



# GANGWAY

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Welcome to issue 15 of Gangway, the HR bulletin from Shiptalk Recruitment.

We're fighting battles on all fronts this issue – from feminism to reality checks. There are articles on the recent WISTA conference, and of the need to bring women into shipping, we also look at the worrying trend of owners turning away cadets and trainees.

It seems like the history lessons have been neglected as the industry looks to save a few dollars here and there, but may well be saving up yet more people problems for the future. The industry's troubles are laid bare in an irate blast from one Master, who's not afraid to bring some home truths into the open.

Inside we look to the recruitment market – and assess the real effect of the downturn on jobs, those looking for them and those who need them.

Continuing our series of articles about the realities of employment, we look at the hazards of the internet – blogging at sea can cause untold chaos for individuals and companies, so we look to pick our way through the issue. We also look at the matter of social networking, and of how “status” and profiles can be of interest not simply to friends, but to lawyers and jurors too.



**Anneley Pickles**  
*Managing Director Shiptalk Recruitment Ltd*

## No Women, No Cry

According to the UN Statistics Division, out of the world's near 7 Billion population, there are 102 males to every 100 females. Which is a slight relief, as having more men than women at least makes the ridiculous lack of females working in shipping somewhat less embarrassing.

So why are women so rarely found at sea today? If shipping has changed so much, then what of the future for women in shipping?

Here in this issue of Gangway we are going to explore the options for women, the thoughts of the recent Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) conference and of one Flag State actively looking to get more women (literally) onboard.

We supposedly live in enlightened times, and it is ridiculous that a profession which we proudly boast of providing good money, travel, interest, responsibility and great leave can be of so little interest to women.

Here Peter Cardy, chief executive of The UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) sets out his thoughts and hopes for the future of women in shipping.

A top-line issue for the UK shipping industry over many years has been the officer shortage.

For the British merchant fleet, its origins are in the shipping slump of the 1980s and the loss of almost an entire generation of cadets. Recent worldwide demand and some reported exotic pay deals in certain shipping sectors have only served to exaggerate it. The demographics are well known and the shortage was predicted for a decade. Its effects were felt not only at sea but in all the shoreside industries that require experienced seafarers: shipping management, class societies, insurers, ports, crewing agents, emergency response and even the MCA's surveyor workforce.

The 2009 slump seems to have driven the shortage out of the headlines - for the moment. Owners whose ships are not trading need fewer officers and they appear to be dealing with this by not recruiting, retiring older staff or making staff redundant. Does this mean the end of the manning crisis? Far from it. There is still both a global and UK shortage of officers and if we don't take action now we shall simply roll the deficit forward to the next upturn.

Of course cash-strapped companies will think hard about how many UK cadets and how much training they can afford even with Government support through SMarT (Support for Maritime Training), but short-term economies can quickly undermine long-term investments. Although numbers of cadets training in the UK have increased substantially (in 2008, 925 new cadets were recruited, a fourfold increase since SMarT began) there are still too few to replace those retiring in the near future. But unemployment among those leaving full-time education is the highest for decades, so where are all the trainees?

One beneficial feature of UK tonnage tax is the minimum training obligation on companies entering the scheme, of one officer trainee per year for every 15 officer posts in the company's effective officer complement, and to give consideration to employment and training opportunities for ratings. This training commitment was adopted to try to ensure an increase in UK seafarers to meet both present needs at sea and future jobs onshore in the maritime services sector. Although the UK fleet is much larger than it was at the turn of the millennium, a shortage of available training places is part of the problem.

A major barrier is that the public mind has not kept pace with reality and seafaring is still a long way down the list of possible careers. If it's considered at all, the old stereotypes still linger: ships as primitive machines of iron and coal; mortal danger aboard or on the high seas; brutal discipline and exotic temptations in tropical ports. These have been reinforced in recent months by the continuing piracy off the coast of East Africa - unfortunately one of the rare events that put shipping onto the front pages of the press, despite its vital role in supplying virtually every commodity we need as a country.

Though the exotic temptations are harder to find in container ports or at the end of a coal wharf or oil jetty, all else has changed for a new recruit, and for the better. Early responsibility, technical sophistication, degree-based education without student debt, internationally-portable qualifications, transferable management skills, the opportunity to switch from sea to shore and back, good domestic and employment conditions. Where can you find that ashore?

Sea Vision, the broad maritime alliance, has recently decided to focus its campaigns on promoting the maritime sector in education and raising awareness of career opportunities. With this new strategy as a backdrop, Trinity House recently held a Celebration of Training, featuring its own scholarship scheme through which 200 young people have passed so far. The training programmes of ASTO (the Association of Sail Training Organisations), and the UK Sailing Academy programme for superyachts were showcased too. This crossover between recreational sailing, superyachts and sail training has much potential.

In the armada of vessels around the UK coast there are thousands of young (and older) people who would love to make a career in shipping, but don't know how. For some of those who do, scaling the heights of STCW seems too big a hurdle. If there were more steps on the ladder between RYA and MCA commercial yachting qualifications, experience on sail training vessels, and the 3,000gt threshold for STCW, we could open a route for more people with a vocation to join the UK commercial fleet. Capt Roger Towner, MCA Registrar General, has written in The Crew Report about how to break through the 3,000gt barrier and the importance of nurturing talent for larger vessels.

