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## Stepping into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Why Northumberland Propeller is Investing in Updated Tools

*A conversation with Gerry Shaw of Northumberland Propeller*

It's 2023 - imagine using a computer from 1993 to complete your everyday tasks; that your doctor hadn't opened a medical journal for the past three decades; or that your local news station continued to report on stories from before the new millennium. History has its place, but in order to stay competitive and fulfill client wants and needs, businesses must work to stay up-to-date with the latest practices and technology. We recently spoke with Gerry Shaw, owner of Northumberland Propeller Services in Nova Scotia, who is very familiar with this principle. He has been utilizing HydroComp's PropExpert software in order to modernize his business.



*A young Gerry Shaw in a propeller shop with his grandfather.*

Gerry founded Northumberland Propeller in 2019 due to a strong family connection to the propeller repair business. "My grandfather used to do it too, I have a picture around here of me doing it when I was 11. There's always been somebody in the area, but besides that, there's not really a lot in Nova Scotia. Plus, I enjoy doing it." Most of their work is in the fishing industry, but there are some pleasure boaters as well.

After purchasing equipment from a local gentleman who worked with him for a little while before retiring, he quickly had a realization. "I could see I needed to change things, update things - we're getting there slowly."

How is Gerry revolutionizing his new business? "More or less, just research. He [the previous owner] was 70, and it was just the same way that he was taught 30 years ago. There's not a lot of information out there and there's not a lot of people that you can talk to about propellers - that's why Adam Kaplan [Program Manager of Propeller Tools] has been great, it's refreshing to talk to someone with knowledge like that. Just doing research, every day I'm trying to learn."

Gerry explains the need for research - improved quality and higher expectations that have become the industry standard. "Vessels are changing now and there's not much room for error. The quality has gone up. The equipment that I use, we're building it ourselves and changing things. The biggest thing would be the quality of the work that's coming out - what was fine 30 years ago isn't fine anymore. People are paying big money and they expect the best, so that's what I'm trying to offer."

HydroComp appeared not only in his Google search results, but also in conversation. He explains, “I talked to a lot of the other propeller shops around too, and it’s what everybody’s used. I thought, ‘I need it!’”



At this point in time, Northumberland Prop consists of Gerry and one other employee. It goes without saying that Gerry has a lot on his plate. He does the majority of the propeller work himself, and since his name is on everything, he takes pride in that ownership and his output. He spends about half of his time on the floor working on the propellers, and the other half sizing, pricing, and sourcing them.

Gerry was sold on PropExpert after a particularly challenging project. “We did a repower in conjunction with another company, and it was a tricky one. We were having a hard time, there were a lot of variables - it didn’t go exactly like we expected it. I didn’t have PropExpert at the time, but Adam and I did a Zoom meeting and I gave him the information, told him what happened. He showed me, right in front of me, by this time we had it figured out, but I thought it was a good project to see how well this program worked.”

This experience gave Gerry the opportunity to experience firsthand how worthwhile PropExpert is. “When I gave him the information, everything was exactly how it was as when we finished the project. It took us a lot longer than it took Adam with this program to figure it out” reflects Gerry. “He had that in 15 minutes and it spit out the numbers, and it took us three pitch changes. That’s when I ordered it right there.” The proof was in the pudding.



*Modern-day Gerry Shaw at his propeller shop.*

Looking back on PropExpert, he says, “It could have been a daily tool right from the start. I get calls every day from people that are not getting the power their engine needs, or they’re looking for a new propeller, or wondering why. And it’s just so easy - a couple minutes, I can go on there and tell them very close to what they need or what their vessel should be using.” For him, it all goes back to using a tool that he can truly trust. “The biggest thing is sizing propellers for people... My name’s on it, so getting that information from somebody else was a bit of a risk before. To be able to see that myself, it has made a big difference.”

Adam states, “We see a lot of propeller shops Customers depend on propeller specialists for recommendations, especially during repowers.” He continues, “Manufacturers are great at sizing, but having the ability to calculate the performance of one propeller versus another is a huge asset. It helps you run more scenarios, faster, with a more complete picture of the results.”

As a new user, Gerry is still getting acquainted with having this powerful tool at his fingertips. “Every time, I am getting a little bit better, but Adam’s great. He’s definitely got some knowledge, and like I said before, it’s nice to talk to somebody that understands the industry.

I'm sure any propeller shop can agree, there's not a lot of people out there to talk to about this. I look forward to any chance I get to send Adam a question because I have learned something every time I've spoken to him."

From the customer point of view, PropExpert provides him with something concrete. "When somebody comes in and they're asking, it gives me something to show them, it's not just me saying, *'This is what I think you need,'* it's, *'Look, here's the data I put in. This has been calculated. There's thousands of hours put into this program to do exactly what I'm showing you.'* I show people - every time there is someone in, I bring them around the counter and show them what I'm doing." He concludes, "It really assures people that we know what we're doing, and that we care about it, too."



Northumberland Propeller and HydroComp are in the early days of their collaboration. As Gerry expands his business, the HydroComp team welcomes their role as a resource and provider of contemporary software, effectively helping Northumberland Propeller establish its position as a leader of propeller shops in the 21st century.

### **About HydroComp**

Since 1984, HydroComp has been a leader in providing hydrodynamic software and services for resistance and propulsion prediction, propeller sizing and design, and forensic performance analysis. Through its unique array of software packages and services, HydroComp now serves over 1400 naval architectural design firms, shipyards, yacht owners, ship operators, propeller designers, universities and militaries around the globe.

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