The people managers... looking after the company’s most valued assets

Look after your people... and they will look after you.

Alert!, Issue No. 18

The first point of contact for any person wanting to go to sea is likely to be a member of the human resources (HR) department; equally, the first point of contact for any seafarer outside the ship is likely to be his/her HR or crewing manager.

So, it stands to reason that those who are involved in the business of managing the working lives of seafarers should never forget that seafarers are unique in that for a large part of each year they are placed aboard a floating platform, which is subject to the vagaries of the wind and the sea, and in which they work, rest and play, away from normal family life.

Maritime HR/crewing managers, therefore, should not just have a professional knowledge of HR practice, but also, they must have some understanding of the ways of the sea, and of the challenges that a seafarer and his family will face through separation. He/she therefore provides a link between the seafarer and his/her family.

The term Human Resources is relatively new. To some it is simply another way of describing the function of personnel management; to others it covers a much broader spectrum of activities than just the management of people. But, this is a term that can turn the Person into a commodity. One dictionary defines a resource as: The stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function. People should not be regarded simply as a resource.

In any industry, the people are vital to the success of an operation. In the maritime context, those who are charged with the management of people (the seafarers and those who are involved in the management and operation of ships) do not just need the professional knowledge and skills to be able to do the job, but also they must possess a number of key attributes, such as attitude, integrity, transparency, motivation, and a dedication to excellence.

Whether we describe them as HR managers, personnel managers or people managers, they all have a responsibility to look after the company’s most valued assets - the people.
Building a trusting relationship with candidates and clients

Matthew Jaenicke, Managing Director, Viking Recruitment & Chiltern Maritime

The Recruitment Department at Viking Recruitment is made up of a wide and diverse team who work with our clients and candidates on a daily basis. A large number of the team have previously worked onboard cruise ships, in differing positions, and this is certainly a plus, as when the Consultants speak to candidates they have an understanding of the cruise industry and what is required to work in the industry.

Consultants are often questioned about life onboard, the way the ship and industry works as well as being able to share their knowledge of certification and technical terminology. Consultants who have worked at sea can also tell if a candidate has the right experience, skills, attitude and personality to work at sea.

The diverse recruitment team is made up of a variety of personnel, who come from different backgrounds and experience. Some have sailed for many years, and to a host of different destinations working with a huge variety of nationalities and cultures. Others have worked on board a Cross Channel Ferry. Some may not have stepped onboard a ship before, but share the passion and drive that their colleagues thrive on.

All bring with them different attributes to the team, and these diversities help to synergize the team together to achieve the ultimate goal of matching candidates to the wide and interesting positions and career opportunities that our clients have open.

Those with shipboard experience educate the 'non-seafarers' and offer them guidance and an understanding of the industry and often answer questions which are only possible from having worked onboard a cruise ship. The members of the team that come from shore based roles are employed because of their excellent people and interpersonal skills. These two diverse groups of people work well and have proved to offer our clients an excellent all-round service. We also have representatives in Auckland, New Zealand who enhance our Recruitment Department by offering a valuable service to the Australasia region; our representatives there have experience within the ever growing yachting industry.

The Recruitment Department is also assisted by a network of global partners, who work with us throughout Europe, South Africa and South America to ensure we have a full global coverage. Many of these hiring partners have cruise ship experience, and they have an excellent understanding to working and life at sea.

As an aside the individuals who have joined us from a 'high street' recruitment background haven’t been able to adjust well to this specialist style of recruiting.

Our diverse client base means that what one client requires can be totally different to another client’s needs and the Recruitment Team build a trusting relationship with candidates and clients to continue, build and nurture this relationship.

The role of the Marine Training Manager

Holly Hewitt, Marine Training Manager, Chiltern Maritime Limited

Whether any Officer Trainee is successful in their training is due to their own ability and commitment; however the role of the training team that manage their cadetship should not be underestimated in this success. The relationship between Training Manager and Officer Trainee starts at the selection process and continues right through to the end goal: the completion of the training programme.