While bewailing the lack of trainees, the industry as a whole has been neglecting half the labour market: women. Shipping remains largely a male industry, "blokeish" in its composition. The first shipping dinner I attended consisted of 594 men and six women and little has changed. The first Trinity House cadet in 1989 was Capt Emma Tiller, now an MAIB Inspector. Later Heather Cowan became an engineer cadet and is now a Superintendent for MOL: both spoke eloquently of their seagoing careers at the Celebration. They remain exceptional; in fact a good few women go to sea but many leave relatively shortly afterwards.

The benefits of seafaring are as likely to fit with women's contemporary career and family aspirations as with men's. But as with other previously male domains, to overcoming the barriers requires senior role models, not being the sole female on board, assurance of privacy and personal security, and clarity from the master and company about behaviour. Of course, the colleges and companies say women are welcome, yet there remains a shortage of women applicants in spite of work by government, industry and the Merchant Navy Training Board.



*Peter Cardy, chief executive of  
The UK Maritime & Coastguard  
Agency (MCA)*



To succeed at sea, women feel they constantly have to prove they are not just as good as the men doing the same job, but better. They have to overcome unspoken - and explicit - expectations and prejudices about the place of women, so being the only female cadet or officer on a ship requires great strength of character. We would want women to succeed on merit, not gender, but first they have to get there. Is this too difficult to achieve?

No: a report from the Royal College of Physicians shows how in the last few decades women have gone from being a small minority of doctors to being almost half the workforce. When I first worked in the health sector it was still dominated by alpha males of the Sir Lancelot Spratt mould. Now medical careers are built on excellence, not school, networks or gender, and women stay in the profession while balancing family demands. Modest adaptations to working practices and environments, to the shape of careers, but most of all to attitudes and expectations, have made this possible.

Why not in shipping too?

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## Motions On The Ocean

Peter Cardy is right to be slightly perplexed about the lack of women working on ships. But lest we forget there is a whole, huge industry behind the stern, pushing the seafarers, ships and cargoes along.

While there is still a battle to be waged in getting women up the gangway, what of their position in the wider maritime domain? Look around any shipping company office and low and behold...WOMEN! Visit insurers, lawyers, bankers and colleges, and there they are women beavering away. So is it that simple? Does the mere presence of women in an industry gloss over the problem? Sadly not, as with so many things, its all about "positions".

There are too few women in senior positions across too many companies. Even for the most qualified, skilled and experienced women, the dreaded glass "deckhead" exists to halt progress to the very highest echelons of the business.

Sure there are the odd exceptions, but for so few women to hold senior positions means there is something clearly wrong. Somewhere and somehow there is discrimination, but what can be done about it? This was the topic debated at the recent WISTA conference held in London...with calls for affirmative action, "to open the doors to greater female participation at top levels of the shipping industry".

But what form should the action take? Should it be forced upon companies – a quota system of women in senior roles? Or should it be less formalised, and more of a battle of hearts and minds to prove that so many women are the equal of their male peers?

Passionate arguments were heard on both sides of the formal debate held at the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Michael Grey, an independent shipping journalist, and Julian Bray, executive editor of Tradewinds were invited to address the gathering as they examined a quota system, such as Norway enacted in 2003, requiring companies to fill 40 percent of corporate board seats with women. Grey believed the Norwegians to be on dangerous ground with such legislation, as it served to "divide men from women." He recommended educating more role models of both sexes to impress talented girls to join the maritime trades.

Though there must be something in the air, as the trend has not stopped with Scandinavia. The Norwegian initiative has passed onto Spain, which has also now passed a similar law. Companies must give 4 out of 10 board positions to women within seven years. While in Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel's centre-right government is moving in the same direction, the first step being a "voluntary charter" committed to gender equality, and the Netherlands is pledging the same commitment to putting women in charge at the top.



[www.wista.net](http://www.wista.net)



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Julian Bray, argued that rules are necessary, and that it was only through the stick not the carrot, that progress could be made rapidly enough. Given the low levels of female board participation, he thought it necessary to force the issue, as relying on organic growth alone it would take 100 years to reach the 40% mark achieved in Norway. Time and tide waiteth for no woman!

Sadly eagle eyed readers will have spotted the fatal flaw in these arguments (both for and against). Yes, they were both delivered by men! It wasn't all from a male perspective however, and Susan Hawker, of London Metropolitan University, said that women in professional organisations and in employment generally suffer discrimination. Reminding us that there was little progress in Norway when companies were asked to act on a voluntary basis, and that common sense seems to, "have got us nowhere."

While Irene Rosberg, warned that there was a danger of quota systems reinforcing and actually strengthening the gender divide and the stereotypes it has given rise to. Ms Rosberg, programme director for the Executive MBA in Shipping & Logistics at Copenhagen Business School, said that quotas could create a real shock to men, especially in the macho maritime world, who were likely to react to maintain their power. They would try to prevent "quota women" from exercising real power by putting them in less prestigious positions.

The "proxy women" would be expected to accept the agenda of the dominant group and ignored in decision making. They would be kept outside leadership positions and end up chairing "Mickey Mouse committees." Thereby, said Ms Rosberg, the depressing status quo is merely maintained if quotas are imposed. Worse, it is perhaps driven underground.

Despite the "Mickey Mouse" (or should that be Minnie?) threat, the conference voted in favour of quotas and more legislation (though given the double negatives and PC wording of the motion, it wasn't always entirely clear whose side anyone was on).

However, given the success of all too many shipping companies in avoiding, or, ahem, "manipulating" legislation that they don't like – it would perhaps be naïve to suppose that the "real" board, the one hidden behind the corporate veil would play by the rules. The boards of the companies "clustered" on the brass plates of Broad Street, Monrovia are unlikely to have 40% women, regardless of the rules.

