

Discussion Paper.

What should MYBA do now that it is a member of the UK Maritime Skills Alliance?

By John Wyborn

The Author. John Wyborn is a director of Bluewater, a yacht brokerage, charter and management company and a provider of crew training and placement services to a large proportion of the yacht crew population. He is Bluewater's representative at MYBA, the worldwide yachting association, is on the council of the Professional Yachting Association (PYA) and is Deputy Chairman of the International Association of Maritime Institutions (IAM).

Introduction

This is a discussion paper to provoke debate about what we, the superyacht industry, expect and require from young people beginning their careers with us. Our sector of the maritime world has grown so large now that we can no longer ignore this. This paper represents my personal views and not those of any organisation with which I am associated.

What is needed is for the 'stakeholders' of our industry to work together (principally brokers, management companies and build/refit yards) to define what skills are required for new entrants. This is not an easy task.

Last year the Professional Yachting Association (PYA) attempted to engage with the Superyacht Builders Association (SYBas) to raise these issues and to enlist their support for their joint project with the Institution of Engineering Technology (IET) to provide quality online mentoring and technical support for yacht engineers. This project is going ahead but sadly the board of SYBas decided not to participate. I have copied the Secretary of SYBas into the distribution of this in the hope that SYBas members will at least engage in the debate. I know that, individually, many of them share my concerns even if collectively they could not agree.

MYBA, by contrast, last year joined the Maritime Skills Alliance and consequently there is a real opportunity to do something concrete to make changes. This paper sets out my opinion as to what these should be. From the perspective of both the economic and political environment in the UK, the timing could now be right to attempt this.

What is the MSA?

The UK Maritime Skills Alliance (MSA) is an influential group of maritime employers organisations, which usually meets in the UK Chamber of Shipping in London. Its primary role is to identify and define what skills are needed in the maritime industry and to establish qualifications to meet those needs. It also works to promote maritime careers and provides advice and feedback to government on these matters.

Example

The MSA created a suite of qualifications called 'Maritime Studies Qualifications' (MSQs). These can be downloaded from the MSA website (www.maritimeskills.org). They are still in the process of being added to but are already affecting our industry. The MCA will probably use the Engineering MSQs as one of the routes to certification as a superyacht engineer. The whole ethos of the MSA is to promote pathways that allow crew to move between maritime sectors and to be able to obtain higher qualifications from any starting point. Our yacht engineers in the near future will be fully qualified to work on fishing boats, tugs and workboats, and the crew from those sectors, equally, will be able to work on yachts we certainly need them!

Why we need to get involved.

All this was achieved with very little input from the superyacht industry itself, just the training providers. There is much more that we can do if we have the will to do it. Once the need for a particular skill has been agreed, the MSA is in a position to create qualifications and put them on one of the UK's qualification frameworks. This means that the UK government could fund them. Schools, Sixth Form colleges and Further Education colleges are actively encouraged to provide training that leads either to higher education or to work. There is already an initiative in the UK to promote [careers at sea](#) and qualifications, defined by employers through the MSA, are already being offered. If we want UK schools and colleges to produce young people with skills relevant to our industry we need to get involved.

Entry Level

Wouldn't it be good if, in a year or two, those coming down from the UK to find work on superyachts in the Spring, already knew something of what will be expected of them? For example the basics of high level service, how to greet guests, how to care for them in a tender, how to clean properly, how to apply and maintain two-part paint and varnish coatings, the fundamentals of AV/IT equipment, food safety – what else? Its up to us: the UK education system will train and educate the candidates if we make clear what we need and then employ them. The continued growth of our industry leaves little doubt that we can find work for motivated, well-trained people.

MCA Certificate of Competency

The new engineering qualifications, allowing people to move between maritime sectors, need to be mirrored in deck qualifications too. The ambition of many young crew to move through the 3000 GT 'ceiling' is now evident; a route already exists but we could create training to help facilitate this.

GUEST

The PYA has so far taken the lead in maritime education and training for our industry. High-level service is at the heart of what we do in every department and at every level. The GUEST programme - ('Guidelines for Unified Excellence in Service Training') - is becoming increasingly recognised; as evidenced by a good turnout and favourable response from MYBA members at the recent GUEST open day in Antibes. These standards are in the process of being

mapped across to existing UK service qualifications but we will need some units that are 'superyacht specific'. We can do this through the MSA, provided we can show a tangible result in the employability of a candidate.

Conclusion.

Isn't this all a little 'UK-centric' for an industry almost wholly based in Europe, the US and on the balmy, sun-kissed seas of the world? Not at all, in my view. The UK has always taken a strong leading role in the superyacht industry and English is the predominant language spoken on board. It makes absolute sense to start in the UK if we want to source better crew for our fleet. That does not mean we have to stop there, however. Once we have defined our own standards and expectations, these can be applied in any country that wants to supply crew for superyachts. We really must stop just leaving things to chance and take charge our training and recruitment!

What to do

The first step is to define what we need. So... Send an email with "MSA' in the subject field to one of the addresses below and list the **four most important skills** you would like to see in a crew member fresh to the industry, (you can give more than four if you wish). Assume that they have already done STCW basic safety training and will do on-board familiarisation. From your perspective in the industry what ELSE would you like them to be able to do or to know?

if you are from a management or charter company contact MYBA [info@myba.net] if you are yacht crew contact the PYA info@pya.org or whoever you are you can contact me! john@bluewateryachting.com .

REMEMBER! This is not all about piling on new courses for existing yacht crew this is about getting the UK education system to train youngsters for us.

John Wyborn

Biot, France

16 February 2015