Due to the unique experience of training for a career at sea, and in order to make the end goal possible, the training team as a whole need to be equipped with a range of skills, experience and knowledge that can be utilised in different scenarios.

There is no doubt that having staff within the training team that have experience of working at sea is a benefit. Going to sea for the first time, particularly at a young age can be a daunting experience and will present the trainees with different environments and challenges. For an Officer Trainee, speaking to someone who has had this experience first-hand can often alleviate fears and promote a sense of common purpose and understanding which in-turn may restore their confidence in the training. Staff members that have worked at sea or have been shore-based within the industry bring a wealth of specialist maritime knowledge which can be used to make the training process run efficiently.

In addition to this, it is essential to employ staff that have a professional knowledge of HR practice. Good practice measures should be adopted at all times and the Training Manager is responsible for keeping aware of changes in employment law and developments to employment practices.

Due to the nature of the training programme, the Training Manager’s position is similar to an HR generalist role, dealing with everything from recruitment and selection, induction, learning and development, employee relations, manpower planning and performance management. Without a good understanding of these practices there is no way to ensure that fair and standard procedures are followed.

The skills required of the Training Manager are diverse and encompass a range of soft and hard skills. One of the key soft areas is the ability to employ excellent interpersonal skills. At the outset, the Training Manager needs to effectively communicate to the Officer Trainee their role as manager in terms of keeping the training on course and their role as an advisor and supporter. To make the relationship successful, listening is an essential skill. Recognising when a cadet is just having a bad day or identifying a more serious issue such as homesickness, illness or personal problems requires an effective listener. The Training Manager often adapts to the role similar to a parent, as essentially these individuals are still growing into young adults and encounter a range of problems whilst at college and at sea.

Alternatively, the Training Manager may need to adopt a harder approach when dealing with performance management and disciplinary procedures. The Training Manager must be able to identify the most productive approach and behaviour to get the results that they want and get their message across in a way that gets heard, understood, accepted and acted upon. It takes a skilled influencer to ensure that the Officer Trainee understands your message and accepts your proposals.

These are but a few of the skills required of the Training Manager, not forgetting other key skills such as problem solving, being decisive, managing and leading change and diplomacy. Ultimately however, the Training Manager is only as effective as the team supporting him/her; therefore, when employing staff there is a need to ensure that they have the range of experience and diverse skills required.
A lot of us would surmise that the HR Manager in a shipping company in most cases is a mariner. But, how about a non-mariner?

Four years ago, this was the situation at Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc - a leading tug and marine services provider in the Philippines - when management decided to split the Finance and HR Division. With the rapid growth in the business and increasing employee concerns, the move was inevitable. The search began and several names of former marine officers were considered, except for one who had no background at all in shipping.

Considering that the aspirant had more than 15 years of HR experience, it was expected that she would be able to adequately and competently discuss HR philosophy, principles, pre-designed plans and tried and tested HR programs. But the question still remained whether to take on a former mariner or to risk taking on the non-mariner HR practitioner. Each had its own advantages, but after thorough deliberation, the decision was to take the latter.

When the applicant was called, and terms and conditions of hiring were discussed, she obliged with much enthusiasm but requested one condition: To be on board! This came as a surprise, but the pioneering President gave his support without question or hesitation.

Sales and marketing gurus prescribe: Know Your Customers. It is in knowing your customers that one can prepare plans and strategies and be able to serve them well. Such companies spend time, money and effort just to know customer needs, wants and preferences with the primary purpose of attracting and retaining them.

Following the same principle, it is imperative for HR to know its clientele, to be able to attract, retain and develop them as happy, motivated and productive employees of the company: How do they work? What do they need? What bothers them? What makes them happy? How do they view management? What are their difficulties? Are they home sick? Are they healthy? How do they see themselves in the company? What are their plans?

And, what better and faster way to get to know your employees? To be on board! Eat with them, drink coffee with them, chat with them and even stay afloat in the middle of the sea with nothing to be seen but the twinkle of the stars and the bright full moon.

All Aboard is a program in our company where the HR team goes on board at least once a year in all our vessels. It’s a face-to-face meeting. It’s far beyond the usual daily text exchanges, calls or written forms of communication. It is a personal encounter. Permits from port authorities are secured. Plans, programs and activities are designed and visits are pre-scheduled so as not to hamper operations.

