

# The Crew Report

A REPORT WORTH READING



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*An exploration of the rise in yacht arrests in the South of France and how to best avoid being caught in the crossfire.*

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Tim Thomas

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**FUNAIR**

## WELCOME LETTER

It's a new year, although by the time many of you read this, the cold dark nights of January will be but a distant memory. And at The Superyacht Group, with a new year comes a raft of new and exciting challenges.

It was three years ago that we ran the groundbreaking Golden Ticket survey – an unprecedented gauging of crew sentiment and insight on a scale never seen before. The results of this survey have given the industry invaluable insight into crew operations and helped to evolve this magazine into what is the only source of serious career and training information for superyacht crew.

But three years is a long time in yachting. As such, we have decided that now is the time to revisit the crew market in the serious and intelligent way that only we can. The Superyacht Intelligence Agency is, therefore, devoting its second quarterly market report to the training and recruitment sector ... and that is where you, the industry's serious and senior crew-members, come in.

We want to know what you think of your training providers, those who place you in jobs and on boats, and the current career-path opportunities that are open to you, depending on your

position on board. We have launched a crew-focused survey that will allow us to create an unprecedented picture of what the training and recruitment market really looks like and will help to evolve the provision of both disciplines for years to come.

We are running this survey for the next couple of months and will close it just before you all begin your busy summer seasons. So please, click on the link below and help to shape your collective futures.

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# THE SAME OLD ...

*Lulu Trask asks the industry to use 2018 for change, rather than suggesting looking towards the same old things ...*



BY LULU TRASK

I'm getting slightly fed up with the industry's constant complaints about crew – and I'm sure you are too. At The Superyacht Forum last November, there was plenty of eye-rolling in reaction to comments such as "Crew are still the biggest frustration for the owner", "The owner hates that every time he/she comes back to his/her boat, there's a different crew smiling back at them" and "Why would the owner pay for crew training when the crewmember is only going to leave?".

But rather than just defend crew (after all, it's completely understandable that a deckhand wants to move up in his or her career and that a position of bosun might only be available on another yacht), which doesn't do much to alleviate owners' concerns, I'd like 2018 to be the year in which we, as an industry, actually come up with some solutions. We're becoming far too good at complaining and sitting back idly, waiting for someone else to tell us how to fix the problem.

Therefore, if owners want to see improved longevity from their crew, we need to find out – from crew – what would be the game-changer; what would make them stay in their current position longer than they intended? Could it be the owner agreeing to pay for their training courses with the provision that

the crewmember will stay on that boat for at least another 12 months? Could it be that they're guaranteed an annual pay rise? The answer, to both, is probably not. These 'solutions' have been tried again and again, so the fact they're not being taken up overwhelmingly suggests they're not enough of an incentive for the majority of crew.

At the moment, most crew are employed by a yacht, even if it's via a management company. But just imagine if a management company employed the crew, so they had regular catch-ups with those on their books and knew that Kate, working on a motoryacht as a deckhand, wanted to be a bosun within two years – then, in two years' time, if there wasn't the space for her to move up to be a bosun on that particular yacht, they moved her to another vessel, where there was a vacancy. Now that's just an idea and one about which I'm more than willing to hear criticism; but it's different ideas that, I think, are needed. Otherwise, we're just going to continue to present the same crew with the same options; and the same crew will keep responding in the same way they always have, leaving owners to continue to face the same problem.

So here's to 2018. I look forward to hearing your – different – solutions. [IT](#)

# The Crew Report

03/2018

THE CAREERS ISSUE

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# DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

## WHAT PROCEDURES AND SUPPORT ARE IN PLACE FOR CREW TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND AND COPE IF A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT OCCURS ON A YACHT?

BY RACHEL ROWNEY

The yachting industry continues to work hard to ensure crewmembers are in as safe an environment as possible. Regulations, stringent safety checks and improvements in technology all contribute to fewer accidents in day-to-day life. However, no job is perfect and accidents still do occur. Recent high-profile tragic incidents aboard *Ocean Victory* and *Germania Nova* highlight that there is still a risk of death for those on yachts.

*The Crew Report* regularly focuses on the significance of safety features and training which are hugely important in protecting both crew and guests from tragic accidents; there are always lessons to be learned from these occurrences. But after the media coverage and investigations into the accident are over, what happens to the crew who were involved in the trauma? The focus has been on the individual who was hurt or even killed, and rightly so, but those who were witnesses can also be deeply affected. What is the yachting industry doing to assist those who have been a part of a traumatic experience?

In an essay on the subject of trauma, Esther Giller, president of the Sidran Institute which specialises in helping those with traumatic stress, says, "A traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope, and leaves that person fearing death, annihilation, mutilation or psychosis. The individual may feel emotionally, cognitively and physically overwhelmed." Traumatic incidents on board can vary greatly, from a crewmember or guest dying to a physical altercation or an accident that results in an injury. The severity of each incident may differ, but the possible effects of trauma should never be underestimated.

"Because of the typically tight bonds between members of a yacht crew, trauma can affect crewmembers who were not directly involved in the incident every bit as severely as those who were," says Captain Richard Le Quesne, Professional Yachting Association (PYA) councillor and board member.

As many crew will testify, the familial atmosphere on board



Nautilus worked closely with many crew who were on board *Ocean Victory* at the time of the incident. It is highlighted that it is fundamental that the industry recognises that individual responses vary after trauma and that the yacht (its captain, owner and management team) must adjust accordingly. "In the case of *Ocean Victory*, for example, there were a number of members that we assisted in obtaining counselling," says McGowan. "But there were also other members who wished to be repatriated quite quickly,

## Give yourself time

## Find out what happened

## Be involved with other survivors

## Ask for support

## Take some time for yourself

## Talk it over

## Get into a routine

## Do some 'normal' things with other people

## Take care



and we made sure that that was able to take place for them, with the assistance of their employer too." One of the key approaches to dealing with trauma is flexibility; there is no 'correct' or uniformed approach.

Crew may require a substantial amount of time away from the vessel to recover from the shock and try to heal any wounds, be they emotional or physical. The difficulty that can occur with any compassionate leave or time away from the vessel following an accident on board is that the remaining crew will be needed on the yacht to carry on working. If this is a busy charter vessel, the management team may not be able to let the crew attend a funeral or allow time off to emotionally recover. Of course, this varies from yacht to yacht, depending on individual circumstances, but the very nature of crew life means that substantial time off or long-distance travel away from the vessel is difficult.

Ultimately, it is beneficial for an owner to ensure that their crew is coping, both emotionally and physically. As one captain explains, "I think crew welfare is incredibly important. If you don't pay it enough attention it can hurt a yacht in so many

ways; [with] unhappy crew, maintenance slips, profile and image can decrease, crew can leave the industry prematurely, and longevity is so important for an owner."

In the period following an incident, the captain admits there is little official guidance on working with crew through a traumatic time and it is mostly up to each captain to use their emotional intelligence to help. "My philosophy as a captain is to be as open and honest with the crew as possible," he adds. "The idea is that they can come to me for advice whether it be about their careers, a life matter or other issue. The treatment is similar for all – spotting a problem before it's too late, offering the chance to share a problem. Giving advice where possible or seeking advice to better advise the crewmember."

As in any area of life, dealing with trauma is truly an individual process. What the industry must recognise is the importance of providing crew with the space to understand and cope with any incidents that occur on a vessel. If they are given the appropriate support, the trauma of a death or serious injury will be dealt with sensitively, allowing those involved to move forward. **RR**

“My philosophy as a captain is to be as open and honest with the crew as possible. The idea is that they can come to me for advice whether it be about their careers, a life matter or issue.

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# WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING A CONTRACT

THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF NEGATIVE STORIES  
RELATED TO POOR OR ABSENT EMPLOYMENT  
CONTRACTS ON BOARD PRIVATE YACHTS.  
HERE, WE EXPLORE WHAT PROVISIONS  
CREWMEMBERS SHOULD BE AWARE OF IN  
THEIR CONTRACTS.

BY RORY JACKSON

When the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC) came into force in August 2013, it brought in a whole raft of changes relating to the terms and conditions of a seafarer's employment. To date, the MLC has been ratified by 84 states that represent 89 per cent of global shipping. However, unlike with commercial (charter) yachts, the provisions set out by the MLC hold no sway over private superyachts. While many private vessels have adopted MLC-style contracts as a basis for the contracts they offer their crew, some have not and, as such, numerous crewmembers on board these vessels still find themselves employed in less than favourable conditions.

As in any walk of life, regardless of the protections afforded by conventions, regulations or legislation, quality of life, at least for those at the bottom of the pile such as junior crew, is dictated by those at the top. In other words, the conditions that you will find on board a superyacht – commercial or private – are dictated by the owner and the senior staff. You could be on board a

commercial vessel, protected by the MLC, despising your time there because an owner has little to no respect for the Convention. Equally, you may find yourself on board a private yacht, with no MLC protection or contract in place, having the time of your life with a kind, fun-loving owner. However, there are means of contractually limiting the likelihood that crew will fall foul of unfair practice.

