



The generation game

Laurence Lewis looks at the new yachting workforce and their aspirations for a better work life balance

The Monaco Yacht Show 2015 is taking place towards the end of September which pretty much signals the end of the Mediterranean season and the beginning of the shipyard and Caribbean season. Charter vessels all of sizes, builds, styles and ages were busier than ever this summer and last minute clients were struggling to find any available yachts; Stamina was the key quality required for the 2015 crew, especially for the newcomers to the industry; 2015 was not the season for the faint hearted!

Yet, many yachts and captains were having to struggle with junior crew, Millennial crew, the 'Y' generation, many of whom have been described as lazy, selfish, self centred, money orientated and prone to job hop with no consideration for the team, the yacht schedule and its owners and guests. "It's not for me, I want to go now", "It's my friend's wedding on the 5th August, I don't want to miss it; I'm off"...

'The trophy kid' syndrome, as presented by Ron Alsop in his book 'The Trophy Kids grow up'. You know, children who have been rewarded by their parents for minimal accomplishments and have unrealistic or delusional expectations of working life. It is en vogue to criticise this generation and many captains find this new crew unprepared to work on yachts and difficult to manage.

The Generation Y is a larger group than the baby boomers and their children, the Generation X (that's you if you can remember where you were when Kurt Cobain died) and, like them or not, they are the future of yachting. In fact, the US Bureau of Statistics shows that by 2015, 'Millennials' became the workforce new majority.

It's a remarkably talented generation. Millennials have passion, are very sporty and have a broad range of interests. They love travelling and want to get 'there' fast! It's also a complex generation with contradictory characteristics and a different concept of authority; understanding them will help to recruit and retain them on your yacht. Millennials have grown up with technology at their fingertips, they communicate quickly and request fast internet access on yachts, and why wouldn't they?

Many can't even remember the world before PCs. They have a lack of sense of discretion on social media and are not willing to sacrifice their network of friends for a job. They want freedom and flexibility. Ah, I forgot to mention it above, this generation is also called The 'Me' Generation...

Of course, some comments above are stereotypes; trying to define a generation is often a futile exercise, but nevertheless, adjusting your style of management might just make the difference between keeping or losing your new crew and having to start building it up all over again. Millennials have been told by their parents that their opinion matters, that they should speak up and question things so you might hit a brick wall with a 'command and order' management style; a more inclusive philosophy will get you more results; I know, easier said than done on a yacht where it's 24 /7.. Over to you to demonstrate that processes are in place for a reason, because they work and that old ways can be the best way.

The other important point is training and development; the new crew coming on the market has a low boredom threshold and they want to acquire new skills and certificates quickly. Employers and yachts who assist with courses and career progression will strike a chord with these newcomers as it demonstrates that as an employer, you have an interest in their success which in turn, will make them want to give you more in return.

Recruiters and employers have to be clear and ensure crew understand fully what the collective goal is, explain that yachting can be, and often is, tough with long hours, hard physical work but that just rewards and promotion are available for those able to keep the pace. This message should be sounded loud and clear at the interviewing stage so that all parties know where they stand. Millennials are looking for a well balanced working environment, they want to work with friends and in many ways, yachting with its strong communities is a great place for Millennials to be.

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