All Aboard allows HR to reach out to employees and keep them in the know. Vision, mission, plans and programs for the continued growth of the business are cascaded. Most of them pay little attention to memoranda and other correspondences. With All Aboard, employees hear it directly from HR. It’s a one-on-one but two way communication.

With All Aboard, employees get to feel that management truly care for their welfare. It is a venue and avenue where crew is relaxed and feels that it is safe to freely discuss how they feel and what is in their minds. Their questions are answered. Their worries are addressed. Their contributions are recognized.

And as the HR team boards each tug, the journey begins unraveling the crew’s needs and concerns: Repair of the air-conditioning unit; purchase of a new rice cooker; copies of their pay slips; issuance of cover-alls and safety shoes; installation of internet facility or a request for new TV or DVD. While for us it may seem trivial, for them it matters a whole lot. And you only get to realize how it affects them once you are on board and hear them out. But, realizing their needs and wants is just half of the story. Addressing these concerns without delay is the more important half. We need to act on them at once. Say yes if we can provide - say no if we can’t.

‘Getting to know you’ was a big revelation. Though the majority shared wanting to be a seafarer even when they were still young, one shared he wanted to be a policeman, another a priest, a doctor, a nurse, a teacher and to our surprise, one even wanted to be an embalmer. This gave us an insight into what led them to be in this career and how they see themselves in the future.

‘My Job’ made us cognizant of the complexities of their work. Specific tasks, duties, responsibilities and accountabilities were reviewed. Job descriptions were updated and rewritten. Performance gaps were identified and served as input to training plans.

The ‘Benefit Survey’ provided us with their preferred improvement in the benefit package. They ranked their choice and now have HR inputs on what, how and why such benefit should be proposed to management. A year later, the rice subsidy and the family health plan were approved for implementation. Faces gleamed with smiles. They were happy to have been heard and consulted.

The ‘Organizational Climate Survey’ conducted on board revealed crews’ perceptions in the areas of: planning, leading and management, organizational structure, organizational process, staffing, values and norms, management control, interaction, motivation, communication, physical environment. For the crew, this was an opportunity to let off steam in a constructive, frank and controlled manner. It was also an opportunity to change their pre-conceived negative notions, undesirable practices and beliefs. For management, results were bases for developing strategies, plans and programs that will help define the culture of the organization conducive to productive work. It facilitates addressing employee concerns affecting their interest, motivation and output.

All new office based employees now get the chance to be on board. As they recognize the crew’s hard work, commitment and sacrifice of being away from home, they can’t think of a better way to show their appreciation and support than attending to their needs right away. With this, everyone just feels we’re all in the same boat.
The purpose of human resource management is to achieve safe and effective operation in the most timely and cost-effective manner by provision of the correct number of competent crew and support staff.

The knowledge, skills and attributes required of HR professionals should cover three aspects of people and systems:

**Knowledge**

**Professional experience**
- ‘Knowledge of the sea’
- Professional knowledge of HR practice
- Understanding the industry

**Conventions, resolutions, rules and regulations**
- Knowledge of IMO, ILO, WHO Conventions & Resolutions
- Flag State regulations
- International and national employment laws

**Industry standards**
- Knowledge of Best Practice Guides and other industry standards appropriate to the HR function

**Continuous professional development**
- Updating of knowledge
- Keeping aware of changes in employment law and developments in employment practices

**Skills**

**Human element**
- Ability to define and operate a human resources strategy
- Ability to define standard competencies and identify gaps
- Ability to define staffing solutions and delivery plans
- Ability to define and manage organisational change
- Ability to evaluate operational solutions and obtain feedback

**Experience**
- Currency
- Leadership
- Change management
- Professional judgement
- Technical skills
- People skills

**Communication**
- Interpersonal skills
- Effective communicator
- Ability to listen

**Continuous professional development**
- Updating of skills and knowledge

**Manpower** - the number of people required to do the jobs in bite-sized chunks to operate and sustain systems (of work). Including: scheduling, dealing with special circumstances (such as emergencies, turnaround) and estimation of staff required