In our opinion the Conference got the call wrong, albeit with some merits to both arguments. Being a woman does not make you better or worse at your job. Having skills, knowledge, experience, contacts, passion, and dedication, these are what count, regardless of sex. So we shouldn't need to force change through rules and regulations – we need to foster a change of mindset within industry. We need female leaders to reach out to others, we need mentors to lift the hopes and aspirations of girls in schools, and of young women entering their professional lives. When we have these in place and a clear path to follow, there will be no need for quotas and such arguments will look redundant and antiquated...sadly though these days still appear a long way off and we must work hard to bring the worthy goals of WISTA to fruition.

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## Note from Anneley

As Managing Director of Shiptalk Recruitment Ltd, I obviously have strong thoughts on the matter. I personally feel that it is my hard work and investment in my career that have got me where I am today, and it would feel wrong to always have the nagging doubt that I am here as part of a numbers game. I certainly don't want to be lumped in as a means of satisfying some arbitrary quotas.

Mind you, that is not to say we don't need change and progress. The dreaded "Old Boy" network has to be eroded, and we need to evolve, improve and diversify the views of those in the highest positions. A group made up of identikit middle aged men can be dangerous, and they all nod and agree (or miss opportunities) based on the same experiences...which can be far removed from the world outside the board room door.

Being approached at exhibitions and asked to introduce people to my boss can get tiresome, but hey it's all about bringing in a different approach and attitude to the boardroom. Being able to have different egos, drivers and capabilities can only be positive. So companies should embrace women onto the board not because they have to, but because the benefits are immense.

As a new member of WISTA it was slightly disappointing to see that the membership seems to want quotas, whereas I personally believe we need confidence and self-belief to tackle the status quo through what we can do, rather than who we are.

## Voices from the Conference

Irene Rosberg and Susan Hawker who debated the issue at the Wista Conference kindly share their views with us.



*Irene Rosberg, Programme Director for the Executive MBA in Shipping and Logistics, Copenhagen Business School*

Attempting to break the male-dominated structure of the shipping industry by increasing the numerical representation of women through gender quotas has become an increasingly prominent solution in recent years. Under the right conditions, and in the right contexts, this would be a good solution. It could be argued that it would effectively break up the male monopoly that currently exists within the industry. Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence that this has happened to date. In fact - quite the reverse. We now face a situation where the status quo has in fact been reinforced. In many cases gender quotas can represent a threat to male leaders who would like to maintain control over the political agenda. In these cases their reaction to gender quota systems is one of tokenism and marginalization.



**Tokenism:** The leadership respond to the threat a gender quota poses to male dominance by selecting inexperienced women. As a consequence, quota or 'proxy' women as they are sometimes called, are expected to accept the agenda of the leaders in their organisations. They feel they have a greater obligation to those who have appointed them, resulting in an experienced difficulty in pursuing a different agenda to the prevailing one within their organisations.

**Marginalisation:** Another common reaction within organisations to the implementation of a gender quota system is to challenge this by marginalising the 'quota' women. This is achieved by granting them membership to non-vital committees and secondary activities; exclusion from the key decision-making processes; no inclusion or discussion of their opinions in respect of organisational proposals and policies. These token women are deliberately chosen for their lower levels of experience and their lack a developed power/influence base. The net effect of these tactics is to ensure that the 'quota' women are left with a very limited room in which to manoeuvre within the management ranks. Fundamentally, this has ensured that the status quo has been maintained in an effective and efficient way, despite a numerical advancement of this traditionally under-represented group.

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The issue of positive discrimination for employment of women has risen its head, threatening to divide the business world over "employment quotas for women". Whilst stopping short of imposing quotas, the Equalities Bill, published on 27th April 2009, will, if it receives Royal Assent, allow employers to use "positive action" in the selection and promotion of women in the workforce. That the Bill is contentious is without doubt, and that it has spurred a flurry of dissent from the female workforce should not surprise those of us raised against the backdrop of a belief in "equality for equal". We women want to be chosen for our merit, not our gender. We might pause, however, in our haste to denigrate the Bill, and spare a thought for the social changes within the last 100 years that have led to the equality that women have within society, and their legitimate expectation of equal treatment with men: the enfranchisement of women and the recent 40-odd years of equality legislation. But inequality and discrimination persist – no other credible explanation for the under-representation of women in high level positions has been advanced. A pertinent question, then, might be "how long will the achievement of real equality take without the Bill?"... the employment we women enjoy today, our right to own property and to vote are rights we take for granted, but actually won by the battle of imposed legislation, equally contentious in its day. If the imposition of severely enforced quotas for women were introduced today, tomorrow would likely see the end of the "we need more women" debate. There simply would be more women in high level employment. A new norm would be established, and in the brave new world a retrospective discussion might seek to praise and not to bury the Equalities Bill.



*Susan Hawker, Principal Lecturer in International Trade and Maritime Law, London Metropolitan University*





## Slash and Earn Policies

It was only a matter of time before the ugly issues of wages and slashing costs reared up, as shipowners struggle through these austere times.

Now it seems that, “cash-strapped owners” are putting pressure on shipmanagers to reduce crewing costs. Which rather depressingly means that cadets are amongst the first to go.

According to Wahid Abu Ajamieh, general manager of Arab Ship Management, a member of InterManager, speaking at the recent Informa Ship Management Conference in Hamburg, he had been told by certain owners to cut cadet numbers.

