

■ Manning ■

V.Ships boss urges blue sky thinking on crew training

Using trained non-crew to carry out specific tasks could alleviate growing personnel problem, writes **Nigel Kitchen**

THE shipping industry needs to review the way vessels are operated and move towards the airline model where specific tasks are carried out by trained people who are not part of the crew, according to David Greenhalgh, managing director, V.People Marine, V.Ships' rebranded crewing operation.

Today's seafarer shortage is significantly different from those of previous times, believes Mr Greenhalgh.

"Shipping continues to expand year on year with no sign of this expansion slowing, but this time when there is a shortage of officers there are no new nationalities to be introduced and the number of officers from the developed countries continues to decline," he said.

"At the same time the number of job opportunities ashore in the emerging countries is rising — especially for officers who have international management

experience and have a good command of English."

Mr Greenhalgh believes the seafarer shortage "is a very serious issue for the whole industry".

He explained: "We have had chronic shortages in the past, but on previous occasions new nationalities have been introduced who have found international standard conditions in merchant vessels acceptable and the remuneration excellent in comparison with what was available in their own countries.

"In broad terms, India produced officers to fill the shortage of European officers and the Philippines supplied large numbers of ratings.

"Later, just as another crisis was looming, the political changes in the former Soviet Union released large numbers of well trained and experienced officers for international trades.

"In the meantime seafarers from the traditional

maritime countries in Europe have found the prevailing international standard conditions either financially or socially unacceptable and have left the industry in large numbers.

"Perhaps the recent decision by the EU to review the interface between the officer and rating responsibilities will open up to a serious debate into the operation of vessels in the future," Mr Greenhalgh continued.

"I share some of the UK reservations about this decision, but welcome the debate.

"A fundamental review of the highways of the sea concept could lead to a project in which new vessels could be designed and new operating methods tested within EU waters and subsequently, where applicable, applied to new tonnage elsewhere."

A full interview with Mr Greenhalgh will appear in the next issue of Lloyd's Ship Manager.