

Should I re-power my boat?

Good question, I am so glad that you asked. As you would expect I would say; "It all depends".

People re-power their boats for a myriad of reasons but it always comes down to a balancing act of cost, return and weighing wants against needs. The deciding factors are usually:

- 1) Condition of my current power. Do my engines run well? Do they require some heavy cash in repairs and maintenance? Are they reliable? Fuel pigs?
- 2) Condition of my boat. Do I love the hull and layout? Is she well mannered and does she do the things I want her to do? Are her bones in good shape? Did I have that surveyor fellow that scowls in his picture and writes for the paper have a look and tell me that the hull, and grid are in good shape and about how much the bare boat is worth? Have I poured a bunch of money into the hull recently like new electronics, canvass or topsides paint?
- 3) Was my boat correctly powered to begin with? Could I use more power? Is the transom or hull rated for more horsepower than is currently installed. And if not how will more power be of a benefit to me?
- 4) Will the cost be absorbed in resale value if I decide to sell the boat?
- 5) I have gasoline inboard engines, should I re-power with diesel?
- 6) How can I slide the expense past the wife?

All of these are questions that need to be asked and if possible answered. #6 is all up to you though.

During the course of my career I have re-powered dozens and dozens of boats. The one thing most of them had in common was that the owner loved that particular boat. He didn't want a bigger, newer shinier more modern version of the same thing or anything else. He liked his boat and installed fresh power. In more than a few cases I was left shaking my head as the owner went happily down the bay in old boat with power worth five times that of the boat. But he was happy and the check cleared so what else is there really? Well in some cases it just made simple financial sense to replace the old with new.

Enthusiasm can be costly. Have you ever stepped over a dollar to pick up a dime? I have. New engines are expensive but the market is applying pressure and the prices have come way down. Recently one of my clients was quoted a price at the Miami show for a new pair of 300hp outboards that 10 months ago would have been unheard of by a margin of 25%.

Diesel engines as well have come down in price, especially the smaller versions in the 200 to 350 hp range. Cummins, Yanmar and Volvo are becoming very competitive. "Better gas mileage" How much gas saving does it take to account for 10-40,000 dollars?

"So is it worth it?" Settle down, I'm getting to that...

"Boater A" has a 6-year-old outboard boat of high quality and proven resale value. His engine is out of warranty. While out boating he hears an expensive noise and the engine dies. Later that week the mechanic gives him the bad news; "your power head is toast" Well he could re-build or replace the power head for a cost of around 4500\$ by the time it's all over or buy a new engine for about 9,500\$. This is no brainier. Buy the new

engine. Resale is enhanced with current technology, reliability and warranty is improved as well. Worth every nickel. Because his hull has held good value. (And not just to him) “Boater B” has a lesser brand boat of the same age with the same problem. The trouble with boater B is that his hull value is so low that the numbers to re-power will never make sense. In this case he is better off fixing it and getting as much use out of the boat as possible. Even if Boater B had sunk a bunch of money into it recently it doesn’t matter. Depreciation is running hard. Very hard.

Should I re-power with diesel? No. Go buy a diesel boat at a great price and spend the extra making it the way you want it.

There is always an exception to any rule and in this case the exception is a word; “classic” The boat in question may be a classic in the (forgive me) classical sense or simply just be the only boat you will ever need or want. Posterity has value to at least one person.

Example: Do you have an old Formula 233? How about a 31 Bertram? Maybe a 200cc Sea Ox or a 46 Hatteras. A stalwart Trojan 10 meter or a Potter built SeaCraft. OH OH! or a John Allmand Citation. And the list goes on. Why are these boats worth re-powering? Simple math.

For the sake of argument lets say I happened to inherit a classic Allmand 25 Citation hard top with a nasty old OMC stern drive engine in mediocre shape. For me if that boat had a diesel stern drive it couldn’t be bested. A deep V hull that eats up Gulf chop and provides for my fishing and family cruising needs. It fits behind my fence and can be towed with the truck I already own. Perfect I could re-power it with diesel for way under 25,000\$ Conversely, I would have to find a Carolina Classic or custom Whitewater for three times that money to find what I wanted already made. But I would never need another boat. And that is why some guys (like me) pour lots of money into old boats.

That is the difference between classic, custom and production with needs and wants coming together as one. What do you have and is it worth the money to re-power? I suggest you call one of our Island brokers or myself to get a feel for what else is out there and what your baby is worth before committing either way.