The company manages ro-ro and passenger ferries and bulkers for Middle Eastern owners. Capt Ajamieh added, “We did not want to reduce numbers so in the end we agreed with the owners that we would cut cadets’ salaries from about \$500 per month to about \$200-250 per month”.

It was believed that some other shipmanagers had come under similar pressure. Though Bernhard Schulte Ship Management chief executive Andreas Droussiotis said his company had not been asked to cut cadet numbers, (he neglected to add the caveat, “YET”).

“If they did we would try to cover the costs ourselves because it is vital for our future to maintain recruitment and training of cadets,” he said. Mr Droussiotis said that although owners’ financial problems were the biggest challenge facing shipmanagers, the industry must learn the lessons from the past.

It has been hammered home by many that previous attempts to cut-back recruitment have caused major problems, and a shortage of experienced senior officers onboard ships, and of shore-based staff with seagoing experience. The manning crisis is not so long ago surely that we can forget the fuss and forelock tugging that accompanied fevered efforts to find good crews?

Mr Droussiotis identified the dangerous, “domino effect” which occurs when we don’t recruit or manage our human resources properly. Before speaking of the need for more experienced people in shipmanagement offices. He stressed, “More needs to be invested in real training and an increase in cadets. We cannot afford to carry on the way we are.”

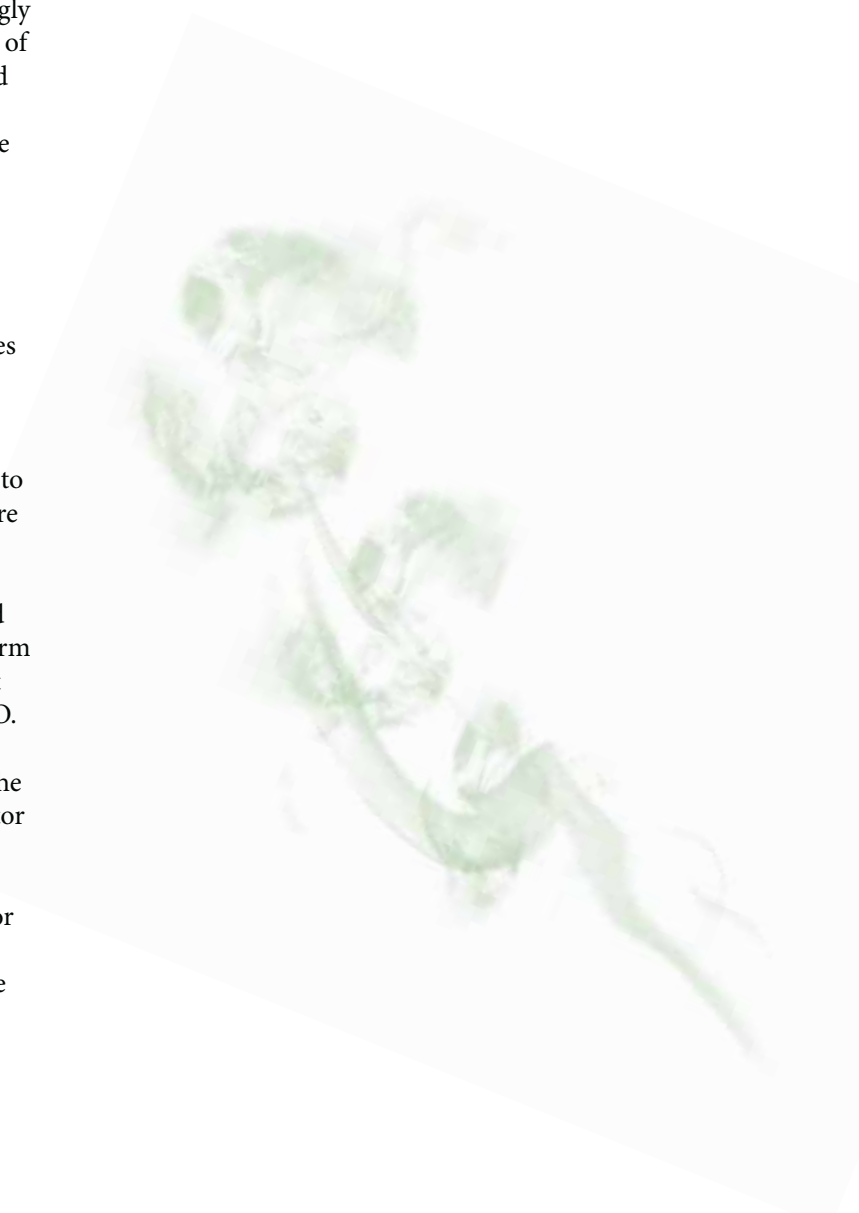
The danger of neglecting cadet recruitment interestingly brings us to a development we have been made aware of recently. Which is affecting the hitherto rarefied world of Dynamic Positioning (DP) - a sector that has often seemed remote and removed from the pressures of the mainstream maritime.

There has been an explosion in the numbers of seafarers looking to train and become certified in DP operations. However, it seems there is a rather concerning bottleneck developing, whereby companies are unwilling or unable to accommodate trainee DP Operators.

Shipmanagers are being told that owners will not pay to have trainee DPO’s onboard, while on some ships there is simply not the room to accommodate them. It seems sadly inevitable that the mistakes of the past are being made once again with regards to cadets, and even more depressingly that the “traditional” short-term views of owners are now filtering through to the most high-tech and modern of shipboard roles, that of DPO.

