



## Information memorandum on media misrepresentation

Synergy Marine Group would like to address the September 25, 2024 story by USA Today, an article that was deeply flawed, incomplete, and, in places, categorically false in its portrayal of our company and its safety record. It is our strong conviction that the reporters lacked a fundamental understanding of the maritime industry and its nuances; failed in their ethical responsibility to present data to their readers that was accurate, verified and placed in the proper context; and drew conclusions that painted a distorted picture of our company and industry, one that delivers 98% of the world's trade every day.

We simply cannot sit by and let inaccurate media coverage go unchallenged or distract us from providing the superior customer service that has been our hallmark since our founding.

One of the key perspectives USA Today lacked was the understanding of the implications of today's maritime industry being a truly global enterprise. Therefore, when it comes to the topic of safety data and reporting, the reality is that this data is archived at different levels - global, at regional levels and even by country. While each event is monitored by world-class and respected organizations, they are often unaffiliated with each other, making direct comparisons difficult. There is no single resource that tracks every event, in every location, and in every country around the world.

Additionally, these organizations do not always follow a homogeneous reporting and recording structure. Therefore, when comparing events, it's critical to also understand the unique circumstances that surround each event to paint an accurate picture of what transpired. It can also provide clarity into the circumstances or actions that might have led up to the event taking place, the responsible party, or whether it was avoidable. For example, our research uncovered cases where mariners had passed away from a heart attack, stroke, or Covid while on board, yet their deaths were inaccurately categorized as a safety event. We believe this is critically important, contextual information that would have been helpful to USA Today's readership.

During our direct correspondences, the journalists themselves even acknowledged the risks of presenting limited and inconsistent datasets as fact in their story, noting the "*great danger*" of "*influencing the outcome of the analysis in a way that someone might say was unfair.*" However, the publication ultimately decided to include this information regardless. They even presented this information to their readers as factual and complete, making statements such as "Among these 10 largest ship managers, USA TODAY discovered 117 incidents since January 2019 in which people died, went missing or were injured. Synergy had the most deaths, but it did not have the most incidents overall..." So, while on one hand they clearly acknowledge the data is incomplete, on the other they present the same data as hard facts, presenting a distorted view to readers.



The journalists also mentioned that they consulted with so-called maritime experts to validate their positions but did not identify them and in several places editorialized the data to present a negative and nefarious tone. For instance, when they included the comment “these numbers are likely an undercount” when referencing official industry reports, or statements such as “Notably, none of the incidents appear to tarnished the company’s reputation or its continued growth...Not even the Baltimore bridge disaster broke its stride.” The undertone of this sentence suggests that Synergy prioritizes growth over all else. Nothing could be further from the truth, and we believe it’s irresponsible journalism to suggest otherwise.

It is important to know that the Synergy team engaged extensively with the USA Today journalists over the course of three months, providing thorough information, contextual analysis, industry education, and transparent responses to all their queries. We also invited them to our offices and ships to see first-hand the priority we place on our people and systems. But despite this openness and transparency, they still published an inaccurate piece that only told part of the story. This team of journalists did not seem interested in investing the time and effort to understand the facts –electing instead to cherry-pick specific events and data that supported their agenda.

As an industry leader, and one that has been recognized for its safety efforts and the keen attention we pay to the quality of life of seafarers – the profession in which Synergy’s founder began his career – we feel strongly that the need for timely, accurate, and, comprehensive data transparency is critical to our industry.

While incidents are an unfortunate reality in any high-risk industry like ours, you can be assured that we rigorously analyse the root causes of every event and implement preventive measures for the future. Our continuous investment in advanced technologies, crew training, and voluntary safety audits ensures that Synergy maintains the highest operational standards across our fleet. It is a key reason why we have enjoyed such longstanding and trusted relationships with owners, insurers, and the broader maritime community.