

# FloaTec's point man

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*Winning the prestigious Papa Terra tension-leg wellhead platform EPC job with Petrobras has turned the spotlight on Eric Namtvedt, president of the Houston-based player*

**The smile is wide and ineffaceable. The president of Houston-based floating production contractor FloaTec, Eric Namtvedt, recently gave up his old corner office for a new workspace one floor below, but that was fine with him.**

His engineers needed the room as FloaTec had finally, after four long years, landed its first lump-sum engineering, procurement and construction contract valued at nearly \$1 billion to deliver an extended tension-leg wellhead platform to Brazilian oil company Petrobras and US partner Chevron.



The letter of intent for the Papa Terra dry-tree TLWP — Brazil's first — was signed on 7 October and Namtvedt is preparing to fly to Brazil to sign the final agreement before Christmas.

It has probably taken a little longer than Namtvedt, aged 55, or FloaTec's parents expected when the 50:50 joint venture between fabrication giants Keppel Fels and J Ray McDermott was launched in September 2005. Namtvedt credits Keppel's experience in Brazil as a key competitive advantage for FloaTec.

"Now it's a different challenge," Namtvedt says. "Everyone wants to see that we can do it. Obviously, everybody is going to be watching us to see how smoothly we will deliver."

FloaTec was formed to provide multiple hull options for developing deep-water fields, be it spars, tension-leg platforms or semi-submersible solutions.

Besides engineering expertise, it also offers access to fabrication capacity through joint venture founders Keppel and J Ray.

"Hopefully when people see FloaTec, they think Keppel and McDermott," Namtvedt says.

The parents' "considerable" investment in FloaTec has been in the "tens of millions" of dollars — evidence, he says, that they are in FloaTec for the long haul.

FloaTec has hitherto generated income from conceptual engineering, screening and pre-front-end engineering and design studies, but it was never intended to be just an engineering company. It was always intended to deliver and Namtvedt knows that he — and FloaTec — has not completely succeeded until he secures contracts that translate into jobs for the partners. It is perhaps the only yardstick he is measured by, and between J Ray and Keppel he has about 25 fabrication yards to fill up. Papa Terra appears to be a good start.

"My job is to create pull-through to the yards, not to sell engineering hours," Namtvedt remarks.

Namtvedt seems a natural fit to lead FloaTec. In one way or another he has played a role in the international oil & gas scene for about 30 years, working for oil majors, contractors and the Norwegian government.

The native of Bergen draws his earliest inspiration from his father Peter Namtvedt, a pioneer in the Norwegian oil and gas industry. In the mid-1970s the elder Namtvedt led the establishment of a coast centre base in Bergen to support the newer offshore discoveries, such as Statfjord and Troll, that were closer to Bergen than the existing support base in Stavanger.

Namtvedt observed all this in his teens. The Namtvedt name may have been known in Bergen for the lumber business since the time of his grandfather, but oil and gas was the topic of conversation at the dining table almost every night, he recalls.

Eric Namtvedt earned a business degree in the UK from the University of Warwick in 1978 after a year of engineering studies at the University of Zurich. His first job was with Mobil Exploration Norway where he worked for about 10 years.

Fluent in English and French, as well as his native Norwegian, Namtvedt spent a year in the US to learn how to manage the finance and accounting aspects of an oil and gas project.

He was involved in putting together the accounting control system for the Statfjord B construction project for Mobil (now ExxonMobil).

Namtvedt then managed the local accounting team for Mobil in Douala, Cameroon, from 1981 to 1984, and the numbers and responsibilities grew from there. He participated in negotiations on production sharing contract terms and tax liabilities with the Angolan Finance Ministry.

From December 1991 to July 1996 Namtvedt worked for the Norwegian embassies in South-East Asia to promote the Norwegian oil & gas industry in the region.

"I was not a career diplomat", he states. "I was never going to be an ambassador."

He eventually shifted gears, entering the contracting industry in Singapore as senior vice president of business development for Kvaerner Oil & Gas in Asia Pacific.

"I got to know the yards, the Sembawang, the Keppels," says Namtvedt. "I created a tremendous network. You don't build a network in Asia overnight. I think I can argue that I've seen the industry from all sides."

The last 10 years in the contracting industry have, in Namtvedt's words, been "probably the most challenging" for him.

He is still trying to sell FloaTec's version of a spar for which there is a growing list of opportunities in the Gulf of Mexico. He is also overseeing continued fine-tuning of a dry-tree semi-submersible design, which he says is available for clients which are ready.

Ultimately, Namtvedt's confidence rests on the roster of engineers he has helped assemble at FloaTec. "I'm proud of this team. This is a powerful team."