We cannot neglect those seeking to be trained to fill the positions of the future. Steven Jones, Executive Director of The International Dynamic Positioning Operators Association (IDPOA) speaking to a recent industry gathering in Houston said, “this very specialised sector of shipping is in danger of creating real problems in the future. It is vital that all parts of the industry come together to face the issue and find ways of ensuring the supply of specialised and skilled DPO’s meets the rapidly growing demand”.

He added, “solutions are needed which bring trainees into available training positions – there is no alternative, and ignoring the problem will not make it go away”. It is tragic that we are seemingly ignoring the lessons from history, and are heading once more into the breach without the manpower necessary to deliver the next generation of seafarers.



## Why do seafarers need the support of maritime welfare charities?

Seafarers can sometimes face a difficult time at sea, far from their homes and loved ones. Often, as part of a small multinational crew, they can find themselves feeling very isolated. This is compounded as often seafarers have little or no opportunity to leave their ship due to fast turnaround times in port, making it hard to access facilities they need and to refresh their minds and spirits.

Maritime welfare organisations, such as the Sailors' Society, seek to address this problem. When their Port Chaplains go on board ships their sole purpose is the welfare of seafarers and their priority is to ask seafarers what they need. Without bias, Port Chaplains and ship visitors offer a trusted and friendly face to seafarers.

The friendship, help and support offered to seafarers by these charities is invaluable.

The ship's crew is one of the shipping industry's most important assets and it is vital that seafarers' are looked after. Legislation, such as the ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006, seeks to ensure that standards of

accommodation and food, conditions of employment, health protection and social security meet seafarers' needs across the board; much as Fairtrade seeks to protect the rights of workers involved in the production of goods to have decent working conditions and fair terms. Most responsible companies regard the welfare, commonly defined as health, happiness and well-being, of their seafarers as crucial to the smooth and safe operation of their ships. However, it can be difficult for companies' to provide for all seafarers' welfare needs without the assistance of port based maritime welfare charities.

The Maritime Labour Convention identifies the importance of seafarers' welfare and that the provision of welfare facilities and services in ports requires the help of external agencies such as maritime welfare charities, who can contribute tremendously to improving seafarers' welfare. This is demonstrated well by research into port based welfare services for seafarers conducted for the ITF Seafarers' Trust by Erol Kahveci at the Seafarers' International Research Centre in 2006 and 2007. This found that seafarers considered



transport to shops and seafarers' centres to be important to their welfare, along with access to international phones, cheap phone cards and internet access in ports. Many seafarers also considered a personal counselling service and place of worship to be important port based welfare services.

The best explanation of how maritime welfare charities can help seafarers comes from seafarers themselves. A seafarer taking part in the Seafarers' International Research Centre's study said:

"It is very important to us that someone comes on board the ship concerned about our welfare, asking how we are or selling phone cards... They can also help us to forget about our stress."

Another told interviewers:

"In my case it is very important for me and other people on board to have a visitor from missions. Because they can help, they can really help us a lot! We can talk about our spiritual and personal needs. I would feel comfortable to talk to them. They can share my emptiness, because I'm far away from my family."

It is important that maritime welfare charities receive help to enable them to achieve this important work. Whilst there are of course lots of important charities helping the world's disadvantaged, those working within

the shipping industry have an obligation to ensure that as part of their programme of charitable support they provide for the seafaring community and assist maritime welfare charities in their work.

Companies increasingly need to demonstrate to stakeholders that they are a good corporate citizen; committed to behaving ethically and contributing to society both environmentally and socially, which includes their workforce and the local community. Supporting seafarers should form a key part of the corporate social responsibility objectives of any company associated with the shipping industry. The benefits to companies of helping finance the provision of port welfare facilities for seafarers can be immense, such as an enhanced image, increased employee motivation and improved brand affinity.

It seems to me that there is no question about the need to support seafarers through their lives at sea. Hopefully the only question companies now have is "How can I help?"

If you are interested in learning more about the Sailors' Society and discussing how you can assist the charity's work supporting seafarers then please contact [halexander@sailors-society.org](mailto:halexander@sailors-society.org) or visit [www.sailors-society.org](http://www.sailors-society.org)



## Hampering Efforts

As we can see from the Sailors Society, there is a need and demand for charitable work and support of seafarers. The loneliness of the long distance sailor continues to bite, and add to that the lack of care and empathy that some companies extend to their people it can be a difficult and stressful life.

While we applaud and support the efforts to make life better for seafarers is there a danger that “caring” can sometimes send out the wrong message? While of course it’s positive to think about those less fortunate than us, does painting seafarers as poor waterborne unfortunates cause long term problems?

By portraying them in this light, and with our gestures of “kindness” there is a real danger that seafarers are seen as needing help and so are viewed with pity. With every act of charity, there is a danger that we make our seagoing professionals out to be basket cases.

When old ladies of the parish knit hats for “poor” seafarers, or when they are given handouts to allow them to wash, read and to feel closer to God. Does it paint them as a professional or a pariah?

Now, we are being unfair here to those who genuinely do good things, but the point is a wider one and is relating to the psychological “ghetto” we are putting seafarers into.

It is a difficult balancing act, that of maintaining professional respect for people who are seen to need charity. Caring and pity are noble, but sadly they are not comfortable bedfellows with the respect we also need seafarers to have. The minute we are unable to respect those that go to sea, well then we devalue the profession. Once that happens then how are we going to attract either the numbers or quality of people we need into the job?

