

MSC'S 98% CREW RETENTION RATE: INSIGHT FROM A LEADER OF SEAFARERS

10/11/2017



Seafarers today are increasingly attracted to sophisticated training, professional development, and long-term employment.

That's according to a survey by MSC Shipmanagement, the Cyprus-based unit of MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company, a leading global container line.

The results of the biannual crew engagement survey, which polled more than 4,500 cargo-ship seafarers, have validated a decision by managers several years ago to introduce top-class leadership training, a range of vessel-handling simulator classes and soft skills coaching.

"MSC has been investing significantly in the career skills of seafarers, creating a culture of training and development," Prabhat Jha, Group Managing Director of MSC Shipmanagement, said in a keynote speech at the [CrewConnect 2017](https://maritime.knect365.com/crew-connect-global/) conference in Manila in November. "Our people believe that once they have been trained, it is their responsibility to train other people."

Training & professional development

MSC's training program ranges from Management Development Programs and executive coaching to crew self-evaluation and 360-degree feedback on managers. Ship handling courses are developed in-house and are adapted to suit vessel sizes and the experience of Masters who enact simulations of navigating the Suez Canal or turning into large, busy ports. This has helped MSC Shipmanagement retain 98% of crew it employs.

MSC has created 10,000 seafarer jobs in developing countries in the past 7 years and employs more than 14,000 crew at MSC Shipmanagement in Limassol, Cyprus and its sister ship management company in Sorrento, Italy.

Some 95 percent of respondents in the crew engagement survey said that training others is everybody's duty. More than 90 percent said that they are committed to personal and professional growth and that MSC is a leader in the maritime industry in providing good working conditions.

MSC rigorously and scientifically measures crew commitment. This year's survey recorded strong emotional commitment to working for MSC, which helps predict future performance onboard ships. More than two thirds of crew expect to work at MSC forever and just 4 percent said they expect to work at MSC for only three years or less, according to the survey.

A world of opportunities

"We're telling them: come aboard and we will give you a career and a chance of promotion," Jha said. "MSC offers a world of opportunities."

MSC uses a third-party survey company, Biennial, to perform an independent crew engagement survey every two years, as well as taking feedback from every crew member upon disembarkation after a voyage at sea.

Punctual monthly wage payments, Internet availability and a culture of safety onboard container vessels are also significant criteria for seafarers assessing their employer, according to the survey.

Technology onboard

With the impact of digitization and technological change on seafarers forming a key theme of the conference in Manila, Jha highlighted that 9 out of 10 crew said that MSC was good at using technology to improve day-to-day work.

For example, MSC's market-leading software crunches information from vessel movements with "big data" analytics, helping crew work seamlessly with shore-based colleagues. Meanwhile, Internet access is more readily available today versus two years ago, the survey found, after a disappointing score in the last survey prompted management to improve connections onboard.

While some seafarers in the industry want to retain a sense of independence and freedom, moving between different shipping lines and temporary work agencies, MSC Shipmanagement values long-term commitments and is pleased to note that more than 90 percent of crew report a strong feeling of "belongingness" to the company.

Seafarers are people, not commodities

Even while technology is developing rapidly and the container shipping industry is actively exploring the potential of artificial intelligence and robotics, MSC continues to value and reward people, Jha said.

"To MSC, seafarers are not commodities to be swapped between companies. We offer permanent employment to those who are willing to learn and pass on their knowledge to others."