"In so many cases, a young potential crewmember will meet a captain, have a fantastic meeting and join the vessel under the proviso that the details will get hammered out at a later date," says Captain Richard Le Quesne, a Professional Yachting Association (PYA) council member. "However, all too often the details don't get hammered out and this can lead to disputes over various things. Before taking a job on board a private superyacht, crew should always make sure there is a contract in place and that, at least, it covers some fundamental provisions, even if this is not legally required by the flag state."

The types of contractual provision that crew should be looking for on board a private superyacht include basics such as name, age, wages (how much and how frequently they are paid), paid leave, repatriation rights, medical cover, normal working hours and various on-board rules (see checklist on the following page). If such a contract is made available, then read it! Mere mention of the various provisions does not necessarily mean that they are favourable.

Many green crewmembers joining the superyacht industry may be coming straight from school or university. As such, they have little contractual experience beyond perhaps a mobile-phone contract or a tenancy agreement, which may or may not have been read at the time, making them an easy target for unscrupulous owners and captains. Alternatively, English may not be the first language of the potential employee. In these scenarios, it is all too easy to be naive and trust in the good nature of future employers.

"I saw a contract recently from a private superyacht where it stated that after three days of sick leave, the owner was entitled to stop paying medical expenses," continues Le Quesne. "This provides a wonderful example of the disparity between MLC contracts and private contracts. Under the MLC, there are provisions for sick leave for up to 16 weeks. In this case, the crewmember had contacted us previously at the termination of his last job because of a dispute. He had been offered a new job and sent us the contract, and I wish people would do that more often."

One of the most important rights for prospective crewmembers on board private superyachts is the right to repatriation. Repatriation amounts to crewmembers being returned to a destination of their choosing upon the termination of their contract, be it a decision made by the crewmember or the employer, or under circumstances in which the crewmember is no longer able to perform their duty on board.

"Crew do not want to find themselves in a situation where they are undergoing a long journey with no rights to repatriation," explains Charles Boyle, director of legal services at Nautilus UK. "Realistically, crew on board private yachts are not going to have all the luxury-type items provided for within the MLC, such as social security and various other provisions. But it is imperative that they ensure they have the more basic rights assured. Repatriation is an incredibly important one. At the very least, the crew should be able to get returned to the destination where the journey began, out of the pocket of the owner or vessel's purse."

At best, engaging in disputes with superyacht owners relating to employment, or indeed anything else, can be incredibly trying. More often than not these may yield little by way of success, even with a contract in place. Should the owner not wish to resolve the issue quickly, it becomes increasingly unlikely that the crewmember will be able to recoup what they are after in



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CAPTAINS

# Termination rights and wrongs



WE EXPLORE THE RISE IN YACHT  
ARRESTS IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE,  
IN ORDER TO ADVISE HOW BEST  
TO AVOID BEING CAUGHT IN THE  
CROSSFIRE.

BY RORY JACKSON

There has been a sharp increase in the number of superyachts being arrested in the south of France in recent years as a result of claims issued by disgruntled former crewmembers. Typically, these have been brought against superyachts as a result of unpaid wages, non-payment of overtime and hidden employment issues that have come to light following the false termination of crew-employment contracts. On the one hand, this increase highlights that crew are becoming far more aware of their rights and rightly so. However, there has also been an increase in exploitative claims where crewmembers are hoping to gain more from the termination of their contract than perhaps is due.

"We have noted that there has been a significant increase in these types of claims in recent years," says Jean-Philippe Maslin, associate at law firm Ince & Co. "Due to the proliferation of superyachts that operate out of the south of France, crew have become more aware of the rights they are afforded under French employment law. Additionally, the issue has been exacerbated by the pattern of recognition of these claims in the south of France. At this point in time, case law is very much in favour of the crew and it is incredibly easy for them to have a superyacht arrested because wages are considered a maritime claim."



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CAPTAINS SECTION  
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“Crew are becoming far more aware of their rights, and rightly so. However, there has also been an increase in exploitative claims.”

To have a vessel arrested in France, a crewmember is not burdened with the necessity to validate their claim in any certain terms. For example, the mere act of an allegation pertaining to unpaid wages is enough to have a vessel arrested so long as the employee is able to prove that they were previously employed, have received wages in the past or are in possession of an employment contract.

This particular piece of legislation is based on the 1952 Arrest Convention, a multilateral treaty within which various jurisdictions have agreed on the rules relating to the arrest of a ship. Ships, and therefore superyachts, are, by their very nature, transient. So it was deemed necessary to have a system by which vessels could be arrested to ensure that they remained in the particular jurisdiction under which a legal action had been brought against them, to ensure that the claim is able to benefit from due process and reach fruition. In France, the courts are denied the possibility by the Supreme Court to investigate the validity of an alleged claim; all they are able to determine is whether or not a claim is alleged and then act accordingly.

“Crew wages and various other typical crew claims are considered a maritime claim under this convention, so it is incredibly easy for crewmembers to go into court and claim for an arrest against a yacht,” adds Maslin. “This is what we call an ex-parte proceeding, meaning that it is done without the presence of the owning company. The owning company is not aware when a crewmember files a claim for an arrest; they only find out about the action when the arrest is enforced.”

In addition to this international convention that creates favourable conditions for having superyachts arrested, there is another: the Convention on the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligations that allows individuals to select the legal system under which their contracts will fall. Ordinarily, superyacht employment contracts are subject to the law of the flag they fly. However, the convention also states that an employee (crewmember) is allowed to select the law under which their contract is governed so long as the employment rights in the said jurisdiction are equal to, or more protective than, the system in place within the country they work.

France, as it happens, boasts a legal system that is incredibly protective of those in employment. Therefore, when employment contract issues are brought to light in the south of France relating to crewmembers whose contracts are governed by, for instance, one of the Red Ensign flags, French law will always supersede because it is perceived to be more protective of the employee than the chosen legislation.

“If you wish to dismiss an employee in France, you must first respect a very precise set of proceedings,” explains Lionel Budieu, a lawyer at Lionel BUDIEU law firm. “You must first meet to explain why you, as an employer, wish to terminate the employment contract and then listen to his/her explanation. After this, you must respect a delay of two days to think about your decision, after which you may maintain your decision. If you do maintain the decision you must send a termination letter that precisely explains the reasons for the dismissal and terms of the dismissal.”

It should be noted that to benefit from this process, a crewmember does not need to be a French national. What exactly determines whether or not an employment case is valid in France is not precisely explained, but French courts are more than willing to use French employment law; if France is the crewmember's country of residence, if their wages are paid in France, if it is where charter contracts begin, if it is the designated place of repatriation or any variety of other links to the country.

"Most of the litigation that I know of concerns the termination of seafarer agreements," says Budieu. "In the majority of cases, the owner simply wants to dismiss a captain or crewmember quickly, and to do so they simply send them a termination letter with no reasoning. However, under French employment law, this is illegal."

In many cases, the grounds for crew claiming against false termination of their employment contracts, as well as damages resulting from the false termination, unpaid wages, overtime and so forth, are legitimate. It is no bad thing that crew have become more aware of their rights because there is no shortage of horror



stories about crewmembers being fired, dropped off, not repatriated or not paid their dues. However, have the favourable conditions for employment suits in the south of France led to more people trying to take advantage of the system?

"I have witnessed a number of illicit crew termination claims – in one example, a crewmember who had worked on board for three months, claiming €175,000 in damages, which is ridiculous for such a short period on board," says Maslin.



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# Captains' comments

## INTRODUCTION

It's a known fact that crew on busy charter yachts can make a very decent living on tips alone. But are owners taking advantage of generous charterers and their tips in order to pay crew a sub-standard salary?

”

“

# Captain Glen Allen, Fleet Captain, Fleet Miami

## TIPPING HAS BECOME A DRIVING FORCE WITH CREW

It seems there are many controversies surrounding tipping in yachting, and as a veteran captain I find it has become a driving force with crew. 'I only want to work on a charter yacht because of the money' is an all too familiar narrative I hear in the interview process when hiring. Speaking for our company, which runs nine yachts, both charter and private, I can tell you that we do not base our offered salaries on the promise that charter tips will make up for a lower monthly wage.

I know of one programme where the owner collects all the gratuities and passes out 'end-of-season bonuses' to the crew based on how he thinks each crewmember performed, even though he was not on the charters and did not have first-hand knowledge of how they did. I have heard first-hand from at least two crew on other programmes that do get paid a lower salary and are told it is because the tips will more than make up for the lower rate. But do they?

A gratuity is earned by working above and beyond what is expected. This is sometimes forgotten by both owners and crew. And not all cultures believe in tipping, so what do you say to a crewmember who is on a sub-par salary? They work their heart out on a long charter and get a small tip or even nothing.

How many times have you heard crew boasting about a huge tip after a charter and how many times have you heard them complain about little or no tip? In my experience, it is about 50/50. So it would seem that it will average out over the course of a season. That says to me that tips cannot be totally relied on by crew as a base for their personal budget.