So we need to juggle the need to help the needy against a backdrop of making sure the industry does the right things to ensure that seafarers are warm, nourished, entertained, returned home safely, etc. Then, and only then will we make shipping attractive as a career. We salute and support those that care, but need to ensure we do not detract from the real problem – the owners who treat their crews with contempt, the death trap ships and the abandoned seafarers. Charity begins at home, but first we need to get our house in order, and thankfully the Maritime Labour Convention may just be the answer.

## On The Market

It has been a funny old year, 2009. The seemingly unending upward progress of shipping (and the companies which serve it) came to a shuddering halt, and many were simply not prepared for the shock.

One of the primary barometers of the health of the industry is the level of recruitment. Are there new jobs being created and are people confident enough to jump to pastures new?



We were approached last month to help Lloyd’s List with a study on trends in recruitment, as they looked to the UK jobs market for seafarers and maritime professionals ashore.

The verdicts weren’t exactly earth shattering, but there were some positive noises from us and other companies, such as Faststream. The opinion appears to be that recruitment has held

up reasonably well after the start of the recession, while business is picking up slowly after coming close to a halt in the summer. It seems we and our fellow recruiters are all now quietly confident that recovery will be in evidence in the first few months of 2010. Fingers tightly crossed.

Shorebased recruitment appears to be characterised by the following at the moment:

- Fewer people moving around - those in jobs appear to be staying put at present, no doubt unsure as to the security of new jobs
- From a recruiters' perspective, given the dearth of high quality candidates, they are waiting for the market of quality people to re-adjust. Which creates a Catch22 for prospective employers as they juggle whether to recruit now, or hold off until better quality candidates come onto the scene
- Fewer openings - there are numerous middle management-level technical openings, but seem to be few "sexy" jobs around at the moment
- Whereas many companies froze recruitment for a while in the face of financial/business uncertainty, it appears that many budgets are once again including advertising and recruitment once more
- Laid up ships have an obvious knock on effect, and there are still the tremors being felt of the 1st and 2nd quarter doom and gloom
- A few months back there was a rash of companies' laying-off staff. For such companies there is now a time of reflection and re-organisation prior to recruiting once more
- Some companies have looked to develop their own in house solutions to recruitment - aside from the very largest companies these efforts have floundered, as they are not attractive to candidates and can remain hidden

- We have always had a sharp eye for "employer branding" opportunities, and these efforts are even more important now, as we need to make employers look more attractive to the talent they seek to attract
- There has been a rise in companies looking to non-specialised (cheap) options, such as Reed, Monster, et al...according to our long term clients the results have been patchy at best. Shipping and marine jobs are so specialised that they can tend to vanish within huge general recruitment sites

As a smaller company, Shiptalk has been able to ride the storm perhaps better than most. We have remained flexible for our clients and given the different services we provide, not simply recruitment, but marketing, advertising and design, we've been able to offset the downs with positives elsewhere. Also in our favour has been the fact that we have one of the world's largest databases of international seafarers. So we have been able to work with this body of people to harness them, focusing them on career development to allow them to look at shorebased positions with more confidence.

We have also seen an interesting trend in recruitment companies coming to us to advertise. Whereas they may have viewed us as competition in the past, the hard market has made them look to any opportunities, and we fit their profile well, and welcome them with open arms.

Shipping does tend to lag behind the general economy, and when the bubble burst, the ripple effect did not come all the way through into shipping until the middle part of this year. It seems at the moment we have basically reached a state of equilibrium, but we are cautiously optimistic for the period ahead...so for employers it's time to dust off those plans for the future and for candidates, it's time to get positive again and be ready to move to that dream job.

## Bang For Your Buck

Let's get real - the maritime jobs market has been through a rough passage in recent months. Vacancies for permanent roles have diminished; the shipping sector has crumbled; and let's not even mention trying to borrow money. It all sounds incredibly gloomy, and with good reason: when ships stop moving, there is little demand for people!

In other words, the employment market is a rather hostile environment at the moment. It's not any easier for companies looking to recruit, with many having their budgets slashed during the course of the recession. The proliferation of online recruitment sites, such as ShiptalkJOBS offer a guiding light for those looking to get the right people in, but what's the best approach to take?

Anneley Pickles, MD of Shiptalk Recruitment has been mulling over the issues, and is concerned as to where current online recruitment strategies in many companies are going wrong. According to Anneley, "Online is still a more cost-effective route for recruitment than traditional print media or recruitment agencies might be, provided you do your advertising or direct sourcing in the right place."

The recent turmoil across most businesses has led to many companies rethinking their strategies, out of necessity. Many have begun to explore different ways to recruit, whilst driving down costs. The ultimate aim being to find high quality candidates using the most cost effective means.

Mind you, it isn't quite so straightforward, and Anneley is quick to point out the importance of preparation and research, stating: "I've always believed in a blended approach to recruitment, and it's always about making sure you do your research and investigation beforehand...it's no good throwing it out onto a job board if the people you're

trying to reach don't actually visit that job board." For us at Shiptalk, the answer has been to innovate, improve and invest. The success of our ShiptalkJOBS, seagoing site has been the catalyst to change the way we handle shorebased positions. We've learned our lessons, and are ready to roll out what we believe will be the biggest, brightest and best database of maritime talent in the world.

Our shorebased recruitment service, **www.first4marinejobs.com** was originally launched as a direct request from a number of our clients - they had experienced success with our seagoing facility, and wanted to see how we could shift our emphasis ashore - which we have now done to great effect, don't take our word for it, check out the website and see what you think.

The new **www.first4marinejobs.com** site will be launched in the New Year, and we look forward to your feedback, to helping you get your dream job, and to helping you find the talent you need ashore.

