



INTERTANKO

**International Association of Independent Tanker Owners
- FOR SAFE TRANSPORT, CLEANER SEAS AND FREE COMPETITION -**

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Challenges for International Shipping in the Year of the Seafarer

In 2009 INTERTANKO and ITF organised a three-day workshop for young serving seafarers to express their views on their career and life at sea, and in particular what attracts young people to the shipping industry and retains them. The “Young Seafarers’ Focus Group” consisted of a mix of 20 young deck and engine officers, ratings and one cadet, of various nationalities around the world of which three were women, all being drawn from the membership of INTERTANKO or ITF.

The objective of the workshop was to draw on their thoughts, to solicit their comments, their views and concerns, and their recommendations as a collective group, without influence from either INTERTANKO or ITF.

The main points they raised were presented to the IMO secretary General and also submitted as a paper to IMO. The main points they raised remain very valid and we believe provide a valuable insight to the problems and concerns encountered by today’s serving seafarers.

The following is a summary of the young seafarers workshop.

Main Attractions to a a Career at Sea

- Salary and tax breaks
- Family traditions
- Opportunity to see the world
- Lifestyle – (hard work but long breaks)
- Job opportunities – (but sometimes absence of other options)
- Challenging and interesting work

The problems faced at Sea

- ISPS: Shore leave is a right not a privilege, feel they are treated as terrorists
- Criminalization of the seafarer seen as a massive issue and problem
- Manning verses workload
- Piracy: deep concerns raised
- Poor living conditions and poor/expensive communication with home
- The high amount of paperwork on board
- Different standards of training depending on nationalities and Administration
- Poor image of the industry

Recommendations:

- Provide secure direct employment agreements instead of employment contracts. Many seafarers cannot get mortgages, loans or credit cards!
- Companies should offer the possibility of fixed exchange rates on salary payments
- Companies should be aware of the importance of creating company spirit.
- Quality of life on board is adversely affected by poor standards of accommodation and poor or no recreational facilities
- Accommodation standards: Single cabins, own toilets, own showers a must, its nothing more than we all enjoy ashore.
- Internet access: Life at sea would be hugely improved contact with family, equals happier seafarers and by default more productive and safer.
- Food quality, standards and victualing allowances often poor.
- ISM Code: Its felt it this is too open to interpretation, with minimal consistency between companies, some systems are very paper work driven.
- Provision of onboard computer-based training requested but problems with time and work load highlighted as creating difficulties in undertaking onboard training
- Licences: The costs of these are mostly passed onto the seafarer, support the seafarer in his training, provide a structured career path, assist with training and further qualifications will create a more loyal seafarer.
- Value the human being behind the seafarer: Talk to your Mariners, listen to their views and needs - you will be rewarded.
- Value their professionalism: Encouragement, constructive criticism and continuous development, they are people too, press the right buttons and they will respond positively.
- Two way communication with the Mariner: Active participation in the safe, environmentally and economically viable operation of their ship is the trademark of a quality seafarer – engage them in your operation.

Image of the industry

There is either a lack of knowledge amongst the public about the industry or an old-fashioned, outdated idea of seafaring.Airline pilots are portrayed as heroes but seafarers are portrayed as criminals and terrorists – why is that?