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McDermott's strategy for Angola

The Energy Year talks to Mahesh Swaminathan, McDermott International's senior VP of subsea and floating facilities, about the company's strategy in Angola and technological innovations it's bringing to the country and region. McDermott International is a global provider of EPC solutions to the energy industry, with 100 years of experience in executing complex projects.



What is your strategy for strengthening local capacity in the Angolan market?

At the moment, our footprint in Angola covers the Begonia project being carried out by TotalEnergies in Block 17/06. This project is setting the foundation for our long-term presence in the country as we forge strategic partnerships with various local service providers that complement our offering.

We want to clearly show that we are not here for one project but are here investing in the future. We are excited to bring our international engineering expertise into Angola. Long-term projects allow us to do that. What I intend to do is grow a footprint in engineering in Angola over the next couple of projects and increase the amount of work that we do in Angola on the engineering side.

We are a 100-year-old company, and compared to our competition, we have the ability to not just do the marine work

with vessels but to also do a lot of complex fabrication work. We have five large global fabrication facilities around the world.

However, in Angola, we're leveraging our unique fabrication expertise and using local facilities for all the fabrication work for Angolan projects. We hope to strengthen these fabrication companies with our expertise. It is a long-term investment in the country, and it's certainly going to pay off for all stakeholders involved.

What are the key technological innovations that you are bringing to Angola?

Angola is where we are deploying our newly commissioned vessel, the *Amazon*, which is a fast-transit, dynamically positioned construction vessel. Angola is the perfect market for this vessel, and it also allows us to differentiate ourselves from our competition in the market. We selected Angola to deploy the *Amazon* because of the large number of subsea and deepwater projects

and investments that are happening in the country.

The *Amazon* is a J-Lay vessel which is able to do hex joints in very deep waters up to 3,000 metres. It is unique in the sense that it's the only vessel in the world that can do that.

It is also largely automated and is in fact one of the most automated vessels in the world. It requires very few people to operate, which means that the number of people onboard is probably less than 150. This makes the carbon footprint of the vessel very low.

How attractive is the subsea and deepwater market in Angola compared to neighbouring countries in the region?

We find it very attractive for two reasons. One is that it's a deepwater market, and in this market, we differentiate ourselves in terms of technology. It's also an established, mature market. I think that's one of

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the key things. If you compare Angola with many of the countries in West Africa, you see that the country has been doing deep-water projects for many years.

Likewise, it's an established market where the big players such as TotalEnergies have been for many years. They know there is expertise available in-country, support available in-country and also support from the regulators and ANPG.

It is also a very competitive market; there is no question about it. We are the newest entrants to this market, but we are proving our capabilities and competitiveness with the Begonia project.

What is McDermott's growth strategy for the Angolan subsea market?

We are a true EPCI company with a very long history of achievements across the world. The way we want to grow is organically. We are investing in people and engineering in-country. We want these people to then execute larger projects and increase the footprint of our engineering activities with the right partners.

Similarly, we want to invest in doing more fabrication and more complex fabrication operations in Angola. Finally, with the graduates we have hired, we transfer knowledge and develop them so they are able to support future projects and take some of the company's key positions as they grow. If you see it from an investment perspective, I think this goes hand in hand with the actual project work.

Having more work in Angola will mean having many partnerships in-country. We should be able to do more and more in-country, and that means that we're able to train and use existing resources. Moreover, we hope we are able to use the people we're training not only for projects here but for projects worldwide, where they will receive further training and exposure. Then, at some point they will come back to Angola and contribute with what they've learned. ■

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