**Personnel** – ensuring the correct mix of people onboard to operate and sustain systems; the type of people required to operate and sustain systems, competence, etc

**Training** – competency and familiarity with the ship and its systems
OPXMFEHF
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Maritime Human Resources

Knowledge, Skills & Attributes

Technical proficiency
- Recruitment and selection
- Induction
- Learning and development
- Employee relations
- Manpower planning
- Performance management
- Informed decision making
- Change management

Leadership, management, and cultural awareness
- Leadership skills
- Motivation of people
- Working together with different nationalities, religions and mentalities
- Affect of ergonomic factors on performance and motivation
- Problem solving
- Decisiveness,
- Managing and leading change

Attributes

Attitude
- Calm
- Patient
- Curious
- Driven to deliver
- Courage to challenge

Communication
- Clear
- Effective

Motivation
- Enthusiasm
- Adaptability
- Committed

Empathy
- Ability to bond with employees
- Promoting a sense of common purpose and understanding

Inspiring
- Exploiting employees' talents, skills and abilities

Willing to Learn
- Willingness to learn from others

Understanding
- Flexible
- Adaptable
- Understanding of human nature

Dedication to excellence
- Getting the best from employees
- Encouraging sharing of ideas
- Willingness to help
- Pride in employee accomplishments

Professionalism
- Professional standards

Integrity
- Moral soundness
- Honesty
- Freedom from corrupting influences
- Unprejudiced
- Role model
- Tactful

Transparency
- Openness
- Accountability
- Impartiality
- Independent
- Unbiased
- Consistent
- Credible

Temperament
- Confident
- Polite
- Firm
- Courteous

Both normal and emergency situations, coding, rostering, tour-of-duty planning and round etc, design of new (or rare) tasks, generate and maintain the ship and its systems (of work). Including: size, strength, systems.
Global professional standards for HR

Claire Bishop, HR Capability Adviser, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

In today’s world of constant change, pressure and demands of more for less, the role of the HR professional comes acutely into focus: what is at the heart of and the driving force of every successful organisation and business if not people? HR professionals, working in the maritime industry, have a chance to lead their organisations to success by building trust, skills, engagement and commitment among employees.

In order to help those working in HR in every country and in every industry, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), has developed the world’s first HR Profession Map. The Profession Map is based on extensive research and collaboration with HR professionals working across the globe, and sets out global HR professional standards: what successful and effective HR people do and deliver across every aspect and specialism of the profession. The result is an extensive and practical map of the profession: how HR adds the greatest sustained value to the organisation it operates in, now and in the future.

The concept is simple. Covering 10 professional areas and 8 behaviours set out in 4 bands of competence, the HR Profession Map covers every area of the profession and details the activities, knowledge and behaviour needed for success. From Band 1 at the start of an HR career through to Band 4 for the most senior leaders, it has been designed to be relevant and applicable to HR professionals operating anywhere in the world, in all sectors and in organisations of all shapes and sizes.

Essentially, the map shares what the most successful HR professionals know and do at every stage of their career, and that is proving to be a powerful tool for many. A wide range of organisations and HR professionals are now using the map to benchmark and build their HR capability at individual, team, function and organisation levels.

The map is flexible, allowing HR professionals to focus on the areas which are most relevant to them. However, the CIPD advice is to start with the core of the map as this is where you can really start to see a shift in performance and success. Two professional areas sit at the core - Insights, Strategy and Solutions and Leading HR. Research has shown that these are the areas that every successful HR professional has in common regardless of role, specialism or stage of career.

Fundamental to CIPD’s view of great HR is that without this core or professional foundation, HR will always speak at the technician level. The core of the HR Profession Map defines the capabilities that the CIPD believes are a foundation of, and fundamental to, great HR practice.

The HR Profession Map is continuously informed by research and feedback from HR professionals to make sure it reflects the world today and supports HR professionals in the current economic, social and political context, helping HR professionals to rise to the challenge and lead industries and businesses through tough times.

