



# GANGWAY

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Welcome to Issue 5 of **Gangway**, where we look at the “evil twin” of the manning crisis, the struggle to find the right people for shore based positions.

This issue sees us look back over the recent IBC Asia - Lloyd's List summit in Singapore, and seeks to find answers to the eternal mystery of why we cannot find the right people to do the job.

We also look at the matter of perceptions, and of how shipping may benefit from managing its human capital in a similarly evolved and structured way to other risks. Business continuity management is a popular buzz word in shipping, but it seems that too many companies have neglected the basics of such schemes and have simply sat back and mistakenly assumed that seafarers would always be freely available, and that many of these would then move ashore.

One emerging issue is that there has been lots of talking about the problems of recruitment and retention but perhaps not enough listening. So with that in mind we bring you exciting news of the new Shiptalk Seafarers Survey.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and if you have any thoughts on the issues raised please feel free to contact us.

## ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL

### Lloyd's List Human Resource Summit 2007, “Shoreside Focus... Human capital investment and future growth”

The 2007 IBC Asia - Lloyd's List Maritime Human Resource Summit, rolled into Singapore recently, and in this (literal) hothouse of shipping the problems of finding people, training them and then keeping them were given a good airing.

There has been much talk about the shortage of people going to sea, but this Conference focused instead on maritime recruitment's “evil twin”, the shortage of people ashore.

Marine recruitment is the archetypal “game of two halves”, first is getting people onto ships, and then comes the need to fill shorebased vacancies. To the layperson it may seem safe to assume that many of the people on ships simply move into the jobs ashore. All well and good, but there seems to be something amiss.

For too long manning of ships was

simply taken for granted, it was merely assumed that we would always have seafarers. Even when it looked like we were running out of traditional labour, well no matter as China's millions would save the day. We now know how wrong we were, how naïve and how wicked to take a steady supply of good seafarers for granted.



Anneley Pickles  
*Managing Director ShiptalkJOBS.com*



*Image courtesy of South Tyneside College.*

Risk management has been an operational watch-word for years, but sadly the manning issue was never really handled like any other kind of risk, and we were seemingly too blasé and blind to the facts. Shipping too late realised the risk of losing people and resolutely failed to address the issues with regards to “human capital”, and now we are struggling to manage the decline. What a mess!

So where do we go now? As is usual with IBC Asia (part of the Informa Group) a very strong line up was put before the gathered, concerned masses, and with senior personnel from the likes of J. Lauritzen, Pacific Basin Shipping, NYK Ship Management, as well as recruitment companies and terminal operators, it became clear that the problems are being faced across the entire industry.

Whatever their maritime perspective, one thread united all the talks, and that was the need for urgent action. Mistakes have been made, the speakers stressed, but we can't simply hang our heads. Instead we need to be more committed, intelligent and determined in finding solutions.

Shipping has been for too long an industry simply addicted to profits, above and beyond much else. Like any addiction, recognising the problem is the start to fixing it. We know there is a challenge, we are not attracting people and even when we do we are not keeping them. So, what are we doing wrong and what should we be doing instead?

In asking, “has the shortage of seafarers created a dilemma ashore”, Ashwin Atre, managing director and chief operation officer of NYK Ship Management nailed the issue. This is indeed the problem, and while we were gathered with a “Shoreside focus”, it seems impossible to address this without facing up to the fundamental “seabased problems” driving the shortages.

In essence there is a “tug-of-war” for talent. However this is not necessarily between rival companies, in some instances it is actually between parts of the same company. We are about to become the industry “that ate itself”, as the fight over the same ever decreasing pool of people gets evermore aggressive.

“Robbing Peter to pay Paul” is the term often used, but as Mr Subhiah – General Manager – Pacific Basin Shipping put

it, in order to address these ills, “The Industry needs to become more imaginative”, in its recruitment, retention and also of its management of human resources.

