UW Group marks 25 years of growth and global reach

An interview with founder and CEO Thrasos Tsangarides on guiding a family-run Cypriot maritime company into a global maritime leader



What does reaching 25 years mean to you personally and to the UW Group as a whole?

Reaching 25 years is both a milestone and a moment of reflection. Personally, it fills me with pride to see how far we have come since our early days as a small family business in Cyprus. For the UW Group, it represents a journey of persistence, growth and transformation. It is not just about the passage of time, but about the values we have carried with us throughout, integrity, professionalism and the drive to always deliver more than we promise.

Looking back, what are you most proud of in UW Group's journey so far?

What makes me most proud is the evolution of the company and the people behind it.

We started with a vision and very limited resources, but through hard work, dedication and trust from our clients, we became a partner of choice for some of the world's leading ship owning and ship management companies shipping companies.

Beyond business achievements, I am especially proud of our social footprint through initiatives like the Life Jacket Foundation, our non-profit organisation that supports children in need and childcare organisations. UW Group contributes a fixed amount from every order we receive completed transaction, complemented by donations from partners, individuals and company-hosted events.

One of our key fundraising initiatives is through our UW Galaxy bags. These are reusable bags sold on the Life Jacket Foundation's website, with 100 per cent of sales proceeds going to charitable causes.

Most recently, in June, we also developed the Life Jacket Inclusive Park, specially designed for children with disabilities, providing a meaningful way to give back to the community. Most recently, in June, we proudly developed the Life Jacket Inclusive Park, a bright and welcoming space specially designed for children with disabilities, offering a joyful and meaningful way to give back to the community.

We also run a variety of CSR and awareness activities, such as a cinema day every November to mark World Children's Day, marathons, tree-planting activities, beach cleanups and other initiatives aimed at supporting the community.

Success, in my view, is meaningful only when it extends beyond the company walls and creates a positive impact on society.

How has UW Group managed to grow from a small family business into a global maritime brand?

The key was never losing sight of who we are, even as we grew. From the beginning, we believed in offering more than just services, we believed in building relationships based on trust and consistency. Our expansion into Greece, Singapore, the UAE, and partnerships in China came as a result of listening carefully to our clients' needs and being present where they needed us most.

At the same time, we invested in our people and in a culture that empowers them to innovate and lead. That combination of global reach and personal touch has been central to our growth.

What was the thinking behind unifying UMAR and WSR under the UW Group identity?

UMAR and WSR each had their own strong identity and reputation, but as our activities expanded, we saw the opportunity to bring them together under a single umbrella.

The UW Group identity allows us to present ourselves as one cohesive company, offering a complete range of maritime services, from equipment supply to shipyard representation and technical solutions. It also reflects our evolution from two companies into a truly global organisation with one shared vision.

Just as two brothers are recognised more by their shared surname than by their individual first names, UW Group has become the 'family name' uniting UMAR and WSR.

How important are people (your team, partners and clients) to the success you've achieved?



People are at the heart of everything we do. Our team is the driving force behind our success; their passion, professionalism and creativity are what make UW Group stand out. We are proud to have been recognised as a 'Great Place to Work', because it shows that our internal culture is strong. Equally important are our partners and clients, without their trust and collaboration, we would not be where we are today. Success in shipping is built on relationships and we never take those relationships for granted.

What role does Cyprus play in the company's identity, even as you've expanded globally?

Cyprus is our home and the foundation of our identity. The island has a long tradition in shipping and being part of this ecosystem has been invaluable to our development. Even as we expanded internationally, Cyprus has remained our anchor, shaping our values and giving us credibility in the global maritime community.

It is a privilege to represent Cyprus abroad and to contribute in our own way to its position as a key shipping hub.

How does UW Group stay ahead in a competitive and constantly evolving maritime industry?

The maritime sector is dynamic and staying ahead requires adaptability, innovation and consistency. At UW Group, we continuously invest in technology, training and strategic partnerships to ensure we meet the changing needs of our clients. At the same time, our certifications and commitment to quality, transparency and sustainability give our partners confidence that we are a reliable long-term ally.

Most importantly, we keep our ears open, we listen to the industry, to our partners and to the trends shaping the future, and we act proactively.

What does the future look like for UW Group in terms of strategy, innovation and expansion?

The future is about consolidating our position as a global leader in integrated maritime services while remaining agile and innovative. Strategically, we aim to expand our international presence, deepen our partnerships and explore new opportunities where we can add value. Innovation will be key, not only in technology, but also in the way we approach sustainability and social responsibility.



We want to grow, but to grow responsibly, in a way that strengthens both the industry and the communities we serve.

What advice would you give to young entrepreneurs starting out today?

My advice would be to believe in your vision, but remain flexible in the way you pursue it. Success does not come overnight; it takes persistence, patience and resilience.

Surround yourself with people who share your values, because a strong team is your greatest asset. Never forget that business is not only about profit, it is about creating value, building trust and giving back. If you keep those principles at the centre of your journey, the rest will follow, but you need to start now.

Time is always important and relevant, but not when you're chasing your dream, because success is a marathon, not a sprint.