The full HR Profession Map is available to download from: www.cipd.co.uk/cipd-hr-profession/profession-map/

The HR Profession Map
The good Crewing manager

A good crewing manager should look after his main assets - the crew. It does not mean he has to bend backwards to every single request. What I mean is to do it in a responsible way, to provide equal opportunities and fair employment conditions.

What attributes are we talking about here?

Commitment and knowledge: I am thinking about someone who ‘can do’ and is constantly willing to know her/his people and their needs; someone who identifies with the needs of the crew being managed; someone who is willing to go the extra mile: to visit his vessels, participate in meetings with visiting officers, attend officer seminars, actively seeking feedback from the people she/he looks after. The ratings should be organised well too.

Problem solving - not creating: A good crew manager is someone who actively plans and has contingency plans at hand. There is no other activity in shipping which ‘can go wrong’ as frequently and acutely as HR management. We humans are likely to fall ill, usually at the last minute, have problems with loved ones, miss flights, do not get on well with others. The good Crew Manager has knowledge of these issues and will also have tried and seasoned solutions available immediately; she/he is interested in solving problems not by pursuing attitudes by not asking “Who did it?” but instead asking “What went wrong and what lessons can we learn for the future?.

Good communication: That means someone who knows how to listen to others. 50% of all the HR problems could have been solved if the HR Manager could just listen. Communication is a two-way street. One way communication is called broadcasting and does not help in any interpersonal relationship.

Tactful and friendly: Approach, with smile on her/his face. Smile even when answering the telephone. We all know how important it is to deal with a nice person. This is probably extremely difficult when dealing with a grievance, but even more important in these particular circumstances, when friendliness, a smile and warm attitude will immediately ‘set the scene’ and lack of it will make things much worse.

Where can we find this Superhero? I am afraid they come by very, very rarely; but, what we should do in shipping is ensure that they are properly trained.

It never fails to amaze me that a lot of people in the shipping industry complain that crewing costs are now 45-55% of their operating expenditure, yet they absolutely fail to notice that the crewing managers are usually the least paid, least trained, very poorly motivated inexperienced youngsters who are expected to be … superheroes.

And now for a little reality check; pause for a second and think about your organisation and then answer honestly:

How many of your HR personnel have been educated in the field of HR management?

How many have any formal HR qualification?

How many are actually Chartered HR Managers?

When did they last go on a course – any course?

Are they the least paid people in your organisation?

Human Element - Quo Vadis?

Our industry is unique in many ways, none more so than the level of uncertainty and volatility that characterizes shipping. A very large proportion of a shipowner’s mind-space is devoted to the volatility of the revenue stream, asset and stock valuation. Thanks to effective and relatively inexpensive insurance cover, physical risk to assets, steel or human, takes up far less proportion of his mind-space. Let us remember that freight and asset value responds smartly to demand-supply imbalance in tonnage and rather sluggishly to risk management of life, property or environment.

The amazing thing is shipping is an extraordinarily safe mode of transport of goods and people. Something close to 99.996% of all cargo and passengers are delivered safely across the Oceans along the arterial lifeline of global economy, (a statistic that doesn’t capture media attention as much as a Costa Concordia would).

Somewhere down the pecking order of priorities, the good people aboard and ashore work together in a chaotic cocktail that we call the Human Element, a very crucial cog in the business wheel. So let us dwell on how we can enhance its output:

Ability and Aptitude should logically lead to performance. Non-performance is the first indicator that the ship manager has either not defined the two A’s well or that he is not really acting on performance appraisals.

Training and empowerment are two powerful management tools, sparingly used in general. An allocation of no more than 2% of the Fleet HR budget to customized and company specific training programs will return several multiples of the training expense by way of reduced operating costs, be it voyage optimization or timely intervention and prevention of technical breakdowns. It is also relevant to ask if mentoring is identified as a tangible process within a company’s learning culture. The NI is launching a campaign shortly to revive this lost but valuable legacy.

