

The Crew

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REPORT

RESPECT

Do crew still respect owners? One captain reminds crew why owners are, and should be, at the top of the chain.

SPLASHING THE CASH

Do you earn more or less than average? What do you spend your money on? Our Superyacht Golden Ticket results are in.

KEEPING SECRETS

We look at the nature of non-disclosure agreements and their impact on crew career progression.

CREW VS GUESTS

What happens when guests don't have the right licences to use PWCs? The issues when crew have to tell guests 'no'.



IN THE SHADOWS

WORDS: BRYONY MCCABE

An increasing number of yachts, particularly those under 60m, have very limited space to carry sufficient tenders and toys and to accommodate large enough beach clubs and spa areas. For those owners content with this size of yacht, one way to negate this issue is to have a shadow vessel. Bryony McCabe looks into this developing sector of the industry and the type of crew needed to work within it.

The demand for both bigger and better superyacht toys and itineraries that include far-flung destinations has seen the emergence of a unique sector of the superyacht industry. A trend for shadow and support vessels, the purpose of which is to unburden the mothership from the storage of water toys, tenders and helicopters, has seen new opportunities emerge for superyacht crew. But what does it take to work on such vessels and how does it compare to the mainstream superyacht industry?

Captain Laurent Blikaast was given the opportunity to start his captain's career on a shadow vessel as the build captain on board Lynx Yachts' 24m *YXT*. "*YXT* was special because she was built to carry guests as well, so the difference between her and your average superyacht was big," he explains. "On a support vessel, guests are not normally on board so you can be a little more casual than you would be on a superyacht – you have the time to work.

The unique thing is that you don't make any decisions about the programme or the itinerary which are all finalised and organised on the master vessel between the captain and guests, so you have a little less responsibility and less organising to do."

Lynx Yachts build capable baby shadow vessels and its founder and chairman, Slim Bouricha, explains the main difference for crew working on board a shadow vessel compared to those working on a superyacht. "On the main yacht, the crew is providing its services to the guests, whereas on a shadow vessel the crew is providing its services to the main yacht and they only have an indirect exposure to guests," he says. "While some shadow vessels have accommodation for extra guests, others have no guest accommodation at all and in this case the crew is fully focused on providing logistical support to the main yacht as well as making sure all toys and tenders are available as needed. The work pace is different on a shadow vessel; »

"The amount of owner-crew interaction will be typically much less, but the pressure will be 100 per cent on to perform perfectly while everyone is waiting for the next toy to be delivered." – Michael Schutte, founder and principal naval architect, Brilliant Boats



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Opening page and left: YXT
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“On a support vessel, guests are not normally on board so you can be a little more casual than you would be on a superyacht – you have the time to work.”
– Captain Laurent Bliekast, *Heliad II*

there are moments of long waiting time and moments of very high workloads. Fast response is expected from a shadow-vessel crew.”

Michael Schutte, founder and principal naval architect at Brilliant Boats, is responsible for the naval architecture on board submarine-carrying motoryacht *Thunderbird 2 (TB2)*. He advises that the main difference between 24m *TB2* and a normal superyacht is the relative density and complexity of the machinery on board. “Because this vessel carries all of the equipment needed to support and service a submarine, despite its relatively small size, the crew’s engineering requirement is much more than would be suggested by her length,” he explains. “*TB2* is an extreme example, but this would be typical on any shadow vessel as they seem to be mostly about carrying toys.”

Consistent with the above, Schutte adds that the crew need to be expert boat wranglers as well as having the engineering nous to ensure everything is ready to go so that they are able to respond quickly to spontaneous requests, which includes cranes and fuelling systems as well as all of the tenders and toys themselves.

“Clearly each shadow vessel will have its defined missions and the crew need to be chosen to properly support the activities dreamt up by the boss,” Schutte advises. “For *TB2*, the crew needed to be certified to maintain and operate the submarine as well as the tender and various skills to find and evaluate underwater features. As yacht

toys become more and more complicated – today we are talking aircraft, submarines and fast chase boats – the crew will need to be doing a lot more than just washing down and polishing to be able to show up at the transom of the mothership with working toys at a moment’s notice.”

Bouricha agrees: “It is important that the crew has enough skills to maintain all the toys and tenders and it is also very important that the crew has training and experience for safety practices. I also believe that some offshore or commercial work experience is a plus.”

But what kind of person do you have to be to enjoy working on a shadow vessel? “Of course, life on board has more to do with who you are with and how the vessel is run than the vessel itself, but there is certainly a different dynamic on a support vessel,” says Schutte. “The amount of owner-crew interaction will be typically much less, but the pressure will be 100 per cent on to perform perfectly while everyone is waiting for the next toy to be delivered.”

While Schutte admits there may be less visibility for the crewmembers overall, they are on centre stage under a spotlight when they are ‘on’. “I imagine 97 per cent of the time they feel bored, thankless and invisible,” he says. “But then this grunt work is interspersed with three per cent abject terror each time the radio goes off.”

Bouricha is confident that shadow vessels bring a whole new dimension to yachting and, as a result, a whole new world of

opportunities for crew. “At times it can be frustrating for those who feel there is a lack of interaction with guests. Some would feel that guests tend to be more grateful to the crew on board the main yacht,” he admits. “One should never forget that working on a shadow vessel is very different from working on a yacht, but working on a shadow vessel can be really exciting because the crew provides the real fun to the guests of the mothership.” ■

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LULU@THESUPERYACHTGROUP.COM
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