A new consideration for owners, crew and management companies is that of withholding tax on crew gratuities. We have found that more and more charterers will include gratuity funds in the advance provisioning allowance. If that is the case,

especially with US-flagged vessels, the company is required by law to withhold tax before distributing the funds to crew. It appears more countries will soon be looking at this situation.

In general, crew need to understand income taxes as a whole and how differing tax rules affect their income. Perhaps it is a positive move for owners and/or managers to collect all gratuities, deduct the income tax and then distribute the gratuities. This would be a constructive way to help crew from getting in trouble at tax time.

I think a bigger problem than owners lowering pay and subsidising crew salary with gratuities is the increasing number of very large superyachts being built and paying huge salaries to crew (it is estimated we will need to add up to 3,000 new crew annually to fill this need). This is draining the crew pool, and the medium-to-small yachts struggle to find crew and establish a pay-rate that makes sense.



# Captain Martyn Walker, *M/Y Fountainhead*

Having run charter boats for many years, in my experience the owners I have worked for have accepted that a great gratuity is somewhat of a crapshoot. Consequently, they have not taken advantage of crew salaries by paying less. I had one owner who made up a poor gratuity to 10 per cent for the crew after a charterer tipped 2.5 per cent following a 10-week, full-price charter. It has been my experience also that quite the opposite has occurred, where crew have taken advantage of generous charter tips. Once they have banked a calculated amount of money from gratuities, they have selfishly left before the owner's trip. This has left us shorthanded or weaker for the man who has paid their wages in the preceding months.

I ran one vessel where the owner came on board for three months in the winter and we did Christmas and New Year's Eve charters, receiving big gratuities for both. A couple of junior crew had made the season's base salary by January, so they took the rest

of the season off. This left us having to hire new crew for the owner's trip, with no gratuity opportunity for several months and having to retain new crew on the owner's trip.

I have withheld crew gratuities several times (after making this agreement with the crew prior to the Mediterranean season), stating that the season is over once the vessel has returned to our home port in the US. If crew gain three or four times their salary between June and August, they don't want to stay for that owner's trip to the Monaco Yacht Show and the return crossing. I once had a particular season many years ago where the crew made a huge amount in tips and I found myself in the Suez Canal heading to Thailand with only four of the original 10 crew from the summer.

IT'S THE CREW WHO  
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF  
GENEROUS TIPS

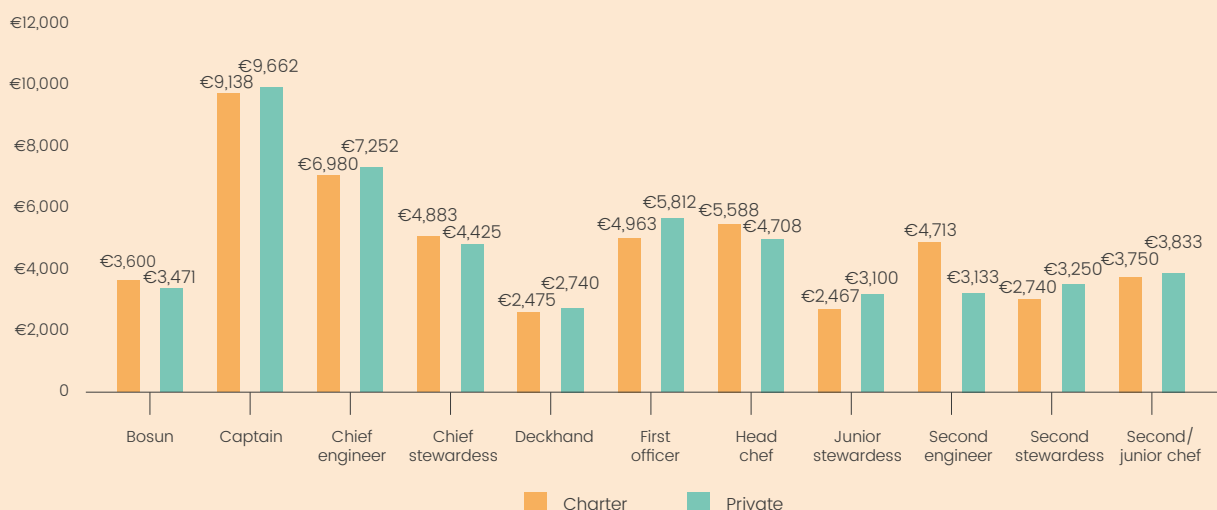
Some years ago, there was an epidemic of yacht crew making big tips for the summer and leaving to go to the mountains for the winter to ski and indulge in the après-ski, only to return for another summer season. The frustration is that the crew who have done two or more seasons then have to share the tip money with junior crew, even though it's the more senior crew who really make it happen.

I did have a boss who I used to inform what the gratuity was, out of pride for a job well done by his crew. Consequently, he did reduce annual bonuses because he factored in the gratuity, but he did pay well for base salaries. I believe it's a very real scenario these days – with no shortage of crew, the owner would take advantage of crew getting generous charter tips. Although I have been sidelined for a couple of years from charter, the word on the dock is that gratuities are not the same as they used to be.

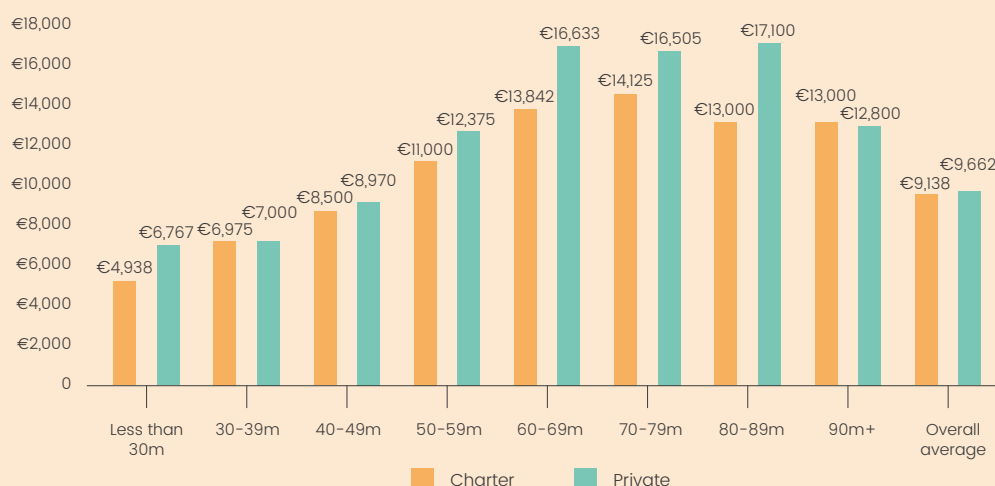


# Editor's comment

## Average monthly crew salary (€)



## Average monthly captain's salary (€)



As is evident from the 'Average monthly salary of crew (€)' chart, extracted from the Golden Ticket crew survey, there is no clear trend to suggest that all crew on charter yachts are paid sub-standard salaries on the basis that they may be receiving

generous tips from charterers. However, it's evident from the data that several of the senior positions – captains, chief engineers and first officers – do earn more on private yachts, on average, although this data is irrespective of the size of the yacht.

The most receptive of all crew positions in the survey were captains, who accounted for 105 of the sample's responses. As a reference, we have included the average salaries (in euros) of captains on charter yachts versus private yachts in specific size ranges.

As you can see, there is a fairly sharp increase in a captain's average salary as one moves through the size ranks up to 70m. Furthermore, it is the captains of private yachts who earn the highest average salary in all categories up to 90m before the data on yachts larger than 90m becomes scarce.



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BY CAPTAIN GILES SANGSTER

# THUMBS UP FOR THE CAPSTONE COURSE

CAPTAIN GILES SANGSTER, WHO NOW HOLDS THE REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS UNLIMITED YACHT CAPSTONE COURSE CERTIFICATE, HAVING COMPLETED THE 24 HOURS OF EXAMS, TALKS US THROUGH THE PROCESS AND BENEFITS.

In late 2014 The Marshall Islands introduced a new certificate to fill a void in the yachting qualification system, creating a certificate for masters to operate yachts over 3,000gt. Other flag states are now giving their support for this new certificate which offers a viable way for yacht captains to upgrade their competency for the world's largest yachts without starting over and going the Master Mariner route. Two years ago, I was one of the first to begin this new training and wrote an article for *The Crew Report* (issue 75) on why such an option is a valuable asset in today's yachting world. Now, having completed the certification, I can tell you what is involved in obtaining a Master of Yachts over 3,000gt.

I started out in yachting in 1997 with what was supposed to be a brief travel experience. A couple of years

in, I was hooked. In 2003, I obtained the MCA Class IV, which became the Master of Yachts (less than 3,000gt). At the time, there was nothing higher – there was no need; a yacht over 3,000gt was almost unthinkable.

Many years later, and having progressed to captain of one of the largest yachts around at the time, the Master of Yachts (less than 3,000gt) had become something of the norm. In the meantime, and at a tremendous pace, the yachts got bigger, as did the number of Master of Yachts (less than 3,000gt) holders and the industry itself.

