

Mentoring

...in the Maritime Industry

Murray Goldberg, Founder and CEO, Marine Learning Systems Inc

By many estimates, as much as 70% of professional knowledge comes from various forms of informal learning. There are very few forms of informal learning as effective and personal as mentoring.

Mentoring is particularly applicable to the maritime industry where practices and traditions are deep and varied. It is one of the most effective ways of transferring this knowledge from one generation of mariner to the next. In addition, the maritime industry is in desperate need of attracting new, bright, young mariners. Raising awareness and knowledge of the industry through the availability of career mentors and role models can help meet this need.

Despite these values, the availability of mentoring can be limited in the maritime industry. At issue is the isolation of being at sea, and the small size of most crews. When mentoring in the maritime industry does happen, it is typically short-lived because one of the participants sooner or later ends up on a different vessel or different shift. Fortunately technology has provided some solutions which are discussed later in this article.

What Isn't Mentoring?

Before discussing what mentoring is, it is important to understand what it is not. Mentoring is not training. Training and mentoring have different goals, teach different knowledge, and require different techniques and tools.

Training should be formal, structured, standardized, and well analysed. Its outcomes should be reliably and validly assessed. Mentoring, while extremely valuable, is not formal, structured, standardized nor well analysed. Its outcomes are rarely assessed. Mentoring and training work together - neither is a substitute for the other.

Then what is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a confidential, trust-based, voluntary relationship between a mentor (someone with significant experience in some area) and a protégé (someone who

either wishes to work in that area, or is working their way through the ranks). The idea, of course, is that the mentor is able to provide guidance based on his or her experience to help the protégé make more informed professional choices.

Mentors are role models, advisors, supporters, leaders, motivators, network enablers and sources of wisdom, experience, and inspiration

The most important characteristics of a good mentor, other than expertise and experience, include a genuine desire to be helpful, good communication skills and patience.

Good mentoring relationships and interactions have a number of characteristics:

- **Long-Lived:** The value of a long-lived relationship is that the mentor has much more intimate knowledge of the personality, goals and context of their protégé. It is this intimate knowledge that enables the mentor to provide appropriate guidance.
- **Personal:** The implications of the mentor's guidance to the life of the protégé are significant, and the personal connection creates a responsibility to the protégé to respect this significance. Likewise, protégés need to feel as though they can trust their mentor, and this trust only comes from respect and, for lack of a better word, intimacy.
- **Unconflicted:** Mentors should never be in a position of conflict or influence with respect to their protégé. While it is true that many successful mentoring relationships do not obey this rule, such relationships can never reach their full potential due to the constraints placed on open discussion.
- **Mutual benefit:** Mentoring benefits for the protégé are generally well understood. But interestingly, mentors also invariably find these to be highly satisfying and rewarding experiences. For myself, as a past mentor to a very

large number of university students, I found that being a mentor challenged me, kept me sharp, and kept me connected with, and informed about the needs and issues of young academics.

Clearly these four characteristics, while arguably some of the most important, only touch the surface of what makes a healthy mentoring relationship.

Conclusion

Mentoring is a timely and valuable activity in the maritime industry, yet it is underutilized due to operational constraints. All mariners and shore-side workers are encouraged to share their expertise by engaging in mentoring relationships whenever possible. The benefit to all participants and to the industry as a whole is enormous.

For further information, contact Murray Goldberg at: Murray@Marinel5.com

Alert!

The International Maritime Human Element Bulletin

Editor: David Squire, FNI

Published by the Nautical Institute, the world's leading international professional body for qualified mariners

www.nautinst.org
Membership info: sec@nautinst.org

The opinions expressed herein are those of the editor or contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of The Nautical Institute or Lloyd's Register.

The Nautical Institute and Lloyd's Register, their affiliates and subsidiaries and their respective officers, employees or agents are, individually and collectively, referred to as 'The Nautical Institute and Lloyd's Register'. The Nautical Institute and Lloyd's Register assume no responsibility and shall not be liable to any person for any loss, damage or expense caused by reliance on the information or advice in this Bulletin or howsoever provided, unless that person has signed a contract with an entity from The Nautical Institute and Lloyd's Register for the provision of this information or advice and in that case any responsibility or liability is exclusively on the terms and conditions set out in that contract.

Design & artwork production by:
Jacamar (UK) Ltd +44 (0)23 92410108

Printing by: Indigo Press +44 (0)23 8023 1196

Website by: Jacamar (UK) Ltd +44 (0)23 92410108

This bulletin is distributed and promoted with the kind support of:
Global Maritime Education & Training Association (GlobalMET); International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSA); International Institute of Marine Surveying (IIMS); Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST); International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA); NewsLink; Royal Institute of Navigation (RIN); Royal Institution of Naval Architects (RINA)