

Superyachts review recruitment policies

There was a time when young people, in particular young men, who wanted some adventure and “to see the world” could, without too much difficulty, join the Merchant Navy as cadets or ratings.

Today’s shipping industry has very little need for ratings from developed countries and even in the major seafarer supply countries getting a job on commercial ships is not that easy.

While the mainstream commercial shipping sector has been closing down as a provider of relatively unskilled employment the need for yacht crews has been growing rapidly over the past 20 years or so. Nowadays if somebody wants to “run away to sea” the yacht industry, not the Merchant Navy, beckons.

What has emerged has been an informal job market with many of the smaller yachts finding crew who will work for their keep, the chance to travel and, in some cases, experience that will provide a stepping stone to paid positions on larger yachts.

In many cases, little stress is placed on qualifications and formal contracts. The typical crew member was – and to lesser extent still is especially for the smaller craft – a young “backpacker”.

With the advent of the Internet, the yachting industry has acquired its equivalent of the old-time shipping industry’s “pool”. The Web is used by a number of specialist agencies that sign up hopeful yacht crew wannabees.

A typical advertisement from a yacht crew website showed three positions on tall ships and pay just £100-400 (about \$180-720) per month. A few days earlier, two rather more attractive positions were available offering up to \$2,750 per month on a 76m yacht based in Sardinia. That is at the higher end of what is on offer and was clearly snapped up quickly.

Under some jurisdictions, such as the UK, yachts are required to have a crew agreement and the officers and crew should be signed on, although there is an impression that some other yachts have less formality. There are no nationality



Officers transferring from commercial shipping to superyachts have to get used to different working conditions, including putting out the red carpet from time to time

restrictions on people signing on UK-flag yachts but many owners require EU nationals for vessels based on the Mediterranean coast.

Professional recruiting

Increasingly, however, the owners of the bigger yachts are looking to professional recruiting agencies to find crews. Terry Wilson, marine recruitment manager for UK-based Viking Recruitment, says his company became involved in recruiting officers for superyachts about five years ago when a yacht captain, who had previously been a deck officer with a cruise vessel, asked him to find two second officers for a yacht he was commanding.

Wilson says: “The yacht was one of the largest and most luxurious in the world. Subsequently, because of this initial involvement and their history of recruitment to demanding cruise ‘majors’, we were asked to be involved in the supply of officers to a revolutionary newbuild project that became arguably the finest private superyacht afloat.” Viking continues to recruit for that vessel and many others.

According to Wilson, it is usually the yacht’s master (normally referred to as the “captain” in the superyacht industry) who recruits the crew; very occasionally it is the manager or owner. Owners and managers often find their own captains through informal networks and the then

leave the crewing to them.

Viking is occasionally asked by charter houses and third party managers for crew. Third party technical management does appear to be increasing but is still the exception to the rule.

But Viking only recruits officers. “Ratings are normally recruited directly. Often, particularly in the case of the smaller yachts, the crew are, or were historically, young backpackers. For the larger yachts crew are, and need to be, more professionally experienced and qualified.”

Increasing regulation, and particularly the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency’s Code, is having a definite effect on the industry and is increasing the need for better qualified officers. As the number of really large yachts has increased, so has the demand for commercially certificated individuals.

Nevertheless, according to Wilson the majority of officers on yachts remain from within the yacht business and not the shipping industry.

Wilson says: “We place high calibre officers whom we have come to know on cruise vessels and other passenger related trades. Those from the smaller ‘boutique’ cruise lines operating ships of about 5,000gt should be best able to make the transition. However, officers from other commercial vessels are considered.”

A superyacht captain of yachts of over

50m can expect to earn in the region of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per month while those on the very top of the range yachts, in excess of 100m, can expect considerably more.

In general superyacht officers have to pay for their own training, do not get paid leave and have to provide for their pensions. But Wilson points out: "A few do receive monetary assistance and are paid for 12 months, inclusive of leave."