I was finding that my experience as a captain continued to mature but that I was never back in class. I'd reached the yachting limit years before. Fortunately, the Republic of Marshall Islands Unlimited Yacht Capstone Course was formed. Don't

confuse this as an easy ride to a Master Mariner certificate that can be obtained after a five-day course. The Capstone Course isn't really a course; it's a week-long exam. I spent two years committed to classes and study in preparation. The list of STCW II/2 modules required to be eligible for the Capstone Course are all those that are required for the Master Mariner, bar cargo, and are as intense and challenging as you would expect for the ultimate seafaring grade.

I completed the modules on my leave periods. It was difficult to get a study rhythm (and for this reason I would advise sitting them all together, between employment). I was balancing a job as a captain and leave time with my family while fitting in courses and endless study hours. Eventually, I was ready to sit the Capstone Course.





It begins with an opening meeting and explanation of the agenda for the week ahead, as you would expect. Over the next five days there is a mix of in-class instruction and exams. The classes are limited to a few hours. The exams are lengthy (up to seven hours in a single day) and difficult, as you would expect. In all, I clocked around 24 hours of exams over the week and another six hours of in-class instruction. The tests are approximately 70 per cent multiple choice and 30 per cent practical assessment.

I came from the MCA system where exams are oral. For others from that system, let's be clear; multiple choice is not multiple guess. If you guess, you will fail. The questions are cleverly

designed to get to the depths of your knowledge and to make sure you know your field. It's based on the traditional USCG system that has been challenging US seafarers for decades.

The practical exams were tough, but fair. Maritime Professional Training (MPT), the provider of this course in Fort Lauderdale, has a fantastic bridge simulator that is incredibly lifelike and includes weather and tide. You start off by leaving a berth or arriving to port. You're then assessed on your ability to manoeuvre, navigate and communicate – all within congested, tight limitations and, of course, while applying the rules of the road. There's plenty of opportunity to slip up. The assessments are

intense and long enough to have you realistically fatigued. You get an instant fail for a collision, grounding or breach of the collision regulations.

The number of candidates for the Capstone Course is increasing as there is more interest than ever from captains all over the world. The flag states are signing up too. Cayman Islands was first and I'm pleased to share that the Isle of Man recently informed me they would write a letter of equivalence. Even the MCA, though yet to commit, is said to be considering recognising this certification. It would seem that the most respected flag states are in agreement that this is a qualification worth having.

So why take the Capstone Course? If you've been in the industry for as long as I have, you will have seen many changes. The challenges for seafarers are greater today than ever before. You have to navigate in ever increasing traffic and safely manage and maintain a multitude of operations. You're bombarded with information that you have to interpret swiftly, and correctly. The Capstone Course gets you back in the classroom, raises your knowledge and enhances your senses. It challenges and takes you to the highest level. It's the ultimate yacht exam for the ultimate yachting qualification. [GS](#)

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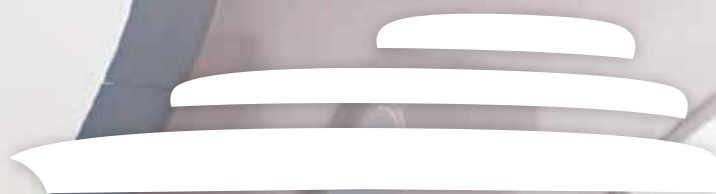
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DECK

# Spinning the decks



WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN A GOOD DECKHAND AND WHAT SHOULD NEW DECK CREW BE AWARE OF WHEN THEY ARE SEEKING THEIR FIRST POSITIONS? *THE CREW REPORT* SPOKE TO CREW AGENTS AND CAPTAINS TO UNCOVER WHAT THEY FEEL ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES FOR DECK CREW TO POSSESS.

BY TIM THOMAS

As the yachting industry has expanded over the decades, so has the spotlight fallen increasingly on the level of professionalism of the crew who work within it. A raft of regulations and certificates has swept in, covering everyone from the captain and chief engineer down to the most junior interior and deck crew.

I was a deckhand in the 1990s and all this seems somewhat alien to me. Back in those days, it was your attitude, perhaps with some existing experience and a passion for yachting, that landed you your first deckhand position; everything else was learnt on the job. New roles came through word of mouth and yacht-to-yacht recommendation and you established your career on the combination of skills acquired – being able to varnish a cap rail and drive a tender, for example – rather than the paperwork you carried with you. Today, paperwork can be the starting point, whether it's the mandatory elements or additional parts such as tender-driving courses, and it makes me wonder what captains and agencies are looking for in a modern deckhand.

It seems that the changing industry doesn't limit opportunities only to those with prior boating experience, let alone superyacht





deckhand experience and the specific skills that go with it. "I think a lot of captains are open to green crew," says Taylor George, captain and crew consultant at Crew4Yachts. "They are often looking more for someone who is willing to learn and who doesn't have an ego. I find that's probably the biggest complaint I hear among captains when they're hiring crew – that nowadays some crew feel they are entitled to this or that because they probably have the wrong idea of the yachting industry. But if they can show they can listen, are open to suggestions and show a little initiative, we are much more likely to recommend them to a captain because I know captains would be happy [that] someone has those qualities."

George says new candidates often don't realise that some of the skills they may have acquired and which they think are not relevant to yachting are actually positives. "They could be applicable, such as maybe they've worked in carpentry or even as a waiter as they still have customer-service experience," adds George. "I try to encourage all new deck crew who are starting out to think about the skills they have, even if it's not yachting or marine related. Having outside skills is a good quality to possess."

There are certain key certificates, such as the STCW, that are mandatory for any crewmember to obtain before starting a career in yachting, but more and more, particularly on larger yachts, it's the additional skills that can give a deckhand the competitive edge. "The boat I'm about to join, every crew has to have a secondary skill," says veteran captain Jeremy Reed. "For example, one is a pro surfer, there are



Tim Thomas

masseuses, a yoga instructor and a beautician. We need a paramedic as a deckhand, a drone pilot, a photographer and videographer. It's endless and it makes it very difficult because yachting is not rocket science – if someone's got the right attitude, aptitude and common sense you can teach them yachting. But nowadays it's all the other things you need which makes it more challenging." So is it easier to teach a paramedic to be a yachtie or a yachtie to be a paramedic? "A paramedic goes through a three-year degree course," says Reed. "Yachting is something you can pick up relatively easily as a green deckhand."

"I see similar in every crew position," adds George. "I see it with our employers and they often say the crew needs this or that, but if they also offer this or that – for example, being a dive instructor – then it's a plus." The problem, according to George, is that for new crew this can present a considerable financial burden



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that might not be necessary at the beginning of their career. "I think at the very core they need their STCW and ENG1, but they are always wondering what extra courses they should take. I think a lot of schools will also push them to take extra courses because it's how they make their money," she explains. "But once crew have been working for a while in the industry I don't see why, if they have some time off, they shouldn't take a course and better themselves. Certainly, some secondary qualifications are expected or preferred."

There are, of course, other qualifications and certificates that demonstrate a particular level of skill – in the old days, it was the RYA Yachtmaster or similar. More recently, alongside STCW and other core courses, there has been the introduction of the Efficient Deckhand course (EDH) which is essentially ported directly from the merchant sector. It covers some basics such as key knots, splices and an introduction to deck operations, but also includes elements that might seem less relevant such as the operation of derricks or hanging ladders for pilots. Moreover, this is not a qualification that a new deckhand can apply for because it requires certain certification to be held in advance – a Yachtmaster ticket, for example, or a Yacht Rating with at least six months' seagoing experience and a steering certificate. On top of that, a minimum six months' seagoing service in vessels larger than 15m is required before the EDH can be issued. This is now a mandatory element of the OOW Certificate of Competence and must be issued 18 months prior to that, but it remains something a developing deckhand is more likely to consider rather than someone who is looking to

**Modern crew are shaped by agencies and so look and act the same, making it much harder for captains to use those benchmarks when considering prospective candidates.**

break into yachting or advance early in their career.

However, having the right personality is crucial. In the early days of yachting, personality and appearance were often the prime drivers for captains looking for new deckhands. "Twenty years ago, crew weren't groomed by the agencies," adds Reed. "We were looking for people who were going to commit for a while, not least because yachting was much more transient back then. But you could tell from how people spoke, how they carried themselves, how they dressed and what they looked like. You were looking for the skill set, but the personality aspect and the character part was important – and still is."

Reed says the problem is that modern crew are shaped by agencies and so look and act the same, making it much harder for captains to use those benchmarks when considering prospective candidates. "Nowadays, they all look the same, be they stewardesses or young deckhands," he smiles ruefully. "All the young deckies mincing around Antibes look like they are members of a boy band with their generic appearances. But yachting remains personal; it's between

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owners and crew and it's a very personal business. It's important too, from the standpoint of crew dynamic, and every yacht is different in that regard. One person might fit and work well on one boat and be absolutely useless on another – not because they are useless, but because they just don't fit. It's still about trying to match people to the dynamic."

