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ENHANCEMENT OF SEAFARER LOYALTY TO THE COMPANY IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Although global economic crisis, rising competition among shipowners forces them to have vessels and fit the vessels with qualified seafarers. From the view point of shipowners and managers, the problem is recruiting and employing competent seafarers and keeping them employed by the same company regularly. Seafarers work at the shipping company during a contract term and they have chance to change the company upon completion of the contract. However, flexible wage scales and competition between companies make it difficult to recruit qualified crew members and maintain their loyalty for the company.

The main focus of this paper is to search for the methods to improve seafarer recruitment and employment practices in order to manage seafarer's loyalty for the company consistently. This study also aims to investigate shipping and ship management firms' viewpoints on seafarer related problems at their countries.

The study will focus on 5 developing maritime countries such as Turkey, Ukraine, India and Philipines. To provide the approaches of the shipping companies in terms of seafarer recruitment and promotion related problems, a questionnaire has been applied to crew managers of shipping companies and/or crew recruitment managers of manning companies. The paper concludes with proposals on certain convenient alternative(s) for shipping and manning firms on future decisions in the light of the research.

Keywords: Seafarer, Recruitment, Manning, Loyalty

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FARLI ÜLKELERDE GEMİADAMLARININ KURUMA BAĞLILIĞININ GÜÇLENDİRİLMESİ

ÖZET

Global ekonomik krize rağmen, gemi sahipleri arasında artan rekabet, onları gemi almaya ve bu gemileri kalifiye gemi personeli ile donatmