



WHITE PAPER · MAY 2026

# The Future of Yacht Brokerage

*From Control to Connection*



**Steven Myers**  
Founder & CEO, YATCO

*To the professionals of the global yacht brokerage community,*

I started as a first mate sport fishing, worked my way through boat shows on three continents, sold and delivered vessels to over twenty countries, have attended countless association meetings from almost all markets, and eventually built a platform that today serves professionals in every major yachting market in the world.

That experience has given me one enduring conviction: the professionals who dedicate their careers to this industry—the builders, the brokers, the captains, the crew, the dealers, the service providers—are the ones who make it work for the buyers and sellers we all serve. Every technology platform, every marketplace, every data system only has value because of the trust, expertise, and relationships those professionals bring to it.

Recently, Mark Gibbons, president of 50 North Yacht Sales, wrote an excellent blog about the "[unbundling of yacht search](#)" — a theme that's resonating across our global professional community as the industry reflects on platform behaviors, perpetually rising costs, diminishing value, and decisions being made that run contrary to the interests of the professionals who built this industry and even the buyers and sellers we all serve.

I am writing this paper because I think we are at one of those rare moments when the foundational assumptions of our industry are being tested simultaneously. How we respond collectively, thoughtfully, without panic or politics will define the next decade of yacht brokerage.

I do not have all the answers. But I have been watching this industry long enough to recognize the patterns. And I think if we look at them honestly together, the right path forward becomes clear.

I welcome your direct response. This is the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one.

— **Steven Myers**

Founder & CEO, YATCO

## The Real Estate Mirror

While our industry has its challenges, we are not alone. In many ways we often reflect the rear-view mirror of the trillion-dollar real estate industry.

Right now, the real estate market is navigating its own structural transformation.

- Platform competition between Zillow, Google, the NAR, Realtor.com, and a wave of newer entrants.
- Federal regulatory and legal change reshaping commission structures and platform practices.
- The rapid rise of artificial intelligence in search and valuation.
- Roughly 540 regional MLS platforms in the United States gradually consolidating into larger regional systems while still operating as a federated, interoperable network.
- Consolidators like Redfin, Compass, and the new Real recently acquiring ReMax are reshaping the competitive landscape.

Looking through that lens, it's no surprise our industry is navigating many of the same structural questions, particularly around platform consolidation, the role of A.I., and how brokers maintain control of their data and client relationships in an era of rapid change.

### We've Seen This Movie Before

As a former yacht broker and boat dealer myself, I watched a few strikingly similar scenarios play out over 25 years ago with a platform called BUC, which had been the only platform in the industry at the time.

Back then, thirteen yacht brokerage associations from around the world collectively known as the International Yacht Council, asked me to leave my brokerage business and build a competing platform. Not a consumer portal, but a platform built to serve the professionals of this industry.

I accepted the challenge. But the early years were difficult, they involved seven years of legal disputes through the U.S. federal court system on questions of broker data ownership, antitrust claims and platform practices. The International Yacht Council understandably dissolved to shield its association directors from the personal costs and liabilities they would face. But in the stubbornness of my youth, I decided to march forward.

I ultimately prevailed on the principle that yacht brokers own their own data, a principle that today is contractually embedded in every YATCO customer agreement.

But there are no winners in a seven-year legal war. I emerged only to face the massive recession of 2008 through 2012. I dissolved the company that powered the Yacht Council system and, from the hard lessons learned, started fresh with what became the YATCO platform.

## **The Pattern Repeating**

Today, we're seeing more brokerage houses, associations, and new entrants investing in their own platforms primarily to regain control of their data, their brand, their costs, and their client relationships. At first glance, this makes perfect sense.

But as we look ahead, it's worth recognizing a pattern that repeats itself in our industry every few years.

In the two decades I've spent serving the industry exclusively as an MLS platform provider, I've watched numerous well-intentioned efforts by associations, individual brokerage houses, and startups to build platforms in our industry. Many launched with great fanfare. Yet most eventually ran into the same hard reality:

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***Building and sustaining technology at scale is complex, expensive, and constantly evolving.***

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## **When the Trade-Off Stops Making Sense**

For decades, the centralized marketplace model served both the real estate and the yachting industries well enough. A single platform aggregated listings from hundreds of brokerages for different market segments. Brokers knew where to look. Buyers knew where to search. It had genuine utility.

The trade-off was straightforward: brokerages gave up some control over their data and their client relationships in exchange for visibility and buyer traffic. For most firms, that was a rational decision.