Empowerment is not about constantly quoting the Master’s over-riding authority under ISM - the over-riding authority is often interpreted as the Master’s unfettered right to incur any expense to respond to a calamity or to over-ride operational instructions to protect life and environment. Empowerment is about giving him financial authority and budgetary responsibility to locally intervene, rectify and preempt routine material or process defects before they lead to high-risk situations. Empowerment is also about seamless sharing of management information from charter parties to voyage performance analysis, from port agency quotations to drydock and technical running costs. Empowerment is sparingly used for the simple reason that it destroys traditional management hierarchies.

The man-machine interface and the application of contemporary technology to ship operations calls for structured research. The Nautical Institute will continue to lead and engage with this effort. The intention is two-fold. One is to free the Human Element from monotony and generate a very precious resource called time. The second is to pull the human out of the error chain and position him at a vantage bird’s eye view of the error process. Intervention and error-prevention will follow like day follows night.
Breathing apparatus air compressor explosion on board a woodchip carrier

This report features an incident where the third mate on board a woodchip carrier suffered burns to his hands and face when the air compressor he was using to fill an oxygen breathing apparatus cylinder exploded.

The ship was equipped with fixed and portable fire fighting equipment in accordance with SOLAS requirements. In addition to the mandatory BA sets, the operating company had equipped the ship with four closed circuit oxygen breathing apparatus (OBA) sets.

When checking the pressures in the OBA cylinders, the third mate found that one was well below the normal, so he decided to re-fill it. He placed the OBA cylinder in a bucket of iced water and tried to screw the compressor discharge hose connector into the OBA cylinder, but it did not fit. He found an adaptor in the box next to the compressor that fitted both the OBA cylinder and the compressor discharge hose connector. He fitted the adaptor to the hose connector and then fitted it to the OBA cylinder. He then checked all the connections and opened the OBA cylinder valve; as he reached over the compressor to switch it on, the compressor discharge tube exploded. He was engulfed in a ball of flame.

Earlier on that day, the third mate suggested to the chief mate that he may need to re-fill the BA cylinders, and the chief mate said that he would assist him. However, when the third mate decided to re-fill the OBA cylinder, he did not call the chief mate because he thought that he would be busy preparing for the ship’s arrival. Furthermore, he did not think that he needed the chief mate’s assistance because he had been trained in the use of BA sets while he was at college, had used BA sets during fire drills and had re-filled BA cylinders many times before.

He was not aware of some of the fundamental differences between BA sets and OBA sets, and thought that both OBA cylinders and BA cylinders contained oxygen. The crew were not all familiar with the operation and maintenance requirements associated with OBA sets; and the third mate was not aware of the requirement for OBA set cylinders to be sent ashore for re-filling. Since OBA sets were not part of a ship’s mandatory SOLAS fire fighting equipment, they were not covered by seafarer pre-sea training. Therefore, the responsibility for appropriately training the crew lay with the ship’s operators and its senior officers.

The investigation identified three safety issues: The crew were not appropriately trained or drilled in the operation and maintenance of the ship’s OBA sets; the ship’s safety management system did not provide the crew with appropriate guidance in relation to the operation and maintenance of the OBA sets; and there were no engineering controls in place to prevent the inadvertent connection of an OBA cylinder to the air compressor.

The purpose of this summary is to highlight certain human element issues arising from this incident; there are many other issues highlighted in this comprehensive accident report. Those who are involved in the management and operation of ships are strongly advised to read the whole report which can be downloaded from: www.atsb.gov.au/media/359696/mo2011007.pdf.

Exploring differences in perceptions of risk
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The Lloyd’s Register Educational Trust Research Unit, Seafarers’ International Research Centre

This report explores differences in perceptions of risk, and its management, amongst personnel directly associated with the operation of ships. It considers the views of personnel at sea and in shore-based offices in a range of positions from Ordinary Seafarer (OS) to company Vice President. The report is based upon case studies of five companies and it builds upon the results of a large scale questionnaire conducted as part of the same study and reported in separate accounts published in 2006 and 2007 respectively.

www.sirc.cf.ac.uk/Uploads/Publications/Publications%202012/Exploring%20differences%20in%20perceptions%20of%20risk.pdf