The logo for First4marinejobs.com features the text "First4marinejobs" in a sans-serif font. The number "4" is stylized as a large, orange-outlined numeral. The text "First" and "marinejobs" are in a dark grey color, while "4" is orange. The logo is set against a white background with a subtle drop shadow.

## Blog Jam

For years we have always known that for every benefit the internet brings, it also carries with it a load of hassle. As ships increasingly provide internet access to personnel at sea, we are beginning to see some real problems beginning to develop.

One of these is the rise and rise of the onboard blogger. Not for these guys the letter home, or the odd email flashed off to loved ones. No, they want to tell the world what they think and what they have been up to. A recent survey revealed that more than a third of “blogging employees” are posting information about their employer, workplace or colleagues on personal blog sites.



For those unfamiliar with the whole scene, a blog is a web site, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries.

Now, while it may be all well and good to tap away at home – there are increasing difficulties for those “telling all” to their online diary from the distant confines of their cabin...and there is some signs of friction developing between bloggers wishing to talk freely to the world, and employers, who believe that silence is golden.

There are of course two sides to every story – and there are also two very different sets of risks attached. Employers need to ensure that they carefully consider the impact of blogging on their organisation and take appropriate steps to minimise any potential risk.

While for the blogger it is wholly understandable that, especially away from home, family and friends, they would wish to tell of their life at sea...whether good or bad.

You can perhaps see the problem already...there is a complete ideological disconnect between the two parties. Seemingly there is not much room for compromise either.

For the employer, the shipping company, we could perhaps expect image and security to be the major concerns. While we don't like to see “security” used as a patsy for all unpopular decisions, it does seem that there are security issues attached when onboard-blogs start twittering on about cargo, location, ports of call, etc. While loose lips sunk ships in the past, it seems that perhaps loose scripts could sink ships today. Ok, ok – it's a long shot, and perhaps bad guys don't read blogs – but given the current climate with piracy so prevalent it seems pretty “devil may care” to spew forth information into the ether.

The other major fear for any shipping company is their image and business profile. It is no good for a company to spend millions projecting a positive image, only to have this undermined by bloggers painting a rather different picture of the company.

Now, we are all for freedom of speech – so there needs to be a means of responding, and it would be a tragedy if ship owners limited access to the internet due to fear of bloggers...so we guess, while we don't condone censorship – perhaps there is a need to “blog clever”, and steer clear of statements that are only likely to stir up trouble and get the bloggers into hot water.

See <http://kiwi-at-sea.blogspot.com/2008/08/maritime-bloggers-beware.html> for a sorry tale of what can happen when employers and bloggers come into conflict.

While many employers may lack the contractual means to clamp down on bloggers, it is interesting to note that within the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration “Standard Terms and Conditions Governing the Employment of Filipino Seafarers onboard Ocean Going Vessel” which covers “Offenses During Employment”. Within there is one possible area that employers could see fit to exploit in this context...Section 33.19 “Any other case as to cast aspersion on the good Name of the company and vessel” [www.poea.gov.ph/docs/sec.pdf](http://www.poea.gov.ph/docs/sec.pdf)

The problems of sea going bloggers are expected increase exponentially in the coming years, as more ships gain access to internet, and as frustrated and bored people sit in their cabins, and think it might be a good idea to lash off a few paragraphs condemning their vessel, employer or co-worker...(or perhaps all three).

The best advice we could give would be to “think before you type”...if you don't want to get into trouble, and yet you know your words will upset someone, well then – it doesn't take a genius to realise that bad things come to those that vent.

## Social Skills

Another problem facing shipping has been the rapid growth over the past couple of years of social networking sites, such as Facebook.

While in the past it was only teens busily telling the world how much they had drank or how my drugs they had consumed, it now seems that grown-ups are all too eager to boast online. Bragging which can have dreadful effect on reputation, employment, and for companies, can lead to liability issues.

As you may be aware social networking sites allow participants to create a “profile page,” which contains various pieces of information, such as name, age, birthday, hobbies, interests, pictures, and videos, etc. On both Facebook and MySpace, users can secure the privacy of their pages so that their pages are only accessible to website “friends.” However, and it is a big HOWEVER...if the user does not secure the access to his or her profile, the profile remains unrestricted, and available for public viewing. Yes...you can see where this is going.

A recent note from US law firm Cozen O'Connor takes the issue further into social networking. As such websites grow in popularity, attorneys are using them as valuable sources of information in both criminal and civil litigation. Because we are so eager to tell everyone everything through our profiles and status updates, we can



unwittingly reveal an array of personal information, giving any interested party incredible levels of insight into parties involved in litigation. It's not just lawyers, jurors to have been known to trawl the net visiting MySpace and Facebook to find out more.

With our own pages and profiles containing information that corroborates or undermines a case, lawyers are increasingly filing discovery motions to obtain such "personal" information. While we may not "like" it...it's a fact and we should be aware that if we aren't careful (and sometimes even when we are careful), your own words can come back to haunt you. Hoisted by your own petard...would be the key concept here.

While it seems the courts are slowly trying to make their minds up on whether such evidence can and should be used – the advice is to update carefully.

Given that, in the event of an accident or incident, investigators may look at not simply at the hours of rest, but of the activities undertaken during that time. If reams and reams of dubious entries are posted the night before an incident there may be scope to question the officer's state...maybe they will look, maybe they won't – but it is important to remember that Big Brother is out there, whether he is watching you is another matter.