"We do get cases where a captain needs someone right away and doesn't care who [that] someone is or what they look like, as long as they can work on the boat. But, in general, it is a huge factor," agrees George. "Serious captains and serious boats will say their crew is like a family and the crew are very close and they are looking for someone who fits in. It is perhaps yachts where crew tend to stay more long term and they will often ask if a candidate is into yoga or surfing, something that the rest of the crew enjoy doing together."

Of course, the other factor is the increasing average size of the vessels in the superyacht fleet. I wonder if this also plays a part and whether the requirements for a deckhand aboard a 100m+ vessel are different from those on a smaller yacht. "On larger yachts, they tend to have honed their skills in certain areas and maybe they don't have all of the deck knowledge," says George. "On a smaller yacht, you are forced to learn different skills because you have to help out with everyone. On a bigger boat, each department has its own thing and they don't share much because they know what they're good at, they know what they need to know and each person does their own thing. On a smaller yacht, as a deckhand, you may end up helping out in the interior if they need a

hand or perhaps you might be a deckhand/engineer or something like that."

It is this that Reed hones in on when I ask him what he looks for in deck crew, even for the larger yachts he has run. "I have always looked to people who worked on smaller boats because it's like an apprenticeship," he says. "Nowadays, kids jump on a 140m yacht and they are given a section to chamois and that's all they do, nothing more, nothing less. But the ones who have come from smaller yachts have spent time mucking in and helping out between departments and moreover there's more owner and guest interaction so they're used to it. And that's important in my view because, at the end of the day, yachting remains a very personal business." **II**

**“Yachting is not rocket science – if someone’s got the right attitude, aptitude and common sense you can teach them yachting.”**







I have found that one problem faced by some crews is making the distinction between banter and bullying. How can anyone define

Sadly, for some, when things do go too far, the only solution, regrettably, is to give in their notice to the captain and start looking for a new position.



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INTERIOR

# Nailing the interview



THERE IS AN ART TO GETTING A JOB AS A STEW ON A SUPERYACHT - AND MANY PEOPLE DON'T MAKE THE CUT. SO WHAT IS IT THAT CAPTAINS LOOK FOR IN A PROSPECTIVE STEWARD OR STEWARDESS AND HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE?

BY GEORGIA BOSCAWEN

The superyacht industry attracts all kinds of people, from those who want to travel the world to those with an interest in pursuing a long-term career in yachting. But what do captains look for when hiring stews and what triggers alarm bells when it comes to the interview?

There are many ways for people to enter the superyacht market, whether it be word of mouth, online job posts or a natural evolution from service roles in other industries. And this, alongside your attitude and interests in the market, can have an impact on your employability. "I probably wouldn't employ someone that hasn't had any kind of hospitality experience," says Captain Mike Hitch, marine director at Golden Fleet Yachts. "You can train them on the job but if you're going to employ someone on a charter boat at the start of the season to provide service to guests, if they haven't got that basic skill then you're going to be in trouble."

While the environment itself is very different from land-based hospitality, the skill set is certainly transferrable. However, there are numerous elements that could make the role tricky, such as seasickness and living in extremely intense surroundings – two things people unfamiliar with the industry may not be prepared for. There



are, however, interior-specific training options for those who are moving into the superyacht market, such as The Stewardess Training Academy, Interior Training Academy and The Crew Academy.

"It isn't essential to have had land-based training, although it can certainly be useful," says Caroline Clarke, interior director at superyacht recruitment agency Quay Crew. "More than training, what I love to see on a CV is experience in high-end hospitality. This is a great platform for working in yachting – specifically in Michelin-starred restaurants, private estates, five-star hotels, etc. Working behind the bar in your local pub probably doesn't contribute much to your CV in terms of training or experience. Nothing can prepare you for yachting, though, and the attention to detail that you require."

Becoming a crewmember is expensive. You have to get the correct certifications and STCW courses that will cost a lot of money (anything up to, and often over, €1,000), but the rewards on the other side should balance out the cost. While there are stewardess-specific training courses, which again may also cost more money, they do offer the skill set required for working on board a superyacht. But there are other ways of getting the requisite skills through different industries that wouldn't cost quite as much.

While having the skill set is incredibly important, much emphasis is placed on your attitude and ability to get on with the job that you are being paid to do. It's also very important to be able to fit in with the existing crew. "One of the biggest things when it comes to doing well on a boat is the ability to get on with people," says Hitch. "You're all cooped up in a very small space, so you're not going to

**“ If your first question is, ‘How much time do I get off?’, your second question is, ‘How much are you going to pay?’ and your third is ‘Is the owner on a lot?’, at that point the interview is over. ”**

get on with everyone, but don't make a big drama out of it. As long as they're not abusive, physically or mentally, and they're not harassing anyone, you need to get past it."

Thanks to social media, the industry tends to attract people who are interested in the idea of living the high life on a superyacht, which is far from what captains are looking for in a stew. "There are too many people that are walking the docks because they have read the *Daily Mail* and thinking they're always drinking or they're on the jet skis, but that is not what this is about," explains Hitch. Work on board a superyacht is hard work and can be incredibly tough. "What you're not seeing is crew posting at three in the morning when they're desperate for the guests to go to bed because the other half of the guests who aren't up at three in the morning, with the kids, are getting up at seven in the morning for breakfast. It is tough," adds Hitch.

This is actually quite a significant problem in the recruitment sector. Much of the feedback Quay Crew has received is from captains who have employed crew who they believe are in the market for the wrong reasons. "We often hear feedback about junior candidates and, sadly, it is often negative," says Clarke. "Specifically, far too many crew seem to be entering the industry for the money and the glamorous lifestyle."

The things we all see plastered all over various social-media channels is truly a gross misrepresentation of life on board a superyacht for crew, especially on a busy charter yacht. When we see posts of the glamorous side of yachting, it's not representative of the average day in the life of a crewmember; more likely, it's a reward or period when there may be a few days off. "If you have a really good charter and you have a few days off, then you may throw all the toys in the water and have



time to use them," says Hitch. "But the reality is that when you're in this beautiful water in Sardinia, working, you just want to jump in all week, but you can't."

When it comes to the interview itself, what are the attributes that captains tend to look for? For starters, it's important to remember that captains are after those who are actually there to work rather than make the most of the lifestyle, as well as having a genuine interest in the boat. Thanks to the Internet, there is information available on almost every superyacht, meaning that at least a basic understanding of the boat is a must. "For all positions, there is enough information about my boats online to find out who we are and what we do," explains Hitch. "Always, my first question in an interview is, what do you know about us? If the answer is 'I've got no idea', that says to me that you haven't prepped for your interview." A little research will not only give you adequate preparation but will also tell you about the yacht and the way it is run and whether you actually want to work on board.

There are many ways to come off extremely badly in an interview and the most common one is to pay too

much attention to the benefits of working on board. For a captain, this is a telltale sign that you're looking to work on a superyacht for the wrong reasons. "If your first question is, 'How much time do I get off?', your second question is, 'How much are you going to pay?', and your third is, 'Is the owner on a lot?', at that point the interview is over," says Hitch.

"We hear that far too many junior crew have an attitude of 'what can this boat do for me?' in terms of money, courses paid for, flights paid for, time off, tips, etc.," says Clarke. It should be 'what can I do for this boat?', but it seems that it's quite easy to get caught up in the idea of working on a superyacht and forgetting what your role actually is. Rotation is another recurring interview query and, as Hitch explains, it seems that everyone is looking for rotation, which again gives the wrong impression about what the potential employee is interested in.

"If I was a prospective stewardess, I would be saying, 'These are my skills, this is what I can bring to the table, this is my attitude and this is what I can bring to that boat – I'm going to work my ass off and prove to the captain and everyone else that actually

they've made the right decision hiring me,'" says Hitch. After a successful interview, the work shouldn't stop there, and one of Hitch's points is that once you've secured a job, make sure you keep your head down and get on with what you're supposed to be doing. If, for example, you like to have a drink or a party ashore, don't until you've got your head around how things work and the politics on board. You must also be careful of jumping ship too soon, as Clarke explains: "Too many crew are flaky and jump ship too quickly. Build longevity and the rewards will come to you later in your career."

In order to prepare for the interview, be sure you know all there is to know about the boat you are interviewing for. "Prepare the same way as you would for any job interview," says Clarke. "Speak to the agent that put you forward for the role and gather as much information as you can from them on the yacht, owners and crew." She also recommends mentally rehearsing the questions and answers you think may come up, and concludes, "Ensure you are well rested, well presented and early for your appointment with all your documents in hand and copies made where necessary. ☞

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## Vessels that have a solid training programme have noted that this has had a very positive effect on their crew retention.

especially since these crew have been quite transient. However, you must calculate the risks of having untrained crew from the moment they step on board; these include poor service to the owner, complaints from guests and interpersonal issues within the team, all of which can lead to more and more turnover.

This trend was prevalent for a very long time as the longevity of interior teams had proved to be rather variable and was often non-existent. Fortunately for the owner, this has come to an end. Over the past decade, a vast number of interior crew have chosen to turn their 'first job abroad' into a serious career path. As a result, interior crew have invested, and continue to invest, a significant amount of time

and resources into improving their knowledge, skills and confidence. This is positive for the employee because it makes them much more marketable for future career growth opportunities within the industry.

