

The Crew

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CAREER • TRAINING • TECHNOLOGY • MONEY • OPERATIONS • ADVICE



REPORT

THE PERFECT CREWMEMBER

Our survey reveals the requirement to re-evaluate the expectations of, and those placed upon, today's crew.

KEEPING UP WITH TRADITION

Captains of classic yachts offer their thoughts on the responsibility to preserve traditionalism on board.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

What happens when a yacht's owner is also its captain? We hear from those in this unique position.

THE CREW CURRICULUM

We hear what new courses and amendments to existing courses would benefit the crew industry.



‘WEEDING OUT’ OR ‘SELECTING IN’?

– WORDS BY LAURENCE LEWIS

With so many complaints from captains about the attitude and skillset of today’s junior crew, what is the responsibility of the recruitment agent in preventing those unsuited to this industry and who leave after a few months, causing crew turnover, from just ‘giving it a go’? Laurence Lewis, director of YPI Crew, looks at the role of the recruitment agent when it comes to those brand new to this industry.

When *The Crew Report* approached me with the latest topic – the responsibility of crew agents in preparing entry-level crew for the industry and our role in weeding out entry-level crew unfit for the industry – I struggled to find an angle; something was bothering me. Yet this was the assigned topic, so I’d better give it some serious thought.

Of course, as recruiters we understand and witness first-hand the frustration and disappointment of captains when they give a newcomer a chance for a season but are then told a few weeks into the job, in the middle of a charter, “I don’t know what it is; I think it’s not for me. I am handing in my notice.”

We have all seen it and, when it happens, recruiters across the board are just as annoyed as the captain, as for us it means doing the job twice, which is never thrilling. For the captain, of course, the implications of having hired a fickle candidate lacking resilience are vast and, as I am writing to an informed and captive audience, there is no need to expand on the subject.

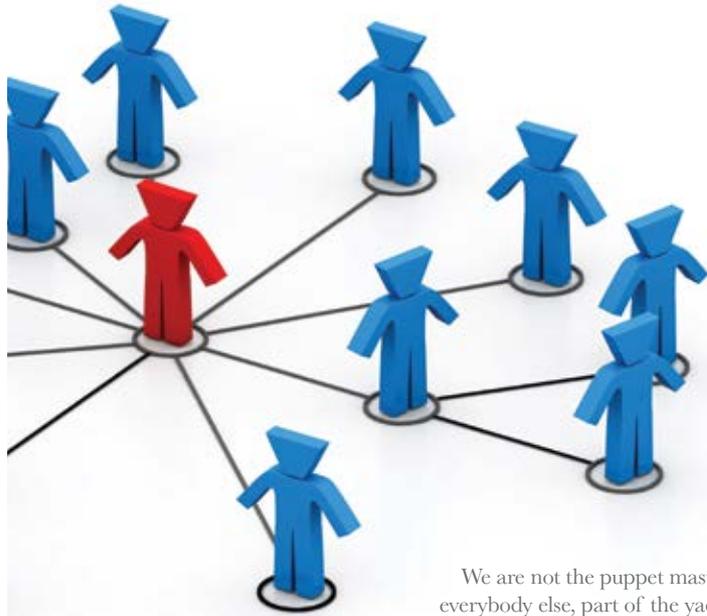
The fact that in our specific industry the job descriptions can at times border on delusional doesn’t help.

This feeling of being let down is, of course, both understandable and logical. The bottom line is nobody wants this scenario to happen; nobody gains from it, so can we get better at separating the wheat from the chaff in the recruitment process of junior crew?

What’s bothering me with the above question is that it is bad logic. It’s based on the fallacy that the issue is to weed out unsuitable candidates when the problem is that it’s so difficult to source great candidates. Ask any heads of companies how they feel about the availability of true talent (not candidates); the problem is widespread, on shore and offshore, and of course the fact that in our specific industry the job descriptions can at times border on delusional doesn’t help.

Attracting talented people who are genuinely interested in the industry is the true challenge; people with passion and drive, commitment and an understanding of team spirit. Recruiters are not magicians; we can’t pull out of our hat an army of perfect junior stewards and stewardesses. If we could, we would – trust me! Professionally presented with an ever-ready smile and pleasant disposition, bi-lingual, impeccable pre-yachting track record, a hospitality background, wine knowledge, sewing skills, good laundry skills and so on; where are they all?

As the middleperson who connects candidates to yachts, the role of a recruiter is, of course, to dispense advice to both clients and junior crew. What we are not, clearly, is responsible for the type and quality of candidates our industry attracts. »



We are not the puppet masters – we are like everybody else, part of the yachting equation. My experience after 12 years at YPI Crew is that the great majority of newcomers in our industry are bright, interesting, curious, open-minded, healthy, sporty and often already well-travelled individuals. As a rule, the lackadaisical 20 year olds out there don't even get as far as entertaining the idea of joining yachting. So, as an industry, we are not doing badly; on the contrary.

Getting back to the initial question about weeding out unsuitable junior candidates, we can think about those only interested in an optimised pay cheque with large tips, a selfish outlook and no thought about their fellow crewmember who will have to work twice as hard after their departure and before a replacement is found. The key to successful recruiting is switching the focus from job responsibilities and skills, which is not the right approach, to finding the best fit as a person. So I am throwing the ball back to us recruiters but also to heads of departments and captains. Are we asking the appropriate questions during the interviews? Are we talking too much instead of listening to what the candidate is saying?

Skills can be learned and certainly, as the industry is getting more structured, there are a myriad of courses that newcomers can take to learn the trade.

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But what we need to discover is the personality hiding behind the CV. Here are a few pointers, in no specific order:

- Why are you interested in this industry?
- What is your experience of living in a community and sharing a room?
- Give me three adjectives describing your personality and explain why.
- How would your friends or previous boss describe you?
- What's the toughest thing you've ever done?
- What achievement(s) are you most proud of?
- Have you experienced pressure at work and deadlines? What were they?
- For sure, you will make mistakes. We'll notice these and show you how to correct them; how will you take that?
- What experience do you have of being part of a team at work, playing sport or at school or university?
- When was the last time you had to go outside your comfort zone? How do you relax and de-stress?
- How would you solve this problem? [provide the candidate with a scenario.]
- The job is for the season and midway, while we are busy with guests, you realise you miss home and the industry is not for you; what do you do?

The above questions can help in making the right choice, but at the end of the day recruitment is not an exact science. The best we can do is get a sense of how a candidate thinks and how the person will tackle work obstacles. Are we 'weeding out' or 'selecting in'? I know what my answer is, but that's because I also know that my glass is half full. ■

TO COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE, EMAIL LULU@THESUPERYACHTGROUP.COM WITH SUBJECT: TCR 70 WEEDING OUT OR SELECTING IN?