Catch 22

Not surprisingly perhaps, he reports a lot of interest among merchant navy officers for superyacht jobs "but it is a question of matching the exact requirements of owners and the sort of packages that the officers want," he says. And owners prefer officers with some yacht experience, "which can be something of a Catch 22 situation for merchant navy officers trying to move to the superyacht sector," he agrees. Overall, he said, there are sufficient officers, "though supply may be a bit tighter in the case of engineers."

Nevertheless, the superyacht sector is having to get over its reticence to taking on merchant navy qualified personnel, as more officers are needed to meet demand.

And yacht owners are likely to have to change their employment conditions, especially in the case of big yacht operating worldwide. For example, seagoing officers are reluctant to be away for 10 or 11 months. At present, one-on, one-off arrangements are very rare but yacht owners are increasingly offering rota arrangements allowing more leave time, for retention and continuity.

Some merchant navy officers find it difficult to adapt to life on superyachts but overall most make the transition successfully. And they have a part to play in smoothing their integration into the superyacht industry – they need to learn the lifestyle, be flexible, and recognise the wealth of talent and experience that already exists there. They can bring their own blend of professionalism, which needs to be introduced sensibly and sensitively.

Standards of professionalism on yachts are just as high, Wilson stresses, as in the commercial industry, and regulation has clearly increased. There do not appear to be any statistics on accidents but reports of serious incidents are rare.

Indeed, the superyacht sector appears to be largely a safe industry which is

probably to be expected given that vessels spend a lot of time at anchor or alongside and the emphasis is on providing a comfortable floating holiday home for the owner.

Looking ahead, Wilson says: "There are

The screenshot shows the Global Crew Network website interface. At the top, there is a logo for 'GLOBAL CREW' and navigation links for 'Home', 'About Us', 'Sign Up!', 'Vacancies', 'FAQ's', 'Events', 'Forum', 'Gallery', and 'Links'. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar and a 'Browse Adverts' link. The main content area displays three job listings, each with a title, location, and a list of details. The first listing is for 'Crew Officer, Commercial Tall Ship' with details like 'Required Date: Sun, 24 Jul 2005' and 'Apply: Salary info: \$130-1430'. The second listing is for 'Tall Ship, Commercial Tall Ship' with details like 'Required Date: Sun, 24 Dec 2005' and 'Apply: Salary info: €250-400'. The third listing is for 'Tall Ship, Commercial Tall Ship' with details like 'Required Date: Sun, 24 Dec 2005' and 'Apply: Salary info: €150-1800'. Each listing also includes a 'DATE ADDED' field and a 'VIEW MORE INFO' link. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Sign up for our free Newsletter - Email:' field and a 'Sign Up' button.

Online recruitment services such as this, at www.globalcrewnetwork.com, offer a wide range of jobs. When SASI took this screenshot, seven jobs on tall ships were on offer; a few days before, two positions on a 76m yacht paying up to \$2,750 per month were available

enough regulations now but the important thing is that they need to be policed effectively, and be seen as a solid framework for healthy growth.”

Mark Clark, spokesman for the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency explained how the agency had helped develop rules for superyachts. “We have also recognised the special nature of the personnel who serve on the large yachts,” he said, “as many have come from the leisure side of yachting and are unable to

comply with the full training and sea service requirements of STCW. We have created a special certification regime to reflect the needs of the industry.”

But he cautioned that “it must be recognised that fatigue affects personnel on yachts in exactly the same manner as on other ships, so for the safety of all on board and the wellbeing of the crew, there is no good reason to ignore the international requirements relating to hours of work.”

to provide professional training to superyachtsmen be they navigators or engineers. The many years of experience that we have in training navigators and engineers for the wider shipping industry has been brought to bear on the superyacht market where our emphasis has always been on providing truly professional training that produces well rounded officers competent to deal with whatever demands an exacting industry can place upon them.”

