



GO TO SEA!

A campaign to attract entrants
to the shipping industry

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A CAMPAIGN TO ATTRACT ENTRANTS TO THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

in association with the

International Labour Organization (ILO)

BIMCO

International Chamber of Shipping/International Shipping Federation (ICS/ISF)

International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (INTERCARGO)

International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO)

International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

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BACKGROUND

Although global implementation of the STCW Convention can ensure that seafarers are properly educated and trained to meet the needs of safe ship operation, their **supply in sufficient numbers, particularly qualified ships' officers**, continues to cause concern. Periodic BIMCO/ISF studies have highlighted an anticipated shortage of some 27,000 officers worldwide by the year 2015, while a recent study predicts a shortage of up to 83,900 even sooner. And, when set against the unprecedented rise in orders for new buildings, which has characterized the situation since the 2004 boom in the shipping market, the shortage will only be exacerbated. Once delivered, these increasingly sophisticated new ships must be entrusted to seafarers who are competent in all respects to sail them in a safe, secure, environmentally-sound and efficient manner.

And there the problem starts. Currently, in some parts of the world, particularly the traditional maritime countries, there is an apparent reluctance on the part of young people to choose seafaring as a profession. And even for those young people who do make that choice, their careers at sea are often short as they are either unwilling or unable to take on higher duties or, even more importantly, they actively chose not to remain at sea. Such choices are influenced, in some degree, by recent unhelpful legislation and practices, which represent a challenge for us all because they have the potential to discourage young people from joining the profession in the first place and serving seafarers from remaining in it.

Seafarers provide a vital service to an industry that contributes significantly to global and sustainable development and prosperity by carrying the world's commerce safely, securely, efficiently and at a fraction of the environmental impact and cost of other modes of transport. Indeed, shipping carries more than 90% of world trade – and, given that the bulk of this trade consists of commodities such as grain and oil, the data leads to the inescapable conclusion that, without shipping, half the world would starve and the other half would freeze.

This immense job is done by close to 100,000 merchant ships, manned by over 1¼ million seafarers from all over the world. Against an estimated total world population of 6.7 billion, these figures draw a stunning conclusion: that the feeding and heating needs of the entire world are dependent on just over 1 million seafarers.

Paraphrasing Winston Churchill's words, one could say that “never before in the history of mankind have so many owed so much to so few”!

On the basis of this strong foundation we should not miss a single opportunity to raise the profile of shipping as a vibrant industry, which, in keeping with its corporate social responsibilities, provides rewarding, stimulating and long-term career prospects. In so doing, we should focus not only on ensuring that politicians and the general public are better informed of shipping's great value to the international community, but also on promoting, among the children and young people in schools and universities all over the world, a career at sea and emphasizing the variety of opportunities it offers in the short-, medium- and long-term. In this context, it is of utmost importance for all the stakeholders – i.e. industry, Governments and IMO – to join forces and address the problem collectively.

INDUSTRY

The shipping industry itself is both at the heart of the problem and holds most of the cards in reaching a solution to the shortage of seafarers. In short, a career at sea has to be more attractive a proposition for youngsters than the available alternatives ashore. The industry has, therefore, to do much more to improve the way it is perceived and the sociological (work/life balance) and financial factors, which explain the limited attraction to a seafaring career.

Maritime related events

Some companies and organizations have already identified the issues and launched initiatives to address them. However, all involved recognize that more can be done. For example ...

During conferences and other public events, the industry could take the lead and do more to promote itself through the media, in particular the electronic media. In addition, the industry should continue to provide support for and endorse campaigns aimed at improving image (recent examples include: Shipping Facts, Poseidon Challenge, Maritime Industry Foundation and its associated Knowledge Centre, SeaVision, etc.) and use some key industry figures as examples of career progression.

The shipping industry should take a closer look at today's lifestyles and do more to make life away from home more akin to the life enjoyed by others ashore. This could probably be achieved through shorter duty period on board, long-term contracts, more or more frequent paid leave, social security, improved communications including internet access, more humane treatment and many more factors, both major and minor.

Industry's financial support for the establishment and promotion of training institutions as well as the maintenance of existing training facilities would do much to enhance maritime education, as would support to new and existing seafarers during their education and training. In this context, the industry should consider the period of shore-based education and training ashore as time 'on duty' rather than 'on leave'.

Women should be encouraged to work in the seafaring profession. This can be done by highlighting the opportunities available and making appropriate presentations during conferences and media events. Action also needs to be taken to make accommodation and the atmosphere on board more gender-friendly. Some good progress in this area has already been made by some maritime administrations and the industry might learn from their actions.

