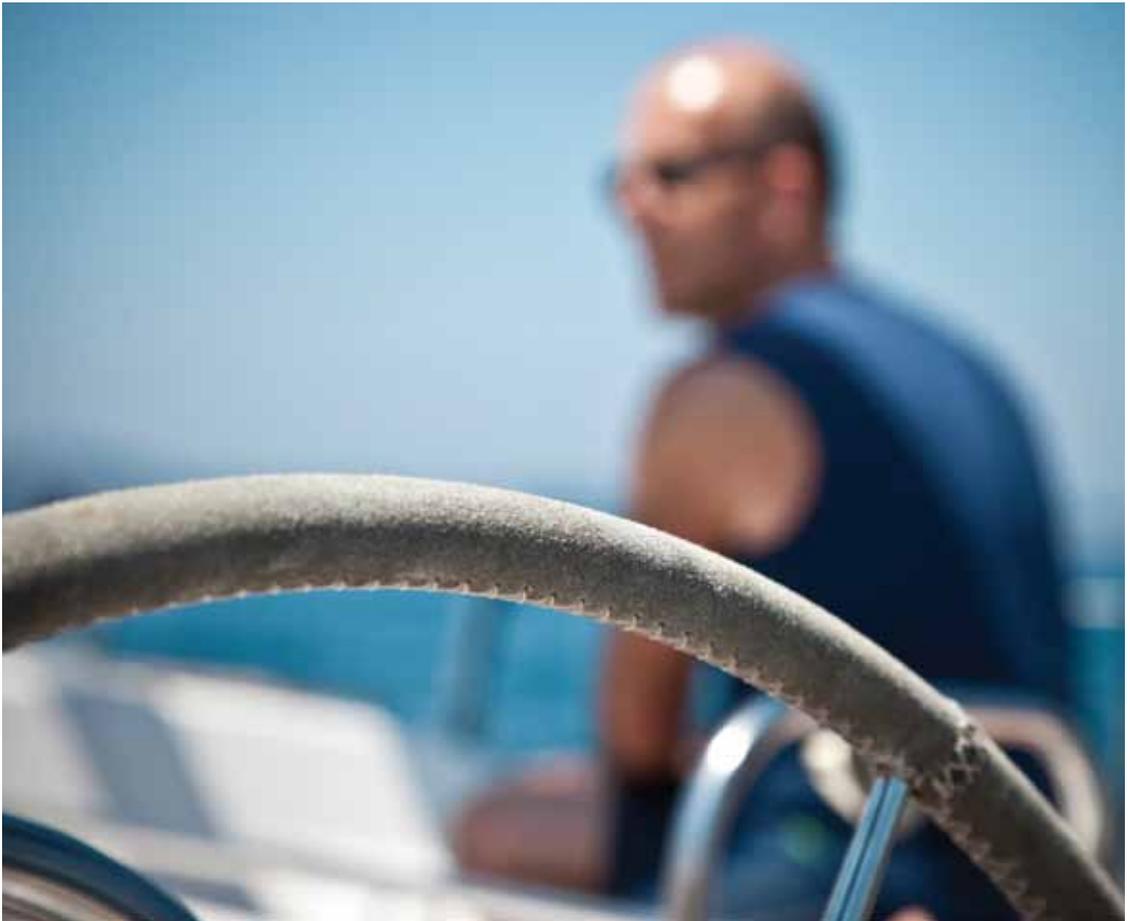


MOVING UP:

CHIEF OFFICER TO CAPTAIN



THE FINAL STEP ON THE YACHTING LADDER TAKES PREPARATION, PATIENCE AND MORE THAN PASSING EXAMS.



THE GENERAL SKILLS & ATTITUDE

By Laurence Reymann (left)

In this series on career development we now address the ultimate step, for which you have been preparing for years, which

seemed so remote and possibly even unreachable when you joined the industry as a young deckhand, dockwalking around the marinas at the beginning of the summer season. When considering moving from chief officer to captain, how do you know

you are ready? As usual, it is down to the individual. Some will have an epiphany, for others it will have been a well-thought-through procedure of ticking boxes, never losing sight of the ultimate goal. You are ready when

confidence supersedes doubts. You cannot eradicate doubts; you have to overcome them, managed them and live with them, in whichever order. To become a good captain, you must first be a good chief officer; forgive me for >

