

TIME TO TALK



ECDIS TODAY TALKS TO ANNELEY PICKLES, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SHIPTALKJOBS, PART OF THE SHIPTALK.COM GROUP AND ASKS:

IS GOING TO SEA STILL AN ATTRACTIVE CAREER?



Since its creation in 2002, Shiptalk.com has been very much a seafaring community website, bringing those at sea together and giving them a voice through Shiptalk's news, views and forums.

It is common knowledge that a labour crisis is gripping shipping today, with the scarcity of skilled seafarers reaching a critical mass. Shiptalk.com has seen first hand the lifeblood of shipping - the seafarers themselves - ebbing away. With an urgent need for a positive recruitment step-change, they created a new global job network, ShiptalkJOBS (www.shiptalkjobs.com).

It is a stark fact that today, fewer and fewer people want, or need to go to sea. It is not unusual to hear issues such as criminalisation being to blame, but do more common factors such as fatigue, stress, low morale and alternative jobs ashore, bite more often into our labour supply?

Insurers and P&I Clubs have scolded and issued stark warnings to the industry, claiming that owners have not 'done enough' to alleviate growing manning problems, and that a lack of skills will lead to an increase in accidents and claims. Others state that profit maximisation has led shipowners to reduce manning and opt for cheap, poorly trained labour from developing countries.

Aside from a seemingly negative image of shipping, Anneley believes that one of the fundamental problems is one of open dialogue. She says, "The seagoing recruitment business has

become fragmented, with too little communication between all the players, whether individuals or companies."

She added, "There is natural competition for the dwindling supply of personnel, but at present many of these valuable human resources do not know where to turn. The whole recruitment process needs tidying up and simplifying."

Allied to cleaning-up the process, Anneley feels that a human approach is essential. "Too often faceless shadowy figures lurk in dubious jurisdictions looking to harvest unsuspecting seafarers through money making schemes."

Anneley stresses, "ShiptalkJOBS are the total antithesis of this practice, we are all about openness, and providing a face, valuable feedback, support and first-class service for all our clients - whether they be seafarers or shipowners."

In an impassioned plea, Anneley states, "It is time to act to stem the flow of people out of shipping, and to guarantee our recruiters a supply of the very best people available from around the globe. There is so much at stake, for individuals, owners and the entire industry, we hope our efforts, innovation and enthusiasm will act as a catalyst for a positive future".

But it's not all doom and gloom, as many leading shipowners are investing millions of dollars in training and recruitment. Meanwhile others are looking to set their own competence standards and vetting procedures, as they build on the (very) basic standards required by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW).

In fact these 'quality operators' whose aim it is to raise the bar above STCW often see that the real problem is as much about the quality of labour, as the quantity. It seems that in introducing a minimum level of attainment, skill and knowledge, too many seafarers have been tempted to simply follow the path of least resistance.

Anneley says: "There has long been a puzzling maritime labour dichotomy, that of too few officers and too many ratings. Perhaps one simple answer is to upgrade the ratings, however, converting one into the other is not that simple - it takes time, effort and commitment from all sides."

As if to demonstrate the point, The Philippines, the world's biggest supplier of seagoing labour, is desperately wrestling with the task of trying to increase the proportion of their seafarers qualified as officers, so far with only limited success.

Despite the problems of supply and demand, the launch of ShiptalkJOBS.com means that there is now one place where individuals can find the right jobs, and employers can find the right seafarers. Anneley adds, "At our core we are a people broker, bringing recruiters and jobseekers from all over the world together in a safe, secure and trusted online environment to find what they, we and the entire industry all need".

"The shipping industry needs to be able to shout out loud that there are great opportunities for people who go to sea. Despite bad press, a career at sea offers good money, and wonderful opportunities. With ShiptalkJOBS.com, seafarers finally have a free platform to be able to say to owners, 'here I am, come and get me'.

Go to www.shiptalkjobs.com for more details, or email enquiries@shiptalkjobs.com



Pictured: Anneley Pickles



JUST THE START

One of the first recruiters to sign up for ShiptalkJOBS was Viking Recruitment, a company which has been supplying Deck, Engine, Technical Officers and Hospitality/Guest Services Professionals worldwide since 1988, to some of the most prestigious names in the business.

Specialising in the recruitment of high calibre, STCW certificated Officers, Viking is alert to the ever-increasing demand in both cruise and yacht markets for these highly skilled professionals.

Following the growing sophistication, size, power and tonnage of such vessels, coupled with the ongoing safety regulations governed by MCA, Viking recognises the need to utilise the best, most effective and innovative means of attracting the seafarers they need.

A close association with the premier Holland America Line cruise ship fleet and the equally prestigious Windstar Cruises means that for Viking, only the very best will do.

Natalie Inman, Viking's Marine Recruitment Supervisor says, "ShiptalkJOBS provides us with a valuable access point to the high calibre seafarers we need from around the globe. We look forward to working with ShiptalkJOBS and reaping the rewards...that of recruiting the right people for our discerning and demanding client base".

www.shiptalkjobs.com
www.vikingrecruitment.com