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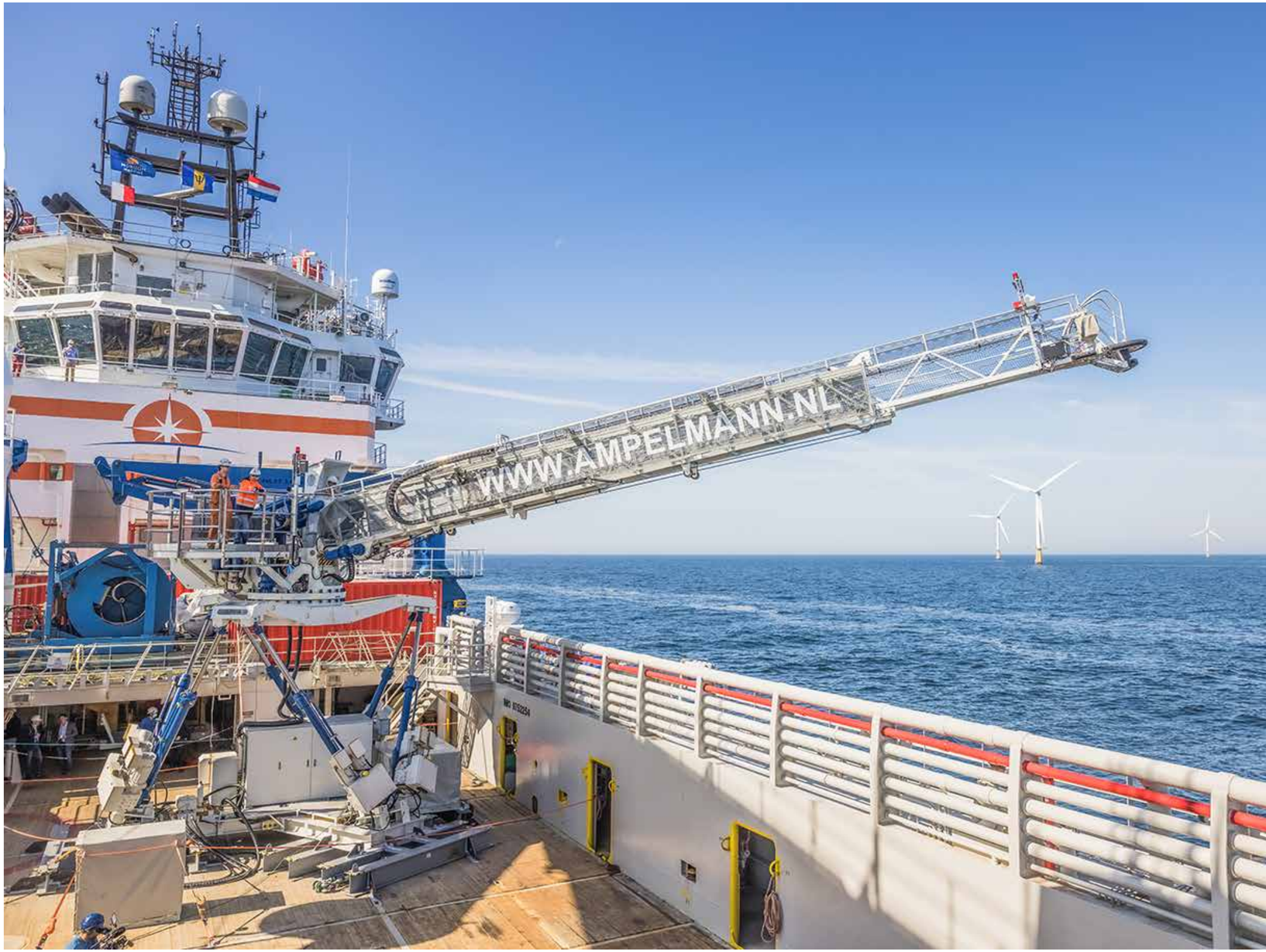
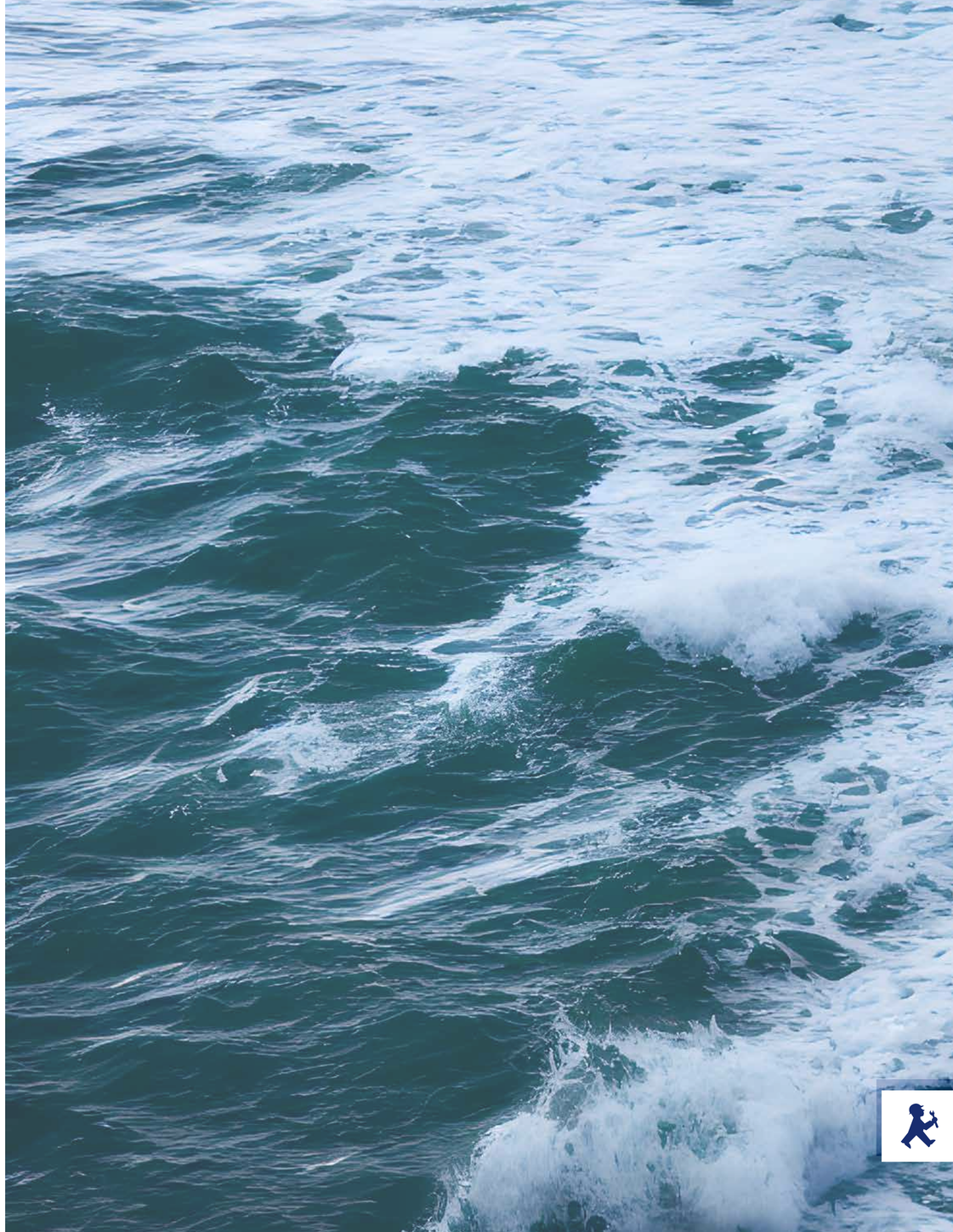
The future is electric:

Why gangways are reshaping offshore operations in the Middle East



Offshore operations in the Middle East are evolving rapidly. As regional Oil and Gas (O&G) projects expand across the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Caspian Sea, the need for safer, more efficient, and scalable crew transfer solutions has never been greater. Among the technologies driving this transformation are motion-compensated gangways – commonly known as Walk to Work (W2W) systems.

Over the past two decades, W2W solutions have become a familiar feature of offshore logistics, enabling direct access between vessels and installations in a wide range of conditions. From improving safety and operational uptime to supporting Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices, gangways are redefining how offshore personnel and equipment move across the region.



Sustained by safety

Before Ampelmann introduced the Middle East to W2W nearly fifteen years ago, the only way to transfer personnel directly from a vessel to an offshore platform and back was by using rudimentary static gangways, ropes, baskets, or by jumping across when conditions allowed it. Prone to delays and not without risks, for good reasons, W2W solutions have gradually been adopted throughout the Middle East as a safer and more efficient alternative.

Modern high-tech gangway systems compensate for the motions a vessel makes in real time. Because of this they can continue to operate in rough weather and minimise delays caused by waiting on the perfect conditions. Via these gangways, personnel can reach their worksites without the risks commonly associated with marine based transfers. Seas are always unpredictable. Even in the somewhat calmer sea conditions in the Caspian Sea and around the Arabian Peninsula, they can change at an instant. High waves and seasonal weather, like the Shamals, can disrupt operations and lead to unsafe working conditions.

Accessing offshore installations directly from a vessel also has some distinct advantages. Large crews, including cargo and equipment, can comfortably transfer to, from and in between different assets. Capable of reaching smaller platforms like Normally Unattended Installations (NUI's) and Single Point Moorings (SPM's), gangways offer a flexible alternative to helicopters.

