The need to hype sea life glamour

Joe Fonseca - Mumbai

The dire shortage of ship board officers world wide which is set to increase literally got the captains of the Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions who came together for the GlobalMET seminar racking their brains trying to figure out how best to overcome the
The need to hype sea life glamour

The dire shortage of ship board officers world wide which is set to increase literally got the captains of the Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions who came together for the GlobalMET seminar racking their brains trying to figure out how best to overcome the problem. The organisers - the Global Maritime Education and Training Association (GlobalMET) - prudently selected the theme 'A Rewarding Career at Sea and Beyond & a Challenge for MET' for the March 15, Mumbai seminar with the hope of coming up with some satisfactory answers.

The captains of the Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions who came together for the GlobalMET seminar which was held at the MTI auditorium of Shipping Corporation of India at Powai, Mumbai discussed the dire straits the shipping industry finds itself in with the officer shortage.

GlobalMET also known as the Global Maritime Education & Training Association comprises of over 100 members in 33 countries formed with the objective to promote, develop and support, in the spirit of co-operation, the common interests of its members in all matters concerning the development and quality of maritime education and training institutions.

As the officer shortage becomes more pronounced manning companies world wide have become a disturbed lot. Capt Ajay Achuthan, Principal of MASSA Maritime Academy drew attention
to the report of the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) which has predicted in its manpower update series a shortage of world shipboard officers to be escalating to 46,000 by 2010. Global shortage of officers thus offers a golden opportunity to India, not only in terms of employment opportunities worldwide but also in terms of foreign exchange earnings, Capt Achuthan informed.

He called for a national strategy wherein the Indian merchant marine industry be given a brand image. He proposed the setting up of an information and guidance portal which would provide details on study and employment opportunities in India. He advocated the cause of providing support to aspirants from rural and urban areas and creating an awareness of the role played by merchant navy.

Already the three national associations viz., INSA, FOSMA and MASSA have initiated measures to spread awareness with the blessings of the industry and has held road shows in 9 cities, he said. The lesson we learnt from participating in various fairs was that there was very poor awareness of the careers in the merchant navy. The age of youth joining needed to be relaxed and parent influence played a major role in decision making. Students who have a pass grade in any degree should be accepted.

Professor A. W. J. Tony Fernandes advised that there was a need to be more dedication in the training fields which would enhance the standard of education and enhance the reputation of the sea life. For attracting more youth there was a need to Empower trainers to be dedicated mentors. Quoting Wayne Dyer he said Authentic empowerment is the knowing that you are on purpose, doing God's work, peacefully and harmoniously. Be of service, whether you make yourself available to a friend or co-worker, or you make time every month to do voluntary work, there is nothing that harvest more of a feeling of empowerment than being of service to some in need.

It is possible to create an empowering environment despite the negativity around us he informed. The word mentor is conspicuous by its absence. In early days for those joining the sea there was no certification process, no institutes, no books yet they learnt to operate ships. It was mentoring that played a major role.

A mentor is a helper who cares about the cadet and the seafarers. It is akin to a father and son relationship. To be a mentor we need to selfless and go that extra mile put in that extra effort.

We need to believe in ourselves and GlobalMET India chapter is a right move in this direction, stated Capt S. Bhardwaj, Vice Chancellor, AMET University, Chennai. The directorate gives accreditation, fine. But the various universities so far have merely been giving certifications without really knowing anything about our jobs.

It is by projecting the myriad opportunities ashore that could reverse the trend of youth staying away from marine career Capt Y. Sharma of IMTC felt. The role of MET is to facilitate transition from Ship to Shore, he stated. As many skills required for onshore jobs may not be actually related to our job profession.

Taking another approach Ms S Poonam a senior psychologist of Applied Research International propounded that the current scenario for personnel working in the shipping industry is one where individuals are expected to perform at a high level under stressful, competitive and non-compromising conditions.

The consequences of incorrect decision making or poor performances are serious and the role of Human Factors in terms of successful operations has been highlighted at the highest international level in the shipping industry, she stated. IMO also recognises that the Human Element is the most important factor in safe and efficient functioning of vessel.

It is therefore necessary to have psychometric profiling which can prove to be useful tool in organisational and human resource application in the shipping industry.