Over coffee it seemed that a rather more rustic view was taken. It may be easier skim the cream from the top today, but what happens when you stop filling the churn? We are no longer milking the best, brightest talent from around the world. Shipping recruitment has soured while the world of work has moved on.

It seems that there are some elementary areas that need to be addressed; one is controlling the flow of good people from ship to the shore, and the issue of managing their “shipping career”.

There appeared to be consensus that we have to promote the concept of “careers”. This issue has reared its head at other conferences, and it seems vital within modern society to offer a natural, recognised and defined route from one stage of the maritime job (at sea) to the opportunities beyond.

This conference was yet another arena in which the “old fashioned” concept of the shipping career path was debunked. Once it was true that young people

joined as cadet, sailed the seas, accumulated qualifications and then became Master or Chief. Now, however, things have to be different, and the pathway needs to be modernised, with a view to continuous progression.

Today reaching the zenith of your profession before the age of thirty and then just sitting there, sadly hints at failure. Such talented people need to see where and when they will move forward. Officers want to access to training, and to careers beyond the sea, and as such are moving ashore increasingly early.

However, the issue of retention doesn't simply vanish when someone shifts from ship-to-shore. For many the move into an office can be quite bewildering, and unsettling. Captain Khir of STET Maritime Bureau, touched on this when he stressed that this is yet another important area to be carefully managed. Make a mistake at this delicate stage, and not only have you sacrificed a skilled officer, you have lost a future Senior manager too. The stakes are high.

So what can we do? Proper career plans are vital for the future of all officers, as they provide a pivotal step in assuring staff of their future role. Remember if you don't invest in your "human capital", then you may find someone else taking "interest".

Aside from keeping those already employed content and motivated, the other vital area addressed was the eternal conundrum of how to bring new life into shipping.

The Conference served as a salutary reminder that while many people at sea may want to move ashore, people are simply not being attracted to sea in the first place. Singapore is a real case in point, and walking the vibrant, bustling streets one sees so many young, well-educated people from across the world. Be they Indian, Chinese, Singaporean, Filipino or European they all share one noticeable commonality, they are not at sea...again we ask, why?

Nicola Wood of Spinnaker Consulting, stressed in her presentation the importance of "Raising the status of HR and establishing a strong hiring brand". We are in complete agreement; there is indeed a vital need to create a new persona and image for the industry and of the wonderful careers available.

We need to cultivate our image to bring young people back into the fold, and we need to shape a culture of reward, benefits and commitment. With recruitment one recognises very quickly whether you have it right or wrong. No applicants or poor quality ones? Then perhaps the message of the shipping brand has weakened, and after so many years of minimal investment, and of collective heads in the sand perhaps this is inevitable?

If employers want to attract people there is a real need to foster a partnership between employer and employee. Sadly it seems that there exists a climate of distrust, of dissatisfaction and of plain disenchantment.

Are seafarers treated right we have to ask? What about shore leave, criminalisation and fatigue? Do we support and resource our crews? What about having empathy for the difficulties they face? These are major factors in making seagoing more attractive, and in shaping the modern professional "leader" we all so sorely need.

At present it seems that things are still far from perfect across the industry, there are Masters and Chiefs standing "6-on, 6 off" watches, there are ships with too few people to police the gangway, or to even look out of the windows, and there are too many instances of unpaid wages and abandonment.

Things do indeed need to change in order to attract and retain good people, and we need the "Field of Dreams" approach, we need to build the job, the rewards and the career and then they will join. Bright young people will walk up the gangway if we can tell them why,

how and what they will get from it.

Naturally there are steps we can take to bring people back to shipping, and over the course of the two days it became apparent that we need to:

- **Project a positive image**
- **Use the media in innovative and imaginative ways**
- **Understand the psychology of recruitment and retention**
- **Make employee rewards worth the sacrifice**
- **Understand employees' future ambitions**
- **Stop criminalising and marginalising seafarers**
- **Resource and support employees**
- **Put pride back into the job**
- **Make the job a true career**
- **Listen to seafarers views**

So there you have it, ten steps to a brighter, people filled future. They may be tough, but we really are running out of options.





