

Moving Up: Deck/Engineer to Engineer

What does it take to move up from a deckhand/engineer position to a full-blown engineer position? Laurence Reymann (left) looks at the soft issues related to making this career move and Joey Meen (right) looks at the certification and qualifications involved.



Are you ready for a promotion? You may be itching to climb the career ladder but are you well equipped to take the pressure associated with added responsibilities? Whether your next job is as second engineer on a 50-metre yacht or sole engineer on a 34-metre one, you will need to display both decision-making and leadership skills. And apart from convincing your captain or chief engineer that you have the required technical skills, they will need to know you are mature enough and confident enough to assume the associated responsibilities that come with the title. Are you ready to be accountable for your professional decisions onboard the vessel?

The General Skills & Attitude

The market is very much "certificate driven" and the crew of today are generally speaking assiduous and keen to tick engineering modules off their study list as fast as possible.

Whilst one can only applaud the fact that crew are studying to obtain certificates which allow them to apply for positions with kudos and bigger financial gains, the question has to be: is this crewmember ready for it? Hands-on practical experience, know-how, authority, confidence, general wisdom and worldliness do not come with a certificate. These attributes are developed and nurtured over time. Know yourself and act accordingly is the best advice. It is always thrilling to start a new job that offers challenges. However, it is dangerous to take a job that completely puts you out of your depth. It is unwise for you; it is unfair on your employer. Before accepting this next "dream" job, why not do a gap analysis. Which skills and attributes do you possess already and which ones will you need to acquire to be a top performer in the desired new job?

Which column is the longest? Food for thought.

One of the toughest adjustments required is often a behavioural one. You will need to gain the respect of your fellow crewmembers (in fact hopefully you already have it) and you will then need to ensure that they keep this respect for you. Being the last one out of the pub is not a good idea any more.

Maturity is about knowing your limits as well as being able to say: "I am not sure, I need your advice or your input." You are, after all, only at the beginning of your career – you do not have all the answers.

The Paperwork

Those aiming to climb the engineering ladder can follow an MCA developed route to certification, which is structured to provide a continuing professional development. Candidates meeting the requirements will be issued with an STCW 95 certificate of competence (COC) limited to service on yachts and sail training vessels, or for AEC and MEOL an MCA "Course Completion Certificate".

The route starts from Approved Engine Course (AEC), via Marine Engine Operators Licence (Yachts) (MEOL (Y)) to Yacht 4, Yacht 3, Yacht 2 and finally Yacht 1.

The fundamental entry requirement to all MCA engineering courses is the basic STCW crew training modules. You must be at least 19 years old (18 for AEC and MEOL) and have a valid medical fitness certificate (ENGI) or equivalent.

The qualifying yacht service must be performed in the engineering department and is reckoned from the date of engagement to the date of discharge. If you are starting off in a dual role as deck/engineer, the MCA will only count half your sea time in each discipline. Additionally, at least six

months of the qualifying yacht service must have been conducted within the five years preceding the application. The MCA only considers yacht service on vessels with over 250kW propulsion power.

During the qualifying period there is a requirement to complete a period of actual sea time accumulated on a day-by-day basis. A day at sea is any day when the vessel leaves port or is already at sea. Proof of sea service is via submission of an MCA recognised log book, service record book or discharge book that is backed up with the relevant testimonials.

To be successful in the training modules a good understanding of written and spoken English is required and to be successful at MCA oral examination, you must communicate clearly and effectively in spoken English.

With more considerations than the deck route, engineers with previous formal qualifications to National or Higher National Diploma/Certificate, or those who have a craft or engineering apprenticeship, may be eligible for sea time or training exemptions. Exemption is possible in this way for the AEC course but not the MEOL (Y). The MCA has a letter of initial assessment (LIA) available for those who might meet these requisites. A diagram providing a rough guide to the engineering route from AEC to Y1 is available with this article online at TheCrewReport.com/ CVSurgery. ■

Laurence Reymann is Director of YPI Crew.
ypicrew.com

Joey Meen is a Council Member for the PYA and runs career consultancy Ask Joey.
askjoey@wanadoo.fr

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