Principals, captains and managers have also taken note. They have come to realise that the knowledge and experience gained in a variety of education is beneficial for all parties. It started with the cost of books being reimbursed by the yacht and has evolved into something much bigger. Additional holiday periods are provided for educational purposes and courses are often sponsored if not reimbursed.

Attaining a Level 3 WSET wine certificate is now within reach of any inspired wine enthusiast. Such course material is now widely available through a variety of yacht-specific courses at several institutions. Becoming a certified barista is another example of an area of expertise that is also accessible. Imagine the benefits of having an entire yacht's complement as potential guinea pigs for such training material! Boats have sent their full interior teams to collectively follow a range of courses on location that are sponsored by the vessel. In the end, everyone benefits.

The reasons all this training for the interior department has become so important is that it has made the interior crew more skilled and professional. It has helped create a more consistent culture of interior teams being on the same page, having obtained the same qualifications. Vessels that have a solid training programme have noted that this has had a very positive effect on their crew retention. As a result, this has been great for recruitment as a lot less of it is required and a vessel with a great reputation for training and retention has a host of qualified candidates to choose from.

Investing in crew takes a great deal of effort and patience. It is very similar to making wine. You must start out by planting vines and these must come of age. Even in times of inclement weather they still require nurture and TLC. Then, with the right conditions, something truly remarkable can be bottled and enjoyed for many years to come. But if you do not plant the vines, nothing will happen.

Sir Richard Branson has the best take on the subject: "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to." PV

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# Don't fear the engineer!



DOES THE ROLE AND NATURAL HABITAT OF ON-BOARD ENGINEERS LEAD TO A TAINTED REPUTATION AMONG THE CREW? WE SPEAK TO EXPERTS IN CREW RECRUITMENT TO GET THEIR THOUGHTS ...

BY FELIX SOWERBUTTS

The value of a top-level engineer's contribution to a yacht's operation and maintenance cannot be underestimated. With their specific qualification requirements and remit, they are certainly among the most qualified crew on board. Yes, they might benefit from a one-on, one-off rotation while nailing down a salary that can be anything from 60 to 80 per cent of a full-time crewmember, but the engine room, with its millions of euros' worth of equipment bearing the safety of those on board, is not somewhere you can take a gamble when it comes to assembling your team.

However, *The Crew Report* has recently learned from a number of industry professionals that while engineers are respected and credited for their expertise, they have a stigma of being less cooperative with other crew and are rarely flavour of the month.

The obvious barrier between engineers and the rest of the team are the long hours spent in the engine room, so it's not necessarily a personal conflict. Matt Kenney, engineering recruitment consultant at wilsonhalligan Yacht Recruitment, explains that sometimes engineers can get a 'bad deal' when it comes to their reputation. "They are often seen sitting in the control room, but their





hands are tied because there's not much else they can do," says Kenney. "They can't start stripping generators down because they need them to produce power – there are a lot of jobs on board that they cannot complete while the boat is in operation, so they must wait for an owner-off period or a yard period."

While, to the untrained eye, engineers might be seen to be doing little at times, it's important to remember they are constantly on standby and ready to be thrown into action when any machinery or equipment breaks down. "It really isn't just the main machinery that they end up being responsible for – it can be a dishwasher, a Hoover or even an iPad; the list goes on and on," says Kenney.

Kenney agrees with Paul Rutterford, general manager at Viking Recruitment, that you have to have certain attributes to be a good engineer: you need an inquisitive mind, strong attention to detail and a desire and passion for making things work. Similarly, Rutterford believes the same can be said of the on-board chefs who also require certain attributes to be able to excel to the best of their ability. "They [engineers] might not be the life and soul of the party, but they'll be taking everything in – they're very technical people," says Rutterford. "It's how their brains are wired, so they might be seen in a different light from the bubbly chief stewardesses."

Perhaps the negative portrayal of engineers has been influenced by something of a personality misunderstanding among other crewmembers and not because they are setting out to intentionally cause conflict, which is highly unlikely. Engineers, especially sole engineers, can have a heavy workload on board



*The grandeur of the engine room aboard 88m Quattroelle.*

yachts, often in very confined spaces, so it's understandable that they might have a short fuse on occasions.

Rutterford says that from a recruitment standpoint engineers are very straightforward to deal with insofar as "They know what size boat they want to work on and what terms they want". And he continues, "They're not overly fussed about the owner, like some other crew, but they know what systems they want to work with and they might have a preference of boat builder. For example, they might not want to work on Italian boats anymore and prefer the idea of working on Dutch boats. Interior crewmembers might be chasing a boat with a nice owner and a nice team, but an engineer wants great toys – there's just a difference in the requirements."

With the time and effort needed to gain the top engineering qualifications, engineers are much more likely to have a clearer idea of

what they want and a more specific set of aspirations and requirements. "Engineers are always highly regarded in a team, especially sole engineers," explains James Scott, Viking Recruitment's yacht operations and travel manager. "Sole engineers can have a lot on their plates because they also have to be AV/IT and satellite specialists and deal with almost anything."

Kenney agrees, adding that engineers are pulled in all directions and are heavily depended upon. "The deck department rely on them to make sure the cranes are working and the interior team rely on them for the water systems, sewage and air-conditioning systems." And there are many other problems that arise on board that require an engineering mind to find the solution. Engineers might find themselves in many situations where they are not trained specifically to deal with a particular problem, but they have the most appropriate skill

set and are the most qualified people on board to deal with it – and they must be flexible. Kenney agrees with Scott that the two hardest roles on a boat are those of a sole engineer and a sole chef.

"If you look back 10 years, a lot of what engineers have to do today was not their responsibility back then," says Scott, highlighting the sub-3,000gt sector, as the threshold most applicable to this observation. While the machinery on yachts is much more efficient today, the yachts are much bigger, with more complex on-board systems. "Engineers might have their heads down working in the engine room and not communicating with the team, but equally, if other department heads don't work together as a team and communicate, it can screw up the whole operation," continues Scott. "I'm sure not every engineer is an angel but there's an argument on both sides – arrogance can cause internal verbal conflict and without a team, you don't have a boat."

In commercial shipping, engineers are guaranteed a one-on, one-off rotation, even a second engineer. Therefore, over the years, as the fleet of superyachts has grown to a size range that emulates that of commercially built yachts, engineers with the

qualifications to handle much larger boats have been in demand by the superyacht sector. However, Kenney claims that demand has now plateaued. "A lot more engineers have now gone through their Y tickets and have come from oil and gas," he says. "But 10 to 15 years ago, they had the upper hand to come to yachts and demand rotation. Consequently, the larger boats in the superyacht sector have had to compete with the commercial sector for engineers and offer the same rotation because it's what is accepted as the norm for yachts of this size. It has also led to junior engineers, who are progressing through the ranks, believing it's the norm."

Kenney explains that the superyacht sector has considerably higher standards in the engine room than the

commercial sector. "Everything has to be highly polished because you have to expect that an owner will walk through – and the upkeep of machinery is a great expense to the owner. In the offshore sector, it's very different and you have many more hands on deck to tidy up every day, and it's just not as glamorous, so it doesn't have to be pristine."

Other crew may well see engineers as being outside their immediate friendship circle on board but, undoubtedly, the value they add to the fold is indispensable and their responsibility has certainly increased over the years. Scott aptly concludes, "They've got the skillset, which is sometimes more important than a smiley face. They might not be front-of-house people, but they are making sure everything is working." FS

“ The larger boats in the superyacht sector have had to compete with the commercial sector for engineers and offer the same rotation because it's what is accepted as the norm for yachts of this size. ”

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balanced rotation and nearly all larger superyachts are offering this rotation to their engineers. However, what we do sometimes see is that on a yacht offering a good rotation the remuneration on offer can often be lower than what many would expect in the yachting industry. This can certainly make recruiting a challenge.

That said, remuneration for many engineers has continued to increase, with many yachts paying well above the industry standard. However, this will depend on a number of factors, such as how generous an owner is willing to be in the employment conditions he or she offers.

It is important to highlight what happens when a chief or senior engineer, with very good seniority and longevity in their current position, wants to move to a new yacht for their next challenge. In this instance, their salary expectations can be very hard to match. They are highly experienced and very highly regarded, but when we present candidates to yachts, some clients are quite surprised at the high remuneration and package that a presented candidate can be earning and is expecting. For us at Viking,

their experience and longevity speak for themselves. In these instances, an experienced engineer with an excellent package, including superb rotation and benefits, can present a challenge when finding a new position to match their current employment terms.

Aside from rotation and salary, the industry continues to provide additional benefits which remain important for crew. These include private medical cover, increased allowance for travel, which can include business class travel for senior engineers, allowances for mandatory training, including refreshers, as well as personal development and management courses. Many yachts offer bonuses that could be either annual or at end of season, or even contract. Plus, there is often a provision for a private pension or international savings scheme, which is now considered a very welcome addition to the benefits offered to employees in the industry.