Over the past five years, Warsash has trained 520 deck and 232 engineer officers for superyachts. The figures for 2004 were 85 and 82 respectively. “We actively target the market,” Holloway said, “via press advertising, attendance at trade shows (eg Monaco) and other networking opportunities.”

There are now several centres competing to attract yacht officer candidates. At least one of the specialist yacht crew Web sites has posted a table giving comparative costs of various courses at different training centres. With the new requirement for ratings to have formal qualifications superyacht training is likely to be an increasingly significant sideline.

Training centres target yacht officers

Until recently there was relatively little emphasis on formal qualifications on large yachts, except perhaps on the largest ones. There are however many schools that train according to syllabuses similar to those of the UK's Royal Yachting Association and USA's International Yacht Training.

The RYA's courses are primarily aimed at leisure sailors but allow the holder to obtain commercial endorsements, with various levels of restriction, to skipper vessels of under 24m.

In the past few years, however, the introduction of specific yacht officer qualifications for vessels over 24m has prompted some commercial shipping industry-orientated establishments to offer specialist courses.

As the table shows, the UK now has four deck officer qualifications specifically for superyachts and a range of applicable

qualifications for engineers. At present only officers need formal qualifications but from the end of this year the situation changes, at least for yachts on Red Ensign Group registers.

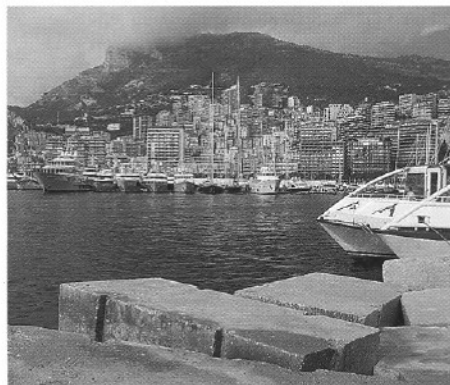
According to the UK's Maritime & Coastguard Agency, all superyacht crew members, including catering staff, will have to have undergone the four basic STCW pre-sea courses: Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting, Elementary First Aid and Personal Safety & Social Responsibility.

This requirement does not apply to “supernumeraries” who can in effect be additional passengers, thus circumventing the 12-passenger-maximum rule. The MCA is however relaxed about this with a spokesman saying that owners rarely abuse this apparent loophole and, in any case, the total number of persons on board must not exceed the capacity of the yacht's lifesaving equipment.

In addition there must be at least one rating per watch – at least two on short trips and three on yachts sailing on long voyages – who hold the new Yacht Rating Certificate which is broadly equivalent to the ILO able seaman/MCA efficient deck-hand standards.

The marketing manager for Warsash Maritime Centre in the UK, Nigel Holloway, said: “With the world fleet of super yachts predicted to double over the next ten years the importance of this segment of the maritime industry can only increase.”

This is good news for training centres, as Holloway acknowledged. “We were in at the beginning of the introduction of Certificates of Competency and continue



Monaco, home to an annual boat show that provides recruitment opportunities for yacht officers

UK Deck Officer Qualifications

Qualification	Relevant for
Officer of the Watch (Yacht). STCW Reg. II/1	Officer of the Watch on commercially and privately operated yachts and sail training vessels less than 3,000gt. Unlimited area.
Chief Mate (Yacht). STCW Reg. II/2	Commercially and privately operated yachts and sail training vessels less than 3,000gt. Unlimited area.
Master 500 gt (Yacht). STCW Reg. II/2	Master 500gt commercial and privately operated yachts and sail training vessels less than 500gt. Unlimited area.
Master (Yacht)STCW. Reg II/2	Commercially and privately operated yachts and sail training vessels less than 3,000gt. Unlimited area.

UK and Italy pioneer superyacht rules

So far there are no globally-recognised international rules applicable to yachts, and no global standards for regulating their effect on the environment. The IMO has however recognised the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Large Yacht Code as equivalent to the International Conventions for Load Line (ICLL), Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS) and Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW).

