

The Superyacht Report

BUYER

Stefanos Macrymichalos, CEO, IYC

“The current brokerage business is an unsustainable model and the number of players needs to be reduced.”



BUSINESS

The latest insight into social security registration and false termination claims for crew operating in French waters.

OPERATIONS

Professionalism and premiums

TSR invited a cross-section of experts for lunch to discuss whether greater crew professionalism should have a downward effect on insurance premiums.

DESIGN

How an academic case study unearthed underlying principles that influence superyacht design for the Millennial generation.

FLEET

The Coatings Market Growth Report

An insight into the market’s potential, with commentary from the experts.

OWNER

A powerful exclusive that reveals just how vulnerable a client’s money can be during the transaction process.

TECHNOLOGY

Coatings focus

Paint covers our entire technical section, with articles on ceramics, antifouling and the raft of regulations governing the sector.

When will we learn?

Steve Monk, managing director at Da Gama Maritime, continues what is becoming a powerful operational narrative – critiquing the industry’s blame culture and highlighting why managers should be openly backing up their captains.

ABOUT STEVE MONK

MANAGING DIRECTOR

DA GAMA MARITIME

FAVOURITE JOB

TWO YEARS INSTRUCTING AT US NAVAL ACADEMY, ANNAPOLIS

GREATEST NAVIGATIONAL CHALLENGE

TAKING A TYPE 42 DESTROYER INTO OBAN FROM THE SOUTH

MOST ENJOYABLE NAVIGATIONAL CHALLENGE

TAKING HMS ARK ROYAL IN/OUT OF GREENWICH, LONDON



I know of several incidents where vessels ran aground, causing more than one million euros of damage, but these have never been made public.

Let's be honest, incidents and accidents happen more regularly than we're led to believe in the superyacht industry. Whether these relate to individuals or the yacht, it's human nature to make a mistake and, sadly, at the time of writing we've just been made aware of another death [*Germania Nova*].

But major incidents covered by accident investigations aside, why is it that the details of so many never make it to the wider community so we can learn? I'm not suggesting mass hysteria and a witch-hunt, with opinionated views on social media 30 seconds after one side of the story is out. However, we need to be able to identify where there's a problem, be it a failure in regulations, standards, design, build, layout, equipment, procedures, training, capability, responsibility or anything else.

Many comparisons are made to the airline industry when it comes to safety, and, to make one more, when pilots make a minor error of judgement (not serious enough to warrant an investigation) they are encouraged to report it for two reasons: firstly, it prevents a formal investigation being made against them; and, secondly, it allows others to learn. We already have something similar in the maritime community by the name of CHIRP [discussed in the Operations Guest Column in Issue 176], but how many incidents have been reported from superyachts?

Why doesn't this happen? In my view, there are a number of reasons, none of which helps us, including confidentiality agreements, a blame culture and lack of support for the individual. As far as

I'm aware, no one deliberately enters the industry to cause an incident, to injure themselves or others, or to be prosecuted for wrongdoing. Personnel join yachts for a career, which means they need to go through a variety of courses to achieve competence and, by putting this into daily practice, they will hopefully learn good routines and procedures to maintain safety.

If the regulators want certain procedures to be followed, it's likely to be for a good reason. It therefore falls on management companies and captains to develop the necessary procedures with associated risk assessments so they're specific to that vessel. Crew then need training and off we go. However, when something happens that identifies a problem or results in an incident where something was missed, it needs reporting, a follow-up, lessons identified and, more than likely, the industry should be made aware. This allows others within management or command to look at their own procedures, to recognise they may have the same problem, and to have time to do something about it.

I know of several incidents where vessels ran aground, causing more than one million euros of damage, but these have never been made public. There were so many lessons the command team identified, and management gave them the opportunity to look at their procedures and learn, but what about the rest of the industry? Management revealed nothing, flag didn't release anything and the owner most likely hasn't discussed it at parties. Subsequently this, like many other incidents, gets brushed under the carpet and we wander over it blindly,

for it to no doubt happen again. Is this mentality actually any good to anyone except the yards that do the repairs (but don't talk about it)?

Isn't it time we got away from the attitude where captains and crew are afraid to put their heads above the parapet and talk about an incident? Of course, there are some aspects that don't need to be discussed, but where lessons can be learnt, discussions should happen. Management should openly and confidently back up their captains and support them (after all, they probably employed them), while also explaining why and what's being done about it to owners without fear of being sacked. This would demonstrate confidence in setting a high standard in reviewing the operation of the vessel, which means spending more time working alongside the crew and not simply piling unnecessary pressure on them with administrative burdens.

Similarly, owners need to be made aware when they purchase a yacht, particularly a new build, that it's not as simple as giving the keys to the crew and expecting that they're going to know everything about the vessel, the equipment and methods of operation within days of walking on board. They need time to learn, to practise, to train, to improve and to perfect, in order to provide the level of service they and owners will be proud of.

Too many incidents are taking place daily, and will continue to do so until we break the current attitude and work together to protect the vulnerable, support the team and identify what needs changing to make things safer. Surely, then, everyone benefits. **SM**