Finally, the topic of training and continued personal and professional development; interestingly, when sourcing new talent for our clients, we have seen that many larger yachts are asking

for engineers who, as well as having the required licence and certificate, are also requesting excellent working knowledge of smaller engines, with experience of tenders and toys on board. For those engineers following a non-commercial route, working on smaller yachts they are still able to gain experience with AEC and MEOL certification.

In addition to this, we have seen changes introduced regarding yacht certification, including the MCA's small vessel engineering certification which will replace the 'Y' tickets. January 2018 has seen the introduction of the Second Engineer, up to 9000 kW certification, with the Chief Engineer certification due to be introduced this coming June. For those that hold the Y4, Y3 and Y2 qualifications, it is now possible to convert these to the new Small Vessel Engineer qualification and further details on this can be obtained through the MCA.

Engineers will remain in demand, and there will be shortages where specific experience and knowledge is desired. But we as an industry need to continue to entice, nurture and encourage our engineers to ensure they stay.

ABOUT PAUL RUTTERFORD

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# WHAT'S ON THE MENU?



FOR A SUPERYACHT CHEF, ENSURING THE CREW ARE WELL FED CAN BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS COOKING FOR THE OWNER AND GUESTS. BUT JUST HOW FAR ARE CHEFS OBLIGED TO GO TO CATER FOR CREWS' EATING HABITS AND DIETARY REQUIREMENTS?

BY BRYONY MCCABE

It's the small and simple home comforts that can make a big difference to how a team feels and performs on board. Food, both in terms of quantity and quality, plays a crucial role in keeping the crew motivated and energetic during a long and hard-working day. While a yacht chef's primary role on board is to delight the owner and guests with their culinary expertise, most are also aware that it is important for the crew to have healthy and tasty meals to keep them going. However, catering for a growing variety of tastes, preferences and dietary requirements (excluding allergies) isn't always practical in a superyacht environment.

Yacht chef Tami Ayers welcomes any such challenge when it comes to special eating habits and dietary requirements as she feels it will make her better at her job. "I am a bit of a pushover when it comes to crew needs, so I do go above and beyond and I am happy to do so," she explains. "I only ask that the crew hold off any requests while on boss trips, regattas or charters, and they are mostly very good with that. I try really hard to raise the bar when it is just the crew on board and I think that helps a lot when I ask them to refrain from being too demanding during the busy times."

Another experienced yacht chef, who wishes to remain anonymous, agrees that during downtime when the boat is on the





dock, chefs often have the luxury of being able to put extra effort into cooking food for the crew. "This is when you can take individual requests from the crew and experiment a little bit more because you have the time, money and resources to do so," she says. "But when you are on a boss trip, on charter or even during a delivery, there is a limit to what you can do and the crew should be able to understand this."

There are, of course, certain dietary requirements and eating habits that can make it even harder for a chef to cater for the crew. Storage is a big issue on most boats and chefs can stock up on only so many ingredients for a delivery or if they are cruising in remote locations where provisioning is not possible. More and more people are interested in healthy eating and with that comes certain dietary trends that are growing in popularity. But these can throw up challenges for the chef on board.

While this chef understands the need to cater for any food intolerances, she does believe that crew should be made to take a medical test in order to prove them to the chef who is cooking their food. As for accommodating dietary requirements, while a chef may not be able to refuse such requests once a crewmember is on board, she believes these should play a more prominent role in the recruitment process. "In the same way that captains might not want to hire certain nationalities because of possible visa complications, I think dietary requirements should be factored into the consideration process because of the impact it could have on the chef," she asserts.

50

Chef Ayers not only welcomes it but also actively encourages it. "I choose to cook vegan twice a week to help with the methane-gas problem that the world faces and it seems to go down well with everyone on board," she admits. "Of course, I have to make a special effort to win over the meat eaters on those days, but usually they are persuaded. By cooking vegan, I have learned so much about our health and the planet, plus it's challenged my skill level and I see so much potential now in ingredients that I did not see before. I encourage chefs to try to step up and embrace the crew's needs so that they can become better chefs."

Chef Ayers concludes that there is often a difference between what most chefs are able to do and what the crew think they can do. "Because we're chefs, they think that somehow means we should know how to make anything, which is not always the case," she explains. "I have worked with crew that have been more challenging, not necessarily because of their diets, but more because of their expectations and that is when challenges can arise. Not all chefs have the same background or training and I think it is very important when chefs are hired to be told exactly what the crew needs are. I have only ever seen one contract for a chef position that required meeting the needs of crew that change their diets while on board [excluding allergies]."

There will always be those crew with particularly unusual dietary requirements, but a balance can almost always be found between keeping the crew happy and the chef stress-free by producing balanced meals that cater for a range of different tastes and dietary requirements. "I find the best way is to always make sure there is a mixture of protein,

carbohydrates and vegetables at every main meal, which makes it easy for crew to pick and eat the diet they want, such as vegetarian or low carb," the anonymous chef concludes. "At the end of the day, the chef should be responsible for allowing the crew to control their own diets." **BM**

**“ I choose to cook vegan twice a week to help with the methane-gas problem that the world faces and it seems to go down well with everyone on board. ”**



Tami Ayers

*Vegan beer-soaked cauliflower tacos.*



Some yachts have requested very specific types of chef, such as those with Lebanese or Japanese experience or Michelin-star chefs, who are sometimes hard to find within the typical yachting selection. Therefore, we have had to think outside the box and recruit chefs directly from restaurants or other venues such as [Caterer.com](#). Often, in cases such as these, chefs have not been in possession

## It is often the smaller yachts where the owners want to hire qualified and very good chefs.

of the required basic training and medical, and the yacht has financed the STCW and ENG1.

We have also noticed that it is often owners of smaller yachts who want to hire qualified and very good chefs – the chef being, for them, probably the most important person on board who plays a huge role in keeping the owner happy during their trip. The problem with this is that the salary on offer sometimes doesn't match the experience or requirements of the chef. Once they have gained some experience, most highly

qualified chefs want to work on larger yachts with a sous chef underneath them.

It seems rotation is becoming more common, especially on larger yachts, but the number of chefs wanting rotation is currently higher than what is on offer.

The introduction of the Ships' Cook Certificate has also changed recruiting habits. Even on yachts where a Ships' Cook Certificate is not required, as there are fewer than 10 crew on board, we still get asked to search for candidates with the appropriate certificate in

hand. I think it feels like a kind of security for the yacht if someone has done it.

From talking with Secrets de Cuisine, the number of chefs doing their Ships' Cook every year has been steady (approximately 120). The main difference lies in the fact that chefs are much more prepared for it, and they are seeing a substantial increase in pass rates (almost 90 per cent now). Chefs who didn't have it confessed they could have missed out on some good opportunities and therefore subsequently decided to do it. [ED](#)

ABOUT ESTHER DELAMARE

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CAREERS

# Don't give a damn 'bout reputation?



IN SUCH A SMALL INDUSTRY, NEGATIVE RUMOURS CAN EASILY SPREAD ABOUT INDIVIDUAL VESSELS, JUST AS THERE ARE CERTAIN YACHTS THAT ARE FAMOUSLY KNOWN TO BE GREAT TO WORK ABOARD. WE EXAMINE THE ISSUE OF A YACHT'S REPUTATION AND WHAT CREW NEED TO KNOW.

BY RACHEL ROWNEY

When you speak to crew, both those currently working on a yacht and those who have come ashore, you often hear boats labelled as either 'good' or 'bad'; gossip and hearsay among crewmembers spreads very quickly.

If a yacht develops a bad reputation, it travels quickly in yachting circles and can be difficult to shake off. According to ex-chief stewardess Gemma White\*, a yacht can achieve infamy for a huge number of reasons. "It varies. Bad yachts can be because of the owners themselves or the crew." White explains that in instances of a 'bad' set of crew; this can be anything from a drug problem on board or inappropriate relations between crewmembers to individuals causing a bad atmosphere. "It can be from poor management style, it could be a psychotic chief stewardess or an unprofessional captain. I've heard of captains bringing prostitutes on board or not turning up for work on time. That sort of news spreads quickly among yachts," she says. In White's experience, a yacht with a bad reputation usually only recovers if a substantial number of crew are replaced or the yacht is sold to a different owner.

\*name has been changed



THE CREW REPORT  
ISSUE 84

CAREERS SECTION  
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However, the website does state that crew should make sure to report serious allegations to their DPA, captain, management company or flag administration. The website currently does not have any strategy in place to enact changes, but rather just reports on them. One must ask if a series of algorithms can ever truly replace industry knowledge and direct contact with yachts and their crew, although the site is a useful tool for crew who aren't familiar with the industry and need insight into individual vessels. The YachtRanking.com team hopes the website is used in a positive light, with yachts labelled as 'good' seeing it as a badge of honour.

One stewardess recalls an owner who had to be referred to as 'Captain Magic', while another stewardess was instructed to serve sex toys to guests on silver platters.