## Welcome to the Shiptalk Recruitment "Life at Sea Survey 2007/8" YOUR OPINION COUNTS...CLICK HERE FOR FULL DETAILS



# Shiptalk Recruitment Life at Sea Survey 2007/8

## Attraction/Retention - Choosing to Work at Sea

If you work on a ship it can be difficult to make your voice heard on land.

That's about to change, over the next 12 months Shiptalk are conducting five new "Life at Sea" surveys, asking serving seafarers their views about the issues faced by our industry today.

We do not want to know your name or even the name of your ship. We just want your personal views and comments about life at sea today.

Shiptalk are working with the leading maritime market research company GRS ([www.gilmour-research.co.uk](http://www.gilmour-research.co.uk)) to make sure that the survey is carried-out according to the British Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. This will guarantee confidentiality.

The first of five short surveys will look at Personnel Attraction & Retention, asking seafarers why they chose to pursue a career at sea. It looks at the issues that make people choose to work at sea, the things that make them stay

and the problems that make them look for another job.

The surveys in the series will include:

- 1) Attraction/Retention – Choosing to Work at Sea
- 2) Salary and Employment Benefits – Payment, Wages & Rewards
- 3) Qualifications and Training – Learning & Experience
- 4) Career Progression – Rising Through the Ranks
- 5) Regulatory Effect – Governments, Laws & the Seafarer

Each of these surveys will be hosted by Shiptalk Recruitment at the website:

URL:<http://www.shiptalkjobs.com/lifeatseasurvey>

Each survey will run for approximately two months, so there will be plenty of time for most seafarers to give their views.

Once each survey has been completed GRS will then analyse the data and produce two reports from the information we collect:

1. The Key Findings book, providing a concise summary of the most important survey results.
2. The Full Report, containing the summary, key findings and details of the statistics behind the survey.

At the end of the year all five surveys will be compiled into the Annual Life At Sea Report. All responses are anonymous and we will only publish an overview of this information. Nobody will be able to identify you at any time.

For the first time you now have the chance to make your voice heard. No-one knows better than you what goes on out of sight of land. Log on to the website and complete the survey. It is your opinion that counts.

If your business is involved with the maritime industry and you have a website, please display the web banner illustrated above to spread news of the survey. Send your request for a copy of our web banner to [enquires@shiptalkjobs.com](mailto:enquires@shiptalkjobs.com)

Whatever your connection to the sea, please publicise news of this survey to as many people within our industry as you can.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this article and for any assistance you may be able to provide.



Image courtesy of Capt Colin Pratt

## The 8th Asia-Pacific Manning & Training Conference

Returning once again to the Philippine Plaza Hotel in Manila, Lloyd's List Events is delighted to announce the 8th Asia-Pacific Manning & Training Conference.

Supported by other events during a full week of manning & training activity the conference will address the reality that shipping is facing greater challenges in manning & training than ever before.

Training & retaining sufficiently well qualified seafarers & preventing further erosion of maritime skills will be the key focus of the conference - already a major concern for the industry with shortages leading to spiralling wage costs.

The conference will cover the need for investment in human resources plus corporate, social & environmental responsibility. Industry leaders & experts will also assess the regime of increasing & changing regulation - even criminalisation - which seafarers have to contend with.

After the main conference, against the backdrop of crew quality issues in the wake of manning shortages, an interactive workshop will undertake an 'Assessment of Crew Competence'.

As well as the educational benefits of the pre & post event workshops, the conference & accompanying exhibition will offer outstanding opportunities for you to network & discuss common issues with leading industry experts & peers.

Manning & Training week is enhanced by the first IFSMA Forum on the Revised STCW. The Philippine Manning Convention will also host their own event preceding the 8th Asia-Pacific Manning & Training Conference.

For more information: <http://www.lloydslistevents.com/lm1960>



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