Existing seafarers should be urged to promote the shipping industry as a career. Senior masters and chief engineers might be invited to speak to youngsters on their experiences and thoughts of serving at sea. And the industry itself might also initiate discussions with local communities to honour seafarers for services rendered towards the betterment of human life.

Non-maritime related contexts and situations

Stepping outside the maritime world is also likely to pay dividends in enhancing the visibility of the shipping industry and raising awareness of career opportunities. Senior industry figures (as role models) should participate in non-maritime related events and project the image of the industry as one which is:

- responsible for over 90% of world trade;
- a clean and efficient mode of transport; and
- the most economical means of bulk transportation.

Industry, along with maritime administrations, should liaise at school level to promote a career in shipping, whilst also drawing attention to the fact that seafaring experience is a well-trodden route to other maritime-related careers. In this context, the industry could provide school students with internship opportunities to go to sea (e.g. during their holidays/practical work experience) or ‘taster’ visits and open days to ships and ports. Raising awareness of the maritime industry based on celebrating World Maritime Day has been a successful initiative that could be built upon.

Industry organizations might jointly prepare standard presentations promoting careers at sea, for use in various fora. These could be distributed to schools world wide by local shipping associations, trade unions, Governments and maritime institutes. The development and publication of books on a seafaring theme aimed a children of all ages (akin to IMO’s ‘Little Mo’ series) might also pay dividends in instilling a better understanding of the role of the industry in everyday life. National industry bodies may wish to consider pooling their own presentational material with a view to producing globally-relevant packages of information aimed at the young.

Industry might also explore the possibilities of inducing personnel from other professions and trades that have links with the shipping industry to consider joining it. Fishing vessel personnel, mechanical engineers, trade mechanics and naval personnel could easily be re-trained by means of bridging courses.

GOVERNMENTS

A supply of competent seafarers requires a commensurate provision of training establishments. The responsibility for establishing and maintaining the standards of maritime training facilities lies chiefly with Governments – and in many cases Governments also directly provide those facilities. Failure to resource this provision adequately (both in financial and human resource terms) limits the ability of industry to effectively train its recruits.

The policies adopted by Governments in response to maritime issues in general (tonnage taxes, accidents and incidents, criminalization of seafarers, seafarer supply, etc.) have a direct effect on the public’s perception of the maritime industry.

A maritime perspective

To give greater prominence to the maritime perspective, Governments should do more to support and encourage the shipping industry in any initiatives it takes to enhance its image. By promoting maritime training, Governments can indirectly but importantly contribute to improved standards and enhance the environmentally-friendly nature of the industry. Governments might encourage campaigns to promote seafaring as an attractive and rewarding career and as a springboard to other relevant positions ashore, particularly through the provision of appropriate training institute or university curricula. Lessons might be learned from campaigns to attract the young to join the armed forces. This might be supported by providing incentives to the industry to provide training berths on ships. As many ports and some ships are under direct Government control (particularly harbour craft, etc.) more might be done to encourage school children to visit ships in ports so that they may consider a career at sea. Not only through learning from actions

taken by other Governments in support of their own shipping industries, Governments can do much to promote a wider take-up of a sea career through, for example recognition of sea service instead of compulsory military service, training of jobless persons and promoting the career for women.

Wider Government initiatives

Those in Government with maritime knowledge or direct maritime responsibilities can draw attention to the economic benefits to be gained by labour-supply and efficient shipping services; highlighting its environmental benefits and drawing attention to the role of competent seafarers in protecting the marine and coastal environments. Greater efforts should also be made to draw attention to the negative effects of some policies and practices of governments (e.g. criminalization of seafarers, wrongly perceived and inappropriate security measures, etc.) which work against efforts to attract the young. Local communities should be encouraged to honour seafarers in recognition of their unique services for the betterment of mankind and this should be extended to the role played by their families.

THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO)

In order to give further effect to the efforts of the industry, Governments and other international organizations, IMO and, in particular, the Secretary-General and staff, will raise the issue at every opportunity through speeches containing appropriate text; through briefings containing suitable content to promote and urge action, as appropriate; when meeting with Government officials; and through meetings with key individuals representing industry or Governments during missions and maritime events.

While on missions abroad, where practicable, the Secretary-General will visit maritime and non-maritime training facilities and seafarers' welfare organizations to express support and address both maritime and non-maritime Government departments to promote shipping and seafaring.

IMO will develop a page on its public website highlighting the types of career paths available to seafarers, through links to industry sites and will explore a possible 'seafaring' theme for a future World Maritime Day and the possibilities for organizing a World Seafarer Day (honouring the role of the seafarer) on a periodic basis.

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

International organizations will also be invited to support this campaign in all relevant activities.

In particular, the ILO, which promotes the objective of decent work for all, has adopted diverse instruments directly relevant to the goals of the campaign and will be invited to support it in every way possible.