For crew, it is important to be proactive in ascertaining the culture of life on board. Before joining the yacht, it is fundamental to ask lots of questions in the interview. New crew should see the trial period as a time not only for the yacht to assess the individual, but also for the new recruit to fully experience the yacht. This idea is echoed by Sarah Plant, director at ReCrewt, who has been in the industry for more than two decades. "You should always be offered a trial period – on some boats it will be one month, others three months. I always say to my crew that a trial is as much for you as it is them. And if at any point during that trial things are not what they told you, you don't feel comfortable or you feel unsafe, you are quite at liberty to say 'Thanks for the opportunity, but I don't think I'm the person for the job'. That's the professional way to handle it."

What should crew do in a situation where they find themselves on board a "bad" yacht? Alison Rentoul, founder of The Crew Coach, advises that those crewmembers who are worried about their environment should report to their manager on board, and if the issue is not dealt with directly, move further up the chain of command. "Always first take the concern to your head of department

### WARNING SIGNS OF A 'BAD' YACHT, ACCORDING TO AN EX-CHIEF STEWARDESS

- HIGH CREW TURNOVER
- A LARGE NUMBER OF CREW BEING HIRED AT ONE TIME
- A QUICK INTERVIEW PROCESS OR AN INTERVIEW WHERE THE INTERVIEWER EVADES QUESTIONS
- UNUSUAL REQUESTS, SUCH AS ASKING FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OR ASKING INVASIVE QUESTIONS
- THE YACHT NOT PAYING FOR EXPECTED AMENITIES SUCH AS FLIGHTS, UNIFORM OR DEPOSITS
- NO TRIAL PERIOD OFFERED

“ It can be from poor management style, it could be a psychotic chief stewardess or an unprofessional captain. I've heard of captains bringing prostitutes on board or not turning up for work on time. That sort of news spreads quickly among yachts. ”

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or, if they are the problem or if they don't handle your concerns adequately, you can take it to the captain. Again, if you get no joy there you can try the management company and lastly, if there is no other recourse, you can go to the flag state or the Professional Yachting Association (PYA) to ask for professional advice and help."

However, does this actually happen? "If a yacht has a bad reputation, it will be due to the poor management of the captain, so it is unlikely a crewmember would go to the captain," says White, confirming a long-standing problem in the industry: the more junior you are, the less power you have. "Also, if the crew did this, they risk tarnishing their reputation as they might come across as fussy or precious – so it's not worth it. You have to put up and shut up or leave," she adds. It is for this reason that high turnover of crew is a red flag for any new crew joining a vessel.

Rentoul adds that if a yacht has a bad reputation, it affects every person and sector within the industry. It's not just crew who will suffer if a yacht is infamous for bad practice; it will influence the decisions of managers, brokers and clients. Similarly, a yacht with a good reputation will flourish in the industry. "Owners benefit from their yacht having a good reputation, not just through the personal satisfaction that brings but also the savings in time, money and hassles that come from efficient operations," says Rentoul. A yacht with a good reputation will garner higher charter fees, which benefits managers and brokers, and if the owner wishes to sell the yacht it will ultimately have a higher resale value.

"Captains also benefit from the halo effect of a great yacht reputation, giving them better job security and more attractive job prospects as they are often headhunted [by] even bigger and better yachts when they have secured a strong reputation in association with the vessels they have run," adds Rentoul. This also extends to more junior crew; if they have been employed by – and trained on – a 'good' yacht, they will be more appealing to recruitment agents and future captains. This illustrates how vital it is for yachts to work towards a 'good' reputation. "It is in everyone's interests to do what is necessary to keep standards as high as possible, which will in turn result in the best possible yacht reputation," Rentoul concludes.

In the small pool of superyacht crew, it is inevitable that there will be gossip, rumours and comments about the culture on board specific yachts. It is to the detriment of everyone in the industry when yachts have a bad reputation; therefore all of those involved in a yacht's operations and management should actively work to ensure best practice on board.

As the industry grows to become more professional, we can only hope that the bad practice of owners, captains and crew that contribute to a yacht's negative reputation will be driven out of the industry. Then there will only be such a thing as a 'good' yacht. **RR**

**“ Owners benefit from their yacht having a good reputation, not just through the personal satisfaction that brings but also the savings in time, money and hassles that come from efficient operations. ”**



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# THE TRUTH ABOUT YACHTING

EMMA BATCHELDER

TO THE UNTRAINED EYE, A CAREER IN YACHTING MAY SEEM TO BE ONE LONG HOLIDAY - BUT NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. LUXURY YACHT GROUP'S EMMA BATCHELDER OFFERS SOME ADVICE AND EXPLAINS WHY BEING PART OF A YACHT CREW TAKES SERIOUS GUTS, MENTAL STRENGTH AND PHYSICAL STAMINA.

I had some of the best years of my life when I worked on board superyachts in my early twenties, even though the exclusive world of white boats was something that I hadn't been completely aware of until I spent a short summer holiday in the south of France. The thought of having a job on board a luxury 'floating hotel' while travelling to the most beautiful parts of the world seemed too good to be true. I later learned that is indeed the reality of the situation.

My friends and family would see the photographs I would post on my social-media accounts and exclaim how lucky I was to be seeing these places for free. We stewardesses would agree, but no one posts pictures of yourself sitting on the upper pantry floor at 3am, resting

your aching feet for just 60 seconds in between mixing cocktails for guests who continue to party through the early hours of the morning.

Yachting is, without a doubt, one of the most incredible and surreal industries to be involved in, but it is not for the faint-hearted. Although it isn't entirely accurate to compare yachting to the navy, there are similarities. Ranking of crewmembers, and certain disciplines or 'standing orders' that should be abided by at all times, are examples of this. This means yachting is not a career for everyone, as not everyone is cut out for it. It takes serious practice, focus and bravery to work on board these floating five-star hotels. Strong personalities will succeed, particularly when you get 'knocked

Yachting is very rewarding and a uniquely special industry to be a part of – if you are the right candidate. It is a serious career choice for many and needs to be viewed as such. The perception some people have that it is a good option for a gap year is misconstrued. Setting yourself up for a career in yachting is an investment and one that should be considered carefully and thoroughly enjoyed. **EB**

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# DISEMBARKING THE SHIP

## *Changes are taking place at TSG Towers ...*



BY LULU TRASK

The crew sector is, without doubt, the best one in the superyacht industry. Those wonderful people who make up the crew sector are fun, passionate, friendly, welcoming and, quite simply, my favourite people in this mad, mad industry. Therefore, it's with great sadness that this will be my last homage to crew – in written form at least.

But I'm not going far. I'm doing what so many crew do. I am, metaphorically speaking that is, going 'land-based'. I'm moving away from *The Crew Report* to TSG Towers under the new role of The Superyacht Group's Operations Director, working closely with the man you all know, Martin Redmayne, to keep The Superyacht Group ship sailing smoothly.

But while stepping off the bridge of a product that during the five years I've been driving the ship has been relaunched twice, seen a huge growth in audience and become established as the only report for professional superyacht crew interested in advancing their careers (yes, I'm tooting my own horn – if there's any time, it's now), there isn't

anyone I'd rather be handing it over to than William Mathieson, The Superyacht Group's Editorial and Intelligence Director.

The most knowledgeable editor in the superyacht industry (I dare you to try to challenge me on that), William knows it all when it comes to this constantly evolving market, and there's no one better to take *The Crew Report* to its next stage than someone who has all the tools at their disposal to tie in wider market activity, needs, trends and information with the backbone of this industry – the crew.

Since the relaunch of *The Superyacht Report* a year ago, our editorial team have been praised for their candour, opinions and the intelligent way they deliver information – all under William's captaincy. So rather than feel I'm losing anything by this change, I'd like to think that you're gaining something – a new captain in whom I have every confidence to take *The Crew Report* forward and continue to deliver the content we've always been so proud of. Over to you, William. [LT](#)

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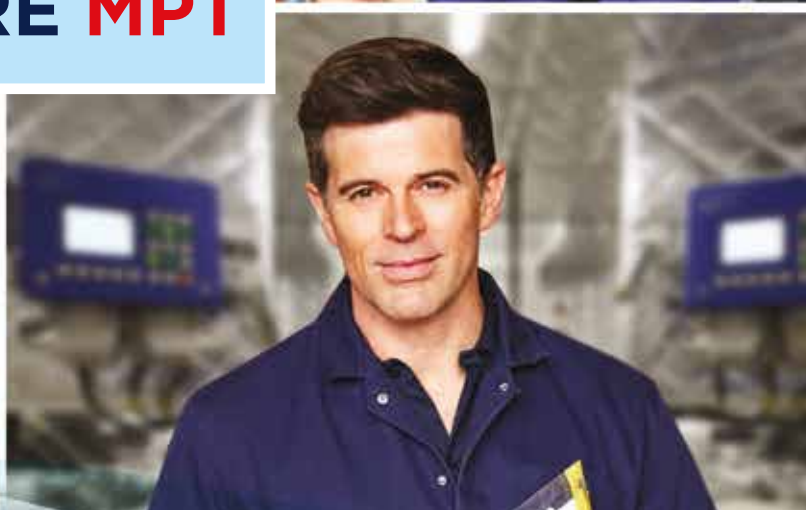
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