Here is the question I would ask any broker reading this: ***does that trade-off still make sense for your business today?***

Think about what you have built over the course of your career. Your client relationships. Your market knowledge. Your reputation. The database of buyers and sellers you have cultivated over years. The brand your firm has earned in your specific market.

Now think about where all of that lives. Who owns it? If the platform you rely on changed hands tomorrow, or raised its fees significantly, what would that mean for your business? How much of what you have built would you actually be able to take with you.

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***The professionals who built the traffic those platforms monetize deserve an honest answer to that question.***

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## **The Independence Impulse**

What has happened in response is entirely predictable and entirely rational. Brokerages are investing in their own systems. Proprietary listing platforms. Internal CRMs. Direct client ecosystems. The tools to own and control what they have spent years building.

Mark Gibbons of 50 North Yachts articulated it simply: every dollar not handed over to a centralized platform is a dollar that can go into the marketing that actually moves boats. That sentiment is shared by brokers from Monaco to Fort Lauderdale, from Athens to Singapore. I hear it in nearly every conversation I have. And the underlying signal is consistent across markets: many brokers report that platform pricing models have moved into territory they consider unsustainable, while the proportion of qualified leads they attribute to legacy platforms continues to decline. This is not noise. It is a structural signal and brokers are voting with their attention, their contracts, and their data.

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***This is not a trend. It is a structural shift—and it reflects something healthy about where this industry is going.***

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Brokers should own their data. They should control their client relationships. They should have the freedom to build their brand on their own terms. That has always been my view, and it is the foundation YATCO was built on.

## The Hard Part Nobody Talks About

Independence is the right instinct. But I want to be honest about something that does not get discussed openly enough because I have lived it from both sides.

### The Realities of Building a Platform at Scale

Every few years, a new platform emerges that promises to solve the industry's problems. Sometimes it is a brokerage deciding to build its own system. Sometimes it is an association launching a member-governed alternative. Sometimes it is a well-funded startup with a compelling pitch and a team that has never actually sold a yacht.

I respect every one of these efforts. The impulse behind them is right. But I have watched enough of them unfold to know what tends to happen next.

Technology is expensive. Not just to build, but to maintain, to secure, to scale, to update. The legal exposure is real. Data disputes, listing accuracy claims, intellectual property questions these are not theoretical risks. They are the daily reality of operating a platform that professionals depend on for their livelihoods.

The integrations are complicated. Every CRM system, every database, every third-party data feed has to be built, secured, and maintained individually. The global yacht market operates across dozens of regulatory jurisdictions, currencies, and languages. Building infrastructure that actually works at that scale is a different problem than building something that works for one market or one firm.

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***Getting to the moon is easy to envision. The engineering to get there is another matter entirely.***

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### Association-Governed Platforms

The association-backed platform model deserves particular attention because the argument for it is genuinely compelling. A platform aligned with broker interests rather than purely commercial extraction sounds like the ideal solution. It's exactly why I agreed to build an MLS platform for the industry in partnership with the International Yacht Council 25 years ago.

And in theory, it is. I believe deeply in the value of professional associations. I have spent over two decades attending their board meetings, speaking at their conferences, and advocating for the standards they represent.

But there is a big difference between setting industry standards and operating a technology platform. Association governance, by design, moves by consensus, serves diverse and competing constituencies, and makes decisions through committees. Technology product development, by necessity, requires speed, focus, and the ability to make hard calls quickly.

Executives and directors are often direct competitors to the association members they represent. As such, associations tend to ebb and flow, often changing or even reversing course mid-direction as a new executive, leading director, or committee decides the path is 180 degrees in the opposite direction.

The question is not whether the intent is right, the question is whether the governance structure can deliver what the market actually needs, at the scale and pace this moment demands

## **The Question of Capital Structure**

The same honest accounting applies to platforms backed by private capital. The right question is not whether a platform takes investment every serious technology business eventually does, including ours. The right question is whose interests the investment is structured around, and what commitments the platform makes to the professionals who depend on it.

Investment that funds product development, broker tools, and global infrastructure aligns with member value. Investment structured primarily around financial returns rather than member outcomes with pricing models that escalate without commensurate value, or contract structures that create friction for members who choose to leave, can drift away from member alignment over time. The distinction is not in the existence of capital. It is in the structure of the deal and the commitments around it.