The high workability of vessels equipped with W2W solutions not only unlocks more hands-on tool time it streamlines year-round productivity while ensuring the safety of personnel. By optimising the use of a vessel, they reduce greenhouse gas emissions per transferee. Especially when compared to traditional transfer methods, Ampelmann's motion compensation gangways improve operational efficiency, reduce idle time, fuel consumption as well as unnecessary crew movements.

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W2W in the Middle East

There is a clearly defined market for W2W systems in the Middle East. Ampelmann has been engaged in 73 short- and long-term projects so far, demonstrating that its gangway systems are an ideal fit for the region's specific conditions.

The company's flagship A-type was first deployed in the region in Qatar in 2012 and has remained the most popular system ever since because of its versatility. Known for the hexapod that keeps the gangway stable even in rough sea conditions, it uniquely compensates for all motions a vessel makes (6DOF), making it suitable for a wide range of offshore operations. With the slideway add-on installed it can transfer up to 10 people per minute, enabling continuous crew changes that keep projects running on schedule.

The L-type, on the other hand, is a fully electric gangway suitable for smaller vessels. Cost-effective and energy efficient, the system enables uninterrupted crew transfers in relatively calm conditions up to 2m Hs. Like the A-type, this gangway can enable operations between two floating objects, commonly known as Ship to Ship (S2S) transfers.

Together, they have already transferred more than three million crew members across the Middle East. Both these systems have been used on a range of different projects in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Azerbaijan. These include jmajor projects, maintenance and inspection, infield crew change and shut-downs.

A new wave of innovation

Though these systems are making strides in the regional and global access market, the company is continuously innovating and designing new solutions to satisfy the growing demand for its systems. A guiding principle of its design philosophy is to reduce the environmental footprint of its systems through electrification. By integrating new technologies such as electro-hydraulics, energy capture and composite materials the company has produced lighter, more energy efficient gangways.

The transition towards a fully electric portfolio is already underway. There are currently several electric versions of the flagship A-type operational, with three more to begin operations by the end of the year. Matching the performance of its fully hydraulic counterpart, the Electric A can also lift cargo up to 400 kilograms and, most importantly, consumes 80% less energy. Put differently, it uses the same amount of energy as five simple coffee machines. As this gangway plugs directly into the vessels internal power supply it does not need an HPU, reducing its weight, mobilisation costs and lowering total energy requirements. With electric and hydrogen powered vessels just beyond the horizon, energy efficient gangways are essential to compensate for the tighter energy capacity of these new designs.

The company is also exploring other ways to improve the design of its systems. Composite materials, for instance, are an exciting new technology with considerable potential to increase the energy efficiency of W2W. These materials are about 30% lighter than steel and more durable and resistant to corrosion. Several composite components have already been developed, including three composite slideways, of which one is currently deployed in Azerbaijan, as well as a fully composite gangway tip.

Serviced by AMPELMANN

While innovation drives these solutions, it is the underlying knowledge, expertise and support networks that power them. Gangways depend on the services that keep them operating at peak performance – from local support, maintenance to data tracking tools.

Ampelmann's long standing presence in the region has enabled the company to provide strong localised support to ensure its systems always perform at peak capacity. The local team in the Qatar office includes projects mangers, business developers, coordinators, technicians and engineers with decades of combined experience in the regional market. Storage facilities in both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a 24/7 global support network managed by the Operation Control Center (OCC) ensure that both the sold and rental fleet have a technical uptime of more than 99 percent.

In addition to operational support and operator training through the W2W Academy, Ampelmann also provides digital services that can be used to find bottlenecks and improve efficiencies. Ampelmann Insights is a proprietary data tracking tool that includes workability forecasts and options to review the performance of W2W operations. These tools can help to identify emissions during operations and find new ways to reduce environmental footprints.

Office Middle East: Yash Shivananda, Jayne Moran and Steven Kaub

Sustainable solutions

For nearly two decades, W2W solutions have quietly transformed offshore operations throughout the world. Motion compensated gangways are an important tool that bring safety and efficiency together with the advantages of marine based access. For good reasons, Ampelmann is scaling up and its gangways have become a key part of the logistics of the offshore O&G market in the Middle East.

With considerable expansions across the region announced for 2026, the Middle East will continue to be a strategic market for offshore access providers. Backed by a strong local foundation, Ampelmann is committed to supporting the evolving operational and environmental needs of the region.

Whether hydraulic or electric, built from composites or steel, innovation and service will remain at the forefront of Ampelmann's solutions. In the short and long term, W2W systems are instrumental to achieving ESG targets as new systems are being developed to satisfy the growing need for safe and efficient access. As W2W converts safety into efficiency, and efficiency into environmental performance, it is a key enabler of the Middle East's offshore future.

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