

Letter to the editor in:

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**"Retention of crew is key to
Adequate manning"**

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Letter to the editor

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Retention of crew is key to adequate manning

SIR,

The managing director of V.People Marine is to be congratulated for his shrewd assessment of the present manning crisis — "VShips boss urges blue sky thinking on crew training" (*Lloyd's List DCN*, February 1) — when he says that today's problem is significantly different from those of previous times as "there are no new nationalities to be introduced and the number of officers from developed countries continues to decline".

With shipping expanding year-on-year, the concerns of the LNG/LPG sector are well recorded and the almost unbelievable six nationalities manning configuration of the ill-fated *MSC Napoli* is an indication of the developing problem in some parts of the container trade.

Hopefully, Mr Greenhalgh's interview in the next issue of *Lloyd's Ship Manager* will reveal his thinking when he advocates that the industry should "move towards the airline model where specific tasks are carried out by trained people who are not part of the crew".

The stipulation "not part of the crew" is interesting insofar as it suggests a degree of control from without the ship. It is unlikely that the head of this prestigious manning agency is advocating a move

towards shore-based "hands on" operational control — the precursor of the unmanned ship — unless, like many others, he sees the latter as an eventual inevitability.

Retention is the problem — not recruitment. In 1987, the secretary of the Nautical Institute wrote: "The number of deck cadets going to sea in 1986 was less than 50.

Worrying trend

"It takes about 10 years to qualify as a master mariner and in that time over half will have left the sea.

"Only about one in 10 will make the rank of captain ... if the current trend continues Great Britain will cease to be a maritime nation."

Today, few trainees/junior officers intend to make seafaring a career and seek eventual promotion to master or chief engineer.

Shorter periods of engagement, regular (paid) leave, proper training aboard ship, shore leave, shorter working hours and the ability to integrate socially with their shipmates are but a few of the suggestions they make to enable them to "enjoy life — afloat and ashore" — and, perhaps, stay at sea.

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