YATCO's commitment, in writing, is that capital invested in our platform funds technology our members depend on. Our pricing protections, data ownership guarantees, and broker independence commitments reflect the foundational principles on which YATCO was built — and they are embedded in our standard agreement. That is not a marketing position. It is how we operate.

Every platform eventually reveals whose interests it was actually built to serve. The ones that survive long-term are the ones that answer that question the same way every time.

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## The Connected Future

Which leads to what I think is the key point at this inflection point in our industry: no single platform can realistically represent a global market as dynamic as ours. At the same time, as listings become more distributed, the market still needs a simple, unified way to search. The real challenge, and the real opportunity, is connecting those two realities.

In my view, **the future isn't one platform—it's connected platforms.** I've lived this reality firsthand for over two decades now. And the lesson I keep coming back to is simple: the answer isn't more fragmentation. It's better connection.

Brokers should be able to choose how they operate, control costs, own and control their data, and still plug into global markets. And consumers should be able to rely on trusted communities with accurate data and intelligence.

So the question isn't whether you need technology. You do. The question is whether every firm, every association, and every start-up should be building their own version of it from scratch or whether there's a smarter path forward that gives everyone the control they need without the cost, complexity, and risk of going it alone.

## The Paradox at the Heart of This Moment

The movement toward broker independence is right. Brokers should own their data and their client relationships. That is not a debatable point.

And yet, buyers have not changed. A client searching for a 50-foot motor yacht does not care about platform politics. They want to see the full market. They want confidence that they are not missing something because one brokerage listed exclusively with one platform and another brokerage listed somewhere else entirely.

This is the paradox Gibbons identified and he was right to name it. The industry is decentralizing supply while demand still requires aggregation. The more brokerages assert their independence, the more fragmented the buyer experience becomes. And a fragmented buyer experience hurts every broker in the market, including the independent ones.

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***Broker independence and buyer market completeness are both necessary. The question is whether they are compatible—and I believe they are.***

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But making them compatible requires something the industry has not yet fully recognized: a neutral layer of connectivity that sits between broker-owned systems and buyer-facing demand. Not a gatekeeper. Not another aggregation layer that the industry has come to associate with rising costs and shrinking control.

A connector. Infrastructure that amplifies broker independence without fragmenting the buyer's view of the market.

Think about how this works in other industries. Real estate agents in most markets operate their own brands, their own client relationships, and their own business development and yet with roughly 540 MLS Platforms across the United States, the underlying listing infrastructure is shared and interoperable. The listing belongs to the agent. The infrastructure belongs to the ecosystem.

Yacht brokerage is not real estate. But the principle is sound. **The future of this industry is not a single platform that owns everything. It is connected platforms that serve everyone.**

## What the Next Era Actually Requires

If I were advising a broker today on what to look for in a platform partner, based on thirty years of watching this industry, building this platform, and having these conversations in every major market in the world, here is what I would say.

### Look for Infrastructure, Not the Bright Shiny New Object

The most important question to ask any platform is not about its features or its pricing. It is about its foundation. How long has it been operating? How many markets does it actually serve, not claim to serve, with working integrations? How has it behaved when something went wrong, when a client dispute arose, when the regulatory environment shifted?

Maturity matters in technology infrastructure the same way it matters in brokerage relationships. A platform that has operated globally for twenty-five years has encountered, and solved, problems that a platform built last year has not yet imagined.

## Look for Contractual Guarantees, Not Policy Statements

Look for Contractual Guarantees, Not Policy Statements. Any platform you trust with your listings, your data, and your client relationships should be willing to put its commitments in writing. Not as a marketing position that can change with ownership or market conditions, but as a contractual obligation.

**These are the questions to ask, and to get answered in your platform agreement:**

- Who owns your data if the platform is acquired?
- Is your pricing locked for the term of your agreement - and what happens to it after?
- Can you export everything and leave without penalties?
- Is the platform free to connect to any other system you choose?
- Does the platform have the right to exclude you for competitive reasons?

*If it is **association “owned”** or driven:*

- Who are the developers behind the platform?
- Can any of the executives or directors be shareholders, have a financial interest, or access to the data?
- What is the contingency plan if the association dissolves or restructures

*If it is a **private developer**:*

- What happens to your platform if the developer dissolves or terminates?
- Will the development and ongoing maintenance become a major distraction to your core business?
- And finally, will your team actually use it once built? And will you ever see a positive ROI?

