

Leadership and Team Development

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Superyachts are staffed by professionals who have spent many years building up expertise and qualifications in their respective fields. They do not work in isolation but as part of a crew, which outside of the marine industry would be referred to as a team.

Improving the team work onboard your yacht would deliver:

- The highest level of customer service
- Improved safety
- Reduced levels of interpersonal conflict
- Improved job satisfaction and reduced crew turnover.

In business and sport the ability of teams to function effectively is considered of such importance that a multi-million dollar team building industry exists to pass on the lessons of successful team behaviour. For a variety of reasons these lessons are not widely examined by superyacht crews. But a crew does not necessarily make a team and whatever your success, all crews would

benefit from a basic understanding of the building blocks that go into maintaining a successful team. I recently spoke to a crewmember of a large motor yacht, who informed me that in 4 months of working onboard, nobody had mentioned the word team. Needless to say many issues were bubbling under the surface – and not surprisingly he was looking for work in a more enlightened environment.

I am always mindful of the experiences of a friend who found himself part of a group of 4 who were attempting to reach the N. Pole in a race. They quickly worked out the key factors for success; they needed to be superfit, have excellent food, understand the terrain and have the best possible kit. These factors were quickly mastered and off they set. All went well until within a few days of their objective one of the party fell through the ice. While it's bad enough to be in freezing water, things can get a whole lot worse when you get out and wind chill attempts to turn you into a solid block of ice.

His companions erected the tent, saved him from hypothermia and sat awaiting his return to strength so that they could realise their objective. But the team-mate had lost his nerve and looking around at his companions announced that he 'owed them nothing' and wished to summon immediate rescue via the sat phone. It was then that the reality of the situation hit my friend. They were not a team, they were just 4 individuals walking towards the N.Pole as fast as they could. Without anything to unite them other than the final objective, the team imploded and was later flown off the ice.

What might have saved the team and what lessons does this offer up to the crew of a large yacht? Well in any environment that is committed to excellence

getting the best out of each other is essential to success. Research consistently shows a positive correlation between high levels of team cohesion and the performance of both the team and the business. Leaving this to chance, or human nature, is not likely to foster the links that unite successful teams in adversity. Adversity comes in many forms: it can be the difficult charter or demanding owner, it can be the large periods of downtime between guests, it can be separation from family and friends.

If you need training to run an engine room, navigate a ship, cook and provide service at the highest level – then it should not be a surprise to know that you need training to be a great team. A group of people is not a team, the process needs facilitation. Teams need to be created, massaged and maintained.



How effective is your team?

Looking at the raft of companies and literature which cover team building can be daunting and time consuming. Complex models of team behaviour may help university lecturers but are unlikely to assist busy yacht captains. Nevertheless, you need a framework from which to analyse your team

performance. Let's start with this simple model. Mark your team's efficiency out of 100 in the following team behaviours.

- ✓ easily understood mission statement
- ✓ a set of agreed team behaviours
- ✓ working to a clear plan
- ✓ roles and boundaries understood by all
- ✓ clear, effective, communication
- ✓ high morale
- ✓ respected leadership

If any of these behaviours are missing, or not articulated effectively in your team, then you are unlikely to be exhibiting high performance team behaviour.

Ask some questions – Team 360

The fastest way to understand the effectiveness of your team is to allow all members of the team to answer the same questions. Known as a Team 360 the answers are collated and the results shared collectively. Typical questions to which respondents agree or disagree might be:

- We listen to each other at team meetings
- The team is receptive to new ideas
- Real differences of opinion are debated not suppressed
- Personal friction rarely occurs between team members
- We trust each other

- When we agree to a decision everyone will commit to it and defend it
- Our leader manages our team meetings well

Team 360's also ask simple open ended questions such as:

- What actions would make the team work more effectively?
- What actions tend to inhibit the effectiveness of the team?

Feedback - sharing information with the team

Having canvassed your team for its opinions you will have confirmed what you are good at - and where you need to improve. The very act of asking "how can this team be more effective" can have a cathartic effect on the crew of a yacht. The next stage in team development needs careful management.

Having asked your team for its opinions, you will doubtless be set some challenges meeting their expectations. Everybody must be prepared to change a little - from Captain to Catering staff. How do we make sure that this change is aligned and likely to bring an outcome that is positive?

Creating Agreed Behaviours

Great teams openly talk about the kind of attributes that are going to make a successful and happy environment – these attributes are often referred to as 'behaviours'. What kind of behaviour is acceptable in your team, has this ever been discussed? Codifying team behaviour is a way of allowing individuals to shape and control their own working environment. The team creates a vision

of itself and lists the behaviours that will most likely see that vision become a reality onboard. The following vision / mission statement and behaviours were

successfully used by a team of 18 racing a yacht around the world in the 2004/-05 Global Challenge.

Safe – Happy – Faster

We will strive to be a constantly improving team, committed to performance and capable of gaining a podium place. This will take place in a safe and happy environment, which values everyone.

Our agreed behaviours are:

- Safety – think first act second
- On time, all the time
- Honesty – Respect – Tolerance
- Excellence in all we do
- Inspire Pride and Praise
- Continuous Improvement
- Communicate – Resolve – Forget
- Performance Focus

Living out your Behaviours

So you have measured your team against a simple model and gauged its effectiveness. You have surveyed the individuals and found out how they feel about working within the team. Leading on from that, you have constructed a

vision of how your crew could operate and negotiated a set of agreed behaviours that will see you become those people - Great Work!

You now need to reinforce your behaviours on a regular basis. At weekly team meetings simply ask yourselves “Are we being the kind of people that we said we could be?” Check your performance against the agreed team behaviours. By repeatedly coming back to the core behaviours, agreed by the team themselves, the team evolves towards a common purpose which unites them through thick and thin.

Great teams increase outputs, increase co-operation and increase job satisfaction. Science aside, intuitively, we all know that the underlying proposition is correct. Cohesive teams are more productive than uncohesive teams.