Luigi Scarpati, of the Pleasure Vessels' Section of Italian class society RINA told *Safety at Sea International* that "responsible classification societies and administrations are acting, but so far, they act alone. Italy, and the Italian classification society RINA, are world leaders in this field, and Italy dominates the world superyacht building business."

He pointed out that, while yachts were traditionally intended only for the pleasure of owners and a restricted group of friends, most of the new and larger superyachts being built today are intended for chartering out.

The Italian Maritime Administration and the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) have both issued Codes of Safety for charter yachts. These codes apply to yachts of over 24m in length with an upper limit of 3,000gt for the MCA Code and 1,000gt for the Italian Code.

These codes are intended to set standards at least equivalent in their effect to those required by the international conventions that apply to equivalent sized commercial passenger vessels, without, however, compromising innovation.

Huge market

MCA spokesman Mark Clark remarked on how "the world of superyachts has expanded rapidly over the last 15 to 20 years and has moved from a small and relatively insignificant sector of the maritime world to where we are now, with over 6,000 yachts worldwide that are over 24m in length." But this is only a fraction of the market's potential, he believes. "Market research into the number of individuals with sufficient funds to buy and run a large yacht indicates this is only 5% of the

potential market," he added.

In order to defray costs, most large yachts are, at some time in their lives, offered for charter. Clark notes: "Any vessel that 'engages in trade' is considered to fall within the ambit of the international standards as set out in the United Nations' International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Conventions. Thus any yacht that is chartered is technically part of the 'Merchant Navy' and must comply with the 'Merchant Navy' requirements of its flag state. As the number of passengers does not exceed 12, the applicable international regulations are those for cargo ships, which are considerably less onerous than those for passenger ships."

Moreover, UK law requires any sea-going vessel over 24m to have properly qualified personnel whether in private or commercial use.

As the majority of the world's large yacht fleet is under the Red Ensign (including many yachts on the Cayman Islands Register), Clark says that the MCA "took the lead and addressed the problem by consulting the UK large yacht industry as to appropriate and pragmatic standards that would provide at least the same level of safety on yachts as the IMO Conventions do for mainstream merchant ships."

In response, the IMO accepted the MCA's Large Yacht Code "and thus, Red Ensign yachts certificated in compliance with the MCA Code, may operate commercially throughout the world," he said. The code has become the 'de facto' world standard and, regardless of flag, a yacht's



This surveyor works for Italian class society RINA, which claims to dominate the superyacht business

Big yachts, big market

The number of yachts of all sizes certainly appears to have grown significantly over the past two or three decades and with it the demand for hands onboard has increased.

There appear to be no definitive statistics, although for yachts over 24m long, which are now commonly referred to as superyachts, the figure of about 6,000 has been bandied about.

Financial consultant Eurofin has conducted a study into the superyacht market. One of the firm's directors Alex Zaracoudis, says that around 150 yachts over 30m in length, with average values over \$25M, are delivered annually.

And he expects the number to rise rapidly as yards in Taiwan and China begin to compete with dominant Italian and US yards and with the very high quality mega yachts built in Holland and Germany.

resale value is now considerably enhanced if it complies with the code.

National codes

While the MCA and Italian Codes have become widely accepted, there is the possibility that other maritime administrations may develop their own, and different, yacht codes. This alarms Clark. "As other maritime administrations begin to consider the advantages of registering large commercial yachts, there are liable to be more large yacht codes in the near future. Discussions with industry indicate that this is viewed with horror if there are to be different technical standards. There should be just one code with one set of technical standards."

It does however seem likely that other administrations will follow the UK and Italian models. "There is general agreement that the standard should be based upon the MCA Large Yacht Code," Clark said, "especially now that it has been revised into the LY2 format and agreed by the international industry. In developing LY2, we worked very closely with our colleagues in Italy, and the new Italian Code is expected to be very similar to LY2 as we both faced the same problems and agreed the same solutions."