**If a platform, tech partner or association cannot or will not answer these questions in writing, that silence tells you everything you need to know.**

## Look for Alignment, Not Dependency

There is a difference between a platform that benefits when you succeed and a platform that benefits regardless of whether you succeed. The former aligns its interests with yours. The latter extracts rent from your business whether the relationship is working or not.

The platform relationships worth building are the ones where your success is the platform's success. Where the platform is investing in tools that make you more productive, not in features

designed to make switching more expensive. Where the people you talk to know your market and care about your specific business—not just your monthly subscription.

## **Look for a Platform Built for Professionals, Not Repurposed for Them**

There is a meaningful difference between a platform designed for professional brokerage and a consumer portal that added a professional tier. The former understands listing accuracy, co-brokerage protocols, central agency agreements, and the specific dynamics of the yacht market. The latter optimizes for buyer traffic volume and treats professional listings as inventory.

This is not an abstract distinction. It shows up in data quality, in how disputes are handled, in what the product roadmap prioritizes, and in who actually answers the phone when something goes wrong.

## **Where YATCO Stands**

That's exactly how we've positioned YATCO, as a trusted connector for the industry, not a gatekeeper. Our global team has been building toward this moment, and we are ready to meet it.

During the last 36 months, we acquired and merged six platforms together—YATCO BOSS, YATCO.com, Triton, ACREW, Boat Deck, and YachtandBoat.com—into one interconnected group connecting yacht brokers, builders, buyers, sellers, charterers, captains, crew, and service providers. Today YATCO operates as a single integrated ecosystem as the Trusted Tech & Connect of Yachting : Search, Data, Community.

As of Q1 2026, YATCO listings receive approximately:

- 2 million monthly impressions across our network.
- Our API data endpoints handle in excess of 45 million queries per month, serving more than 1,000 websites and platforms.
- Our team produces approximately 6,600 custom PDF brochures monthly for qualified buyers globally,
- attends over 20 international boat shows annually, and distributes more than 13,000 printed and 20,000 digital show books each year.
- Our CRM, e-contracts, and email marketing tools integrate with HubSpot, Salesforce, MS Dynamics, and others.

We have grown 150% in the last 36 months alone. And we are just getting started.

We are currently investing heavily in A.I., mobile apps, and consumer marketing with 30 full-time employees and a 50-person extended team dedicated to these initiatives, because the market demands it and the pace of change requires it.

YATCO's role is not to replace the broker. It is to make the broker more powerful. We run the backend so brokers can run the relationship absorbing the complexity of data, integrations, infrastructure, and global distribution, so the professionals we serve can focus on what only they can do: advise, negotiate, and close. Combined with 25 years of broker-only data inside YATCO BOSS, real-time market intelligence, automated alerts, client activity tracking, API distribution, and integrated charter and sales workflows, our members are equipped to be the most informed and most trusted advisor in any room they walk into.

To be clear: we are not advocating for a monopolistic position. We are advocating for a partnership with each and every professional in this industry providing data feeds, controls, technology, and connectivity to build your own communities, promote to markets of your choice, control your own data and costs, and support your company's best interests now and into the future with contractual guarantees.

For the past two decades, our team at YATCO has worked to earn our position as a valued and trusted partner to the world's leading brokerage companies, builders, and luxury yacht buyers by serving the professionals of yachting with accuracy, integrity, and leading-edge technology.

We are here to deliver accurate real-time data, innovative software and A.I. solutions, and integrated marketing services that drive global buyer demand through interconnected platforms of yachting communities. Our commitment is that our members own and control their data, central listings benefit buyers and sellers, and reasonable pricing is defined transparently in your agreement.

## Five Commitments in Writing

**Your data is yours.** Under our standard agreement, members retain ownership of their listing data, with full export rights and no exclusivity requirement on YATCO's side.

**Your pricing is protected.** Rates are defined in your Purchase Order for the term of your agreement, with advance written notice required before any adjustment takes effect. No differential pricing based on your region, the revenue of your firm, or other non-transparent factors.

**Your freedom is protected.** Members are free to connect to other platforms, systems, or markets they choose. YATCO does not require exclusivity, and our standard agreement reflects that commitment.

**Your exit is clean.** At the end of your agreement, leave with all your data intact. Standard 12-month minimum and 90-day notice apply. No exit penalties, your data is returned to you in accordance with the agreement terms.

**Your voice shapes what we build.** YATCO is establishing a Global Advisory Committee of senior professionals from every major market, with direct input into our product roadmap.

