

Moving Up: Lead Deckhand to Officer

As a lead deckhand with several seasons under your belt you will no doubt relish the prospect of more responsibility onboard as an officer. Laurence Reymann (left) and Joey Meen (right) address the paperwork and practical experience needed to make this transition.



The General Skills & Attitude

Whether it is a promotion from within the ranks or through joining a new yacht, going from lead deckhand or bosun to mate or officer is going to be an important step in your career.

This is going to represent a huge leap in terms of responsibilities and you will automatically start to look at the yacht in a different way. Gone are the days when you would keep your head down. The professional in you will come to the forefront as by now yachting is your career and you are slowly starting to define what type of captain you will one day become.

As mate/officer you will become an integral part of the running of the yacht and will have the captain and chief officers' trust plus have an active role in the in developing or maintaining the work ethic onboard the yacht. You are going to be the link or bridge between the captain and the rest of the crew whilst also having more contact with guests.

To achieve this transition successfully, you will need to have attained a level of maturity and ability to think on your feet. You will need to have a global vision: How is the yacht presented? Are all the tenders well looked after? You will do your rounds to ensure the decks are well laid out for the guests. You will start thinking about the weather and how it affects the decks and the guest activities. You will think about the watersports management. Your role will be about leading, delegating and communicating.

With the title and the certification, you will of course have the enormous responsibility as an officer of the

watch (OOW) on the bridge, doing night watches and navigation. You will develop your administrative and budgeting skills, and keep on top of new rules and regulations.

You may be a mate with one deckhand below you or you may be a second officer on a larger yacht. In any case, you will be exposed to all of the above aspects, some more than others depending on the size of the yacht. What counts is that you will need to embrace the new challenges facing you.

The Paperwork

A lead deckhand will normally already have completed the Yachtmaster qualifications, either the certificate of competence (CoC) Yachtmaster Offshore or, better still, the Yachtmaster Ocean. You should least have the minimum experience up to this level.

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) or International Yacht Training (IYT) Yachtmaster Offshore will qualify you for Master <200gt (Yacht) limited to 150 miles from shore (unlimited distance with the Yachtmaster Ocean CoC). For vessels over 200gt, it will qualify you to be a mate or third officer.

You are required to complete both the theory and practical elements and pass the appropriate exams. The MCA recognises both the Yachtmaster Offshore and Yachtmaster Ocean CoCs completed either with the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) or with International Yacht Training (IYT).

The various codes of practice for commercial craft are described in the

Large Yacht Code 2 (LY2) and other relevant publications by the MCA. These describe in great detail the minimum qualifications for skippers and crew. The rules are complex and have many variable conditions; the table to the right provides a brief summary. However, the original text should always be referred to.

To move from lead deckhand to officer or mate might require you to extend your training to the next level by completing the MCA OOW 3,000gt (Yacht) CoC qualification, ideally with the chief mate endorsement.

The fundamental entry requirements to applying for your MCA OOW 3,000gt (Yacht) Notice of Eligibility for your MCA Oral Exam are:

- Formal record of sea time of 36 months' yacht service plus 365 days' sea service (refer to MSN 1802 for full details).
- With the completion of the OOW (Yacht) Training Record Book (TRB). (Note: Not required if you can provide evidence of 36 months (1,096 days) of actual days at sea on vessels of at least 24m.) The (Yacht) TRB could take up to three years to complete. For more experienced yacht crew, the MCA will accept the TRB completed in no less than 12 months, so start this as soon as possible in your career.
- The Yachtmaster Offshore theory and CoC qualifications.
- Basic STCW 95 modules (STCW A-VI/1-1-4).
- Valid ENG1 medical. (It might be

OPERATION AREA (nm from a safe haven)	VESSEL CATEGORY			
	<24m & <200gt	>24m BUT <200gt	>24m & 200–500gt	>24m & 500–3,000gt
CAT 2 (60nm)	YM Offshore Coastal Skipper First Aid	YM Offshore Mate First Aid (MCA) Engineer	Master (500gt) Coastal Skipper Medical First Aid Engineer	Master (3,000gt) OOW Medical First Aid Engineer x 2
CAT 1 (150nm)	YM Offshore Coastal Skipper Medical Care Engineer	YM Offshore Coastal Skipper Medical Care Engineer	Masters (500gt) YM Offshore Medical Care Engineer x 2	Master (3,000gt) Chief Mate Medical Care Engineer x 2
CAT 0 (unlimited)	YM Ocean YM Offshore Medical Care Engineer x 2	YM Ocean YM Offshore Mate Medical Care Engineer x 2	Master (500gt) OOW YM Offshore Medical Care Engineers x 2	Master (3,000gt) Chief Mate OOW Medical Care Engineers x 2

wise to do this first before you spend money on any courses, as you cannot be a watchkeeper if you are colour-blind or suffer from certain types of diabetes.)

You will also require the Advanced Sea Survival for Yachtsmen, GMDSS General Operator's Certificate, General Ship Knowledge and OOW Navigation & Radar to be completed before you take your MCA OOW 3,000gt (Yacht) Oral exam.

You can apply for your chief mate endorsement either at the same time as you apply for your OOW notice of eligibility (NoE) or after your OOW oral exam and issue of CoC. This is easily done with a few more courses, and this time without the need for an MCA oral exam. You need your Yachtmaster Ocean Theory, Yachtmaster Ocean CoC, Advanced

Fire Fighting and Medical First Aid.

Also, remember that for any applications, revalidations or similar, you will need a formal record of your yacht service. All your yacht service and sea service must be logged in an officially recognised logbook or discharge book, backed up with testimonials.

Remember, it is not all about the ticket. Moving into more responsible positions it is essential you have the experience and maturity to meet the requirements for your increased level of responsibilities of assisting the captain and possibly running the deck department.

The course content within the MCA OOW qualification or chief mate modules do not cover any essential leadership and management training, so it might be wise to seek additional courses that will increase your level of expertise,

communication skills and mentoring abilities – as well as accounts and budgeting.

Furthermore, with the higher level of security these days, it might be sensible to complete the ISPS Security Officer and ISM Safety Officer courses. It could certainly be a requirement for an officer to hold these qualifications on larger vessels. And it looks good on your CV too. ■

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