The goal, he said, is for other administrations to agree on the technical standards. "We are looking to create a flexible but effective 'International Code' overseen by the administrations that adopt it, and with the close involvement of technical experts within the industry," he said. "This will enable the 'regulations' to react quickly to the needs of the industry."

US safety detentions rise



The USCG found more safety-related defects during inspections last year, said Capt Michael Karr, chief of the USCG Office of Compliance



An over-flight photo taken in December 2004 shows the bow and stern sections of the bulker Selendang Ayu near Skan Bay on Unalaska Island (photo: US Coast Guard)

Safety-related defects pushed vessel detentions in the US up slightly in 2004 – yet actual casualties were down, according to Coast Guard officials, who see the trend as positive. And Capt Michael Karr, chief of the USCG Office of Compliance, told *Safety at Sea International* that there are even better days ahead.

Why safety-related detentions are up is open to debate. Karr says the increase may just be a fluctuation, others in the industry feel the spike is due to increased inspections that began last July with the new ISPS regime. “When the Coast Guard checks for security issues, they also check safety,” one source said.

Only three major casualties have occurred in North American waters in the



Damage to the Staten Island ferry Andrew J. Barberi, which crashed into a pier in New York in October 2003, killing 11 and injuring over 70 (photo: US Coast Guard)

past two years and all were in US waters – the *Selendang Ayu*, which broke up and grounded in Alaska, leaving six crewmen dead and an oil spill in excess of 1,000 tonnes – second only to the *Exxon Valdez* in US waters – the Staten Island ferry *Andrew J. Barberi* that crashed into a pier in New York, killing 11 and injuring over 70, and the *Athos I*, which fell foul of several uncharted objects on the river bottom in the lower Delaware River, leaving another spill that is still being felt in two states.

Reviewing the year's events, Karr pointed out that casualties – especially major accidents – have been reduced year by year because of several key advancements. Newer vessels and better equipment are crucial, he notes, but an effective global port state control system to enforce rules is equally important. And Canada's Capt Eric Snow agrees, stating that “ships of shame are a thing of the past” in Canada.

Snow, manager of head office operations for marine infrastructure with the Transportation Board of Canada, notes that around 1,500 maritime incidents per year were reported in Canada in the 1970s and that's down to around 600 per year now. In Canadian waters, he explains, most reported casualties have been accidents involving small passenger vessels and ferries.

With newer vessels on the water, equipment, maintenance and training remain critical elements, believes Tom Thompson, executive director of the US Marine Safety Association. He notes that frequently-inspected vessels generally have excellent complements of firefighting gear, liferafts and survival suits. But he admits that some non-inspected craft and those infrequently inspected often let compressed gas inflation cylinders in life rafts go un-

replaced and many survival suits stay in crates for 10 years or more, where they can deteriorate.

The human factor

No amount of technology and physical improvement in ships at sea can make up for the human factor. Karr notes that at present, some form of human error is to blame in 80% of maritime casualties. He asserts that the International Safety Management (ISM) Code imposed by the International Maritime Organization is working well. “The system is working,” he says, adding that the “challenge for the industry is keeping up with standards.”

He says that malfunctions have to be expected and that no “system is perfect.” He also stressed that “the whole regulatory system is based on trust.” That's why



Athos I lists eight degrees on 28 November 2004 in the Delaware River. More than 80 tonnes of crude oil was spilled after the vessel hit several submerged objects near its terminal. (photo: US Coast Guard)

US – Safety detentions by ship type, 2004

Bulk carrier	62
General dry cargo	41
Ro-ro	16
Tanker (non specified)	13
Container	11
Reefer cargo	7
Chemical tanker	7
Passenger	5
Oil tanker	5
Gas carrier (non specified)	5
Heavy lift	2
LPG Carrier	1
Cement carrier	1

Source: US Coast Guard