*Ask for these commitments in writing from every platform you evaluate. If they are unwilling to put them on paper, that tells you everything you need to know about whose interests the platform actually serves.*

## A Direct Invitation

I want to close this paper the same way I try to approach every conversation in this industry, directly, without pretense, and with genuine respect for the professionals I am talking to.

## An Honest Comparison

If you are currently on another platform and you have questions about whether YATCO would serve your business better, compare them side by side. Compare data tools, brochures, APIs, qualified inquiry quality, data control, data ownership and global listing reach. We are confident in what that comparison will show. And if it does not show what we believe it will, you have lost nothing.

## **A Direct Conversation**

Tell me what your brokerage needs that no platform is currently delivering. I mean that literally. Contact me directly. The tools we build next are shaped by the conversations I have with professionals in the field, not by internal strategy sessions or investor requirements.

## **A Shared Future**

The future of yacht brokerage will not be owned by a single platform. It will be built by connected ones, where brokers control their systems, platforms interoperate, and buyers access the full market without friction.

That future is not a distant concept. It is being built right now, one broker relationship, one integration, one honest conversation at a time.

The invitation is open to every professional in this industry, whether you are currently a YATCO member or not, whether you agree with everything in these pages or not. The industry belongs to the professionals who have dedicated their careers to it. Our job is to make sure they have the technology, the reach, and the independence to keep it that way.

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***The future will not be owned. It will be connected.***

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## About Steven Myers

A global yachting professional with over 30 years of experience, Steven Myers has dedicated his career to the yachting industry, becoming a recognized leader in sales, marketing, and technology.

Starting as a professional sport fishing first-mate, Steve worked his way through Penn State University before moving to Europe to work for Viking Yacht Company as International Sales Manager, establishing a global dealer network across more than 30 international markets. He attended graduate school at the Wharton School of Business and served on a regional board of Habitat for Humanity.

Steve later founded Emarine International, with offices in Fort Lauderdale, Spain, and Malaysia, brokering vessels in 20 countries and achieving personal sales of over \$100 million by the age of 30. He earned the status of #1 dealer worldwide for the Ferretti Group and was granted full group dealership rights after achieving 100% growth three years in a row, before selling to a MarineMax in 2003.

He has been an active supporter of the Boys & Girls Club, served the USAID in Kyrgyzstan, and founded an education abroad alumni group with the goal of promoting international study for all college students. In March 2018, he became an alumnus of Harvard Business School after completing their prestigious three-year Owners, Presidents & Managers program.

As Founder and CEO of YATCO, Steve has spent over two decades building the trusted digital infrastructure of the global yachting industry. He has traveled to over 100 countries, attended every major boat show in the world, and delivered vessels in virtually every major yachting market globally.

## About YATCO

For almost two decades, YATCO has grown into the world's leading professional digital marketplace and platform provider for the large yacht sector of the global industry.

As *TheTrusted Tech & Connect of Yachting: Search, Data, Community*, YATCO's integrated ecosystem serves brokers, dealers, builders, charter operators, captains, crew, and service providers across every major market. The platform processes over 45 million API data queries per month to over 1,000 websites & platforms, powers over 1,000 broker and dealer websites, generates more than 2 million monthly listing impressions globally, creates and distributes over 6,600 custom brochures to professional yacht brokers, and has facilitated billions of dollars in annual vessel transactions.

And while we have grown 150% in the last 36 months alone, we are just getting started by acquiring and merging six platforms together, including YATCO BOSS, YATCO.com, Triton, ACREW, Boat Deck and YachtandBoat.com into one interconnected group connecting yacht brokers, builders, buyers, sellers, charterers, captains, crew and service providers to better serve the industry. We have grown to over 30 full-time employees and a 50-person extended team, expanded into charter, and have built an integrated ecosystem to serve as the trusted connector of yachting.

Our team is present at over 20 boat shows around the world, distributing 13,000 printed and 20,000 digital boat show books annually. Through our Boat Deck division, we power over 1,000 broker and dealer websites via WordPress plugins and APIs. Through BOSS, our CRM, e-contracts, and email marketing features connect with HubSpot, Salesforce, MS Dynamics, and more. Through our Triton and ACREW acquisitions, we connect directly with over 80,000 captains, crew, and service providers worldwide.

Our pricing commitments, data ownership guarantees, and broker independence protections reflect the foundational principles on which YATCO was built and they are embedded in our standard agreement. That is not a marketing position. It is how we operate. Our only obligation is to the professionals who trust us with their business.

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