→ stating the obvious but it is important. There is no substitute for experience, so put in the time and effort to get the job done and live up to the captain's expectations. When the captain feels confident in your capabilities and feels your natural authority, he will hopefully want to give you the opportunity to do a crossing, for instance. But to get there you will need to have proven yourself to him or her, the insurance company, the management and the owner. Crew management is always a delicate exercise onboard a yacht. The chief officer should aim to be the unifying force between departments. Make sure there is understanding and respect between the interior and deck department, for instance, and be the one who understands the needs of all parties, finding solutions to make life onboard easier. This global vision will prepare you to be in charge and to manage your own crew. Then there are the relationships you have with the owner, management company, contractors and brokers. All of these need to be established, developed and nurtured. If you have come this far in your career, you probably have

the confidence, charisma, service orientated attitude and business awareness to deal with all of the above; if not, it is time to brush up. Ask your captain for his or her opinion, are you ready? Visualise that you have been invited to interview for a captain's job; this could be the big break you are waiting for, so be prepared, be focused, you will need to *sell yourself*. In yachting, people are often not ready to do so or are even surprised at the thought of having to do it but you must. We will revisit captain interview techniques in a later issue but remember that it is not just about what you can do and who you are, it is also about knowing your competition and what your angle of attack is going to be. You will always have to compete with more experienced candidates and established captains with a proven track record. So why chose you, the chief officer looking for a first command? Before

going for any captain interviews, you need to be able to answer this question with confidence and back up your answer with real facts that illustrate your readiness.

THE PAPERWORK

By Joey Meen (right)

The captain (or master) is wholly in charge and fully responsible for all aspects of the vessel and the safety and wellbeing of all passengers and crew, safety being their paramount concern.

Qualifications and significant maritime and seafaring experience are not the only requirements for this senior management position. A captain, regardless of size of vessel or number of crew, requires a vast skill set, from a strong administrative, IT and financial aptitude (including the enormous responsibility and accountability for the owner's funds) to personnel management skills and full working shipboard operations knowledge.

A captain should be vigilant and able to abide with overall safety codes, environmental regulations, safe manning as well as flag requirements, local by-laws and local port officials. It is vital to know the latest rules and keep official paperwork and logs fully maintained. A safe operation requires an ability to handle emergencies and perform regular onboard crew safety

training and ensuring that all safety procedures are followed.

Likewise, the captain should have a good working knowledge of onboard repairs and likely maintenance programmes. He/she is responsible for overseeing repairs and upkeep of the vessel, which often includes shipyard visits for refits - and moreover, sometimes new builds. On occasion, a captain finds he/she is wearing the cap of a project manager or owner's representative and is required to work and communicate with the shipyard, the owners and managing companies, bringing projects in on time and within budget. The MCA (Yacht) qualifications have a ceiling of 3,000GT and do not qualify seafarers' to work on "Commercial" or MN vessels. Recommendations from the MCA on how to prepare for a career on a yacht over 3,000GT whilst working in yachting can be found at TheCrewReport.com/GlassCeiling.

It is always worth considering that gaining experience on the size of vessel you eventually want to skipper could be invaluable. There is no substitute for actual time spent at sea and the knowledge gained in all aspects of the vessel is a must. Learning command and practical skills from peers and mentors can only really be achieved with experience.

"YOU ARE READY WHEN CONFIDENCE SUPERSEDES DOUBTS"

"A CAPTAIN, REGARDLESS OF SIZE OF VESSEL OR NUMBER OF CREW, REQUIRES A VAST SKILL SET"

The Captain should hold the required certificate of competence (CoC) qualification, depending on the size and flag of the vessel:

VESSELS <200GT

RYA: Yachtmaster Offshore or Ocean Commercially Endorsed <200GT CoC

IYT: Master of Yachts <200GT

MCA STCW: <200GT Master (Yachts) CoC

Usually on vessels under 200GT (up to approximately 30 metres), the captain would have a minimum of a Master 200GT CoC, with three to five years' intensive deck and boat handling experience on vessels of this size, ideally with a good working background in engineering.

With a smaller number of crew on this size vessel, there would be a requirement for dual roles, and the captain needs to be a hands-on "master" of all operational areas onboard. In some cases, this can also include the catering.

VESSELS <500GT

MCA STCW: <500GT Master (Yachts) CoC

On vessels over 200GT but under 500GT (approximately 30 to 50 metres) the captain would hold the Master 500GT CoC as a minimum. With five to seven years' experience on similar sized boats, ideally working up from deck crew level for more concentrated expertise. On vessels of this size, it is vital that the captain be fluent in safety management systems (SMS) and all aspects of shipboard operations.

VESSELS <3,000GT

MCA STCW: <3,000GT Master (Yachts) CoC or STCW Master (Unlimited) CoC

Merchant Navy STCW: <3000GT Master CoC
Captains on vessels over 500GT and up to 3,000GT (approximately 50 to 80 metres) would hold the Master 3,000GT (Yacht) or (Unlimited) CoC, normally with in excess of seven to 10 years on vessels of this size, with a higher managerial background.

VESSELS >3,000GT

MCA STCW: Master (Unlimited) CoC

To qualify as captain on a vessel over 3,000GT, you must have attained the Master (Unlimited) CoC (STCW 95 II/2), with rank of captain taking approximately 10 to 12 years of study and sea time. The captain would have extensive global knowledge and maritime expertise. 

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