Short staffed

*Laurence Lewis offers advice and tips on how to recruit
in a candidate short market*

An important part of our job as recruiters is to share intelligence on trends in the market and to advise on how best to adapt to new environments. As 2016 is upon us I would like to give you three tips on how to successfully interview and recruit in what we have today, a candidate short market.

The perceived notion that there are not enough engineers, chief stewardesses, pursers, officers, chefs, well crew in general will create a dash for talent and it is critical that as an employer you are first of all aware of this and secondly, equipped to deal with this.

Before I go into details, let me reassure you that the yachting industry is not the only sector affected, far from it. Last October I attended a few seminars in London organised by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation REC and it was clear that the UK faces a major skills shortage in all sectors, apart from oil and gas. This is true in many other European economies too. Skilled people are at a premium right now and companies are having to pay more to attract and retain staff. The yachting industry is no different.

Top candidates and let's face it, others too, will have more choices, more jobs to chose from which means competing offers. So, in order to have your offers accepted you will need to develop skills in influencing and convincing candidates to accept your offer. I know, there's something frustrating about this, however we must accept the world as it is and find solutions. This is of course also where your recruitment agency comes into the equation, recruiters are middlemen and as such are here to assist both parties in crafting the best job offer acceptable to all. We are here to help you.

When you are recruiting, there are three important tips to follow. The first tip is that the perfect candidate does not exist, yes, there are exceptions but what I am saying is don't drag out the recruitment process in the hope to find that unicorn crew member. You will put off suitable candidates you have already interviewed who will accept other offers. If what is holding you back is a skill gap, look at organising some training to bring the candidate up to speed. Of course, attitude and cultural fit have to match your yacht but in any job description there are elements which can be compromised on, you need to identify these.

The second tip is don't procrastinate; Time is Not on your side. If you see a great candidate, the likelihood is they have a few interviews planned. Be ready to move fast and listen to your recruiter. We are specialists who spend our days interviewing and checking references, most of the time, we know best. So if your recruiter tells you that you must interview this candidate quickly, you must do so or be prepared to lose the candidate and the recruiter's attention.

My final tip is to prepare your interview and make sure that whether it's you, the captain or your head of department the message is clear and consistent with a positive vibe. We have seen candidates turning down great jobs on yachts with excellent captains because at second interview stage the head of department was stressed and disengaged with his job and colleagues. Candidates need to feel excited about joining your yacht. Preparation is the key and if heads of department are involved with the process, discuss with them what your hiring strategy is and how you want to sell the job, the yacht, the programme, what the good points are and what the challenges are. This starts with a clear job description which sets up your expectations from the beginning. If there are problems with the jobs, if for instance, there has been a high crew turnover, explain the situation briefly and elaborate on the steps you have taken to change things. In a nutshell, all involved in the recruitment process have to sing from the same hymn book.

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