You can read the full guidance here, [www.cozen.com/cozendocs/outgoing/alerts/2009/subro101409.pdf](http://www.cozen.com/cozendocs/outgoing/alerts/2009/subro101409.pdf)

## Ship Hits The Fan

Regular readers of Gangway will know that we try to take a positive view of shipping, while trying to enthuse others. Our focus is to drive debate about the problems that face the industry from time-to-time, but in such a way that we highlight the positives.



With this in mind we were very interested to engage in debate with a master who felt compelled to write as his frustration at the industry reached boiling point, he agreed to share his thoughts in Gangway, and pointed out that our positivism can be negative...

Captain Marek Cichomski, wrote to us after our last issue, and looked to put us right on a few things, he told us, "Shipping today has nothing to offer crews but lengthy working hours, cheap food and hours of rest disturbed by Port State, Flag State, Class and other types of inspections or audits."

He went on to add, "The word sleep does not exist in shipping industry, not for the ship's crew. So you want to attract well-educated and talented young people to be a seafarers, mission impossible, I'm afraid. If they are clever they will stay away from being a seaman as far as possible. There is nobody in this word who cares for seafarers and the last in line are shipping companies and crewing agencies, looking only for their own profits."

In response to our feature on “Corporate Social Responsibility” he stated, “CSR does not exist, neither does ethical behaviour. You are only good if you accept conditions. If you start complaining because you are treated badly you are not suitable for company ships any longer. If something goes wrong you are responsible and you will pay a fine at least or go to prison even if the case is obvious and everybody knows someone else is responsible.

In slamming legislation, he added, “Safe Manning Certificates have cut crew numbers to unacceptable and dangerous levels. Safety Management Certificate has thrown away common sense. Planned Maintenance does not exist if there is no paint and spare parts onboard. In regards to Crew Management what can you do when every time you have crew change there is new personnel coming onboard? Not every ship is the same ship!”

Before adding, “From my point of view there is no real thru-life career opportunity in shipping. Youngsters have to be mad enough to choose this option for their life. I just wonder which way you are going to pass the message out to the young boys, maybe girls too. Are you going to take responsibility if they will find out your message is far, very far away from real seaman’s life?”. To the good Captain the idea of sending a “sugar coated message to youngsters” is not the right way to attract their attention. As the reality of life at sea will soon have them running to the career lifeboat.

It is wonderful to hear from readers, especially with such passionate and energetic debate. Of course while we recognise much of what Captain Cichomski has said, and while we know so much of it is sadly true - we find that we cannot wholly agree. Especially where those striving to drive positive change are painted as part of the problem, not part of the solution.

There are of course the issues raised - long trips, abandonment, poor food, bad managers/owners, moneymaking sharks using people like machines and discarding them. There are pirates and criminals - there are sharp suited lawyers looking to punish the innocent, and there are corrupt Governments creaming cash from shipping while making people’s lives a misery, there is too little sleep, too little shoreleave, and more problems

besides. However, as with anything in life there are different approaches to tackling the problems.

Faced with such issues, we as a company have decided not to simply bemoan the negatives. We have decided to try and push affirmative action to build an industry and image worthy of the good people in it and those we want to join with us in the future.

If we simply reach out with a grey, miserable, doom-laden view, we will only attract a low standard of recruits. With substandard people, we enter a self-fulfilling prophecy of a substandard industry. We would create a blue print for the future that will be as awful as the past and present depicted. If, however, we reach out to clever, skilled, bright and talented people, who know what can be done, and who are not afraid to speak out and drive improvement - then, and only then, will we have a chance.

Sometimes painting an upbeat picture is important, because that is the vision with most chance of driving change. It is however important not to write about maritime issues sat in some ivory tower remote from reality, or blind to negatives. It is important also not to “sugar coat”, but to raise the profile of those that do good and of those who work hard to fix the problems.

As for real “thru life” careers in shipping. Well they do exist, they are all around us – we just need to work hard to promote them. Within Shiptalk there are many mariners now working ashore - look inside insurance companies and P&I Clubs, port control, law firms, the maritime media. There are a whole swathe of options out there, which will reward those who have been to sea.

So all credit to Captain Cichomski for having the desire to fight his corner and to try and flag up what we are doing wrong. We take onboard the observations and while we have never looked to mislead, or white wash, we will try even harder to inspire positive progress while not shying away from the problems. In the hope that as we remain focused, we can drive improvements and increased consciousness. Then we will have a chance to forge an industry worthy of the well educated and talented people that perhaps would today be better off elsewhere....but this is not simply about yesterday or today – we need to move forward for tomorrow.

## GL Academy – Where experts learn more

What could be a better area of investment than one's own vocational qualifications? Advanced education is the key to personal, professional and corporate success.

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In 2009 GL Academy has been expanded its international network of training facilities and experts. GL Academy opened 13 local offices all over the world. More branches will follow in 2010.

The aim is to offer training services in a focused and intensive way and to build up local service competences worldwide. GL Academics route to success is high standards in the content, design and structure of the seminars. In this way, new and up-to-date topics are continuously being prepared and presented with powerful practical applications.

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GL Academy offers a wide variety of seminars to suit everyone's specific needs. The modular system for advanced training allows participants to acquire additional qualifications based on their individual needs and preferences.

The portfolio covers more than 80 courses on the several topics from Maritime Regulations, Management of Risks and Emergencies, Quality Management System ISO 9001:2008 to Ship Technology and Ship Operation. All these topics contain seminars which are structured into basic, advanced and advanced plus seminars. This allows participants to choose an entry level that matches their current level of knowledge and skills.

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