completion of his MBA, he plans to rejoin the family business and apply his acquired skills to fuel its commitment to the green and technology-driven growth of the maritime industry.

That is a commitment that has not gone unnoticed, not least on the other side of the Ofer family.

Under chief executive Cyril Ducau, Eastern Pacific has made a splash with an audacious orderbook of 25 ships totalling more than 3.2m dwt, according to Clarksons Research. Its existing fleet totals 125 ships of nearly 10m dwt, with vessels in the dry, wet, LPG and container sectors.

The newbuilding orderbook includes a 10-vessel series of 14,800-teu boxships and up to five 209,000-dwt newcastlemax bulkers, all of which will have LNG dual-fuel propulsion.

At the other end of a ship’s life, Eastern Pacific has adopted an environmental, social and governance code that includes a commitment to green scrapping.

It has pledged to demolish vessels only at yards that comply with the provisions of the Hong Kong Convention.

Idan Ofer’s elder brother Eyal and his UK-based Zodiac Maritime operation remain a close rival after the family assets were divided following the death of their father Sammy in 2011, with its own new generation coming through.

Daniel Ofer, the elder of Eyal’s two sons, has been Zodiac’s managing director for seven years. Younger son David moved back to Zodiac after the split, having previously worked for Idan in Singapore.

Daniel and David are more slowly building Zodiac away from the limelight. They remain reluctant to adopt a public profile. And although Zodiac is significantly larger than Eastern Pacific, with 149 ships of 15.8m dwt, it has only five ships on order, none of them LNG-fuelled, according to Clarksons.

The contrast between Idan and Eyal’s approach to business — and their succession planning and culture — suggests that watchers of the Ofer family’s impact on shipping in the next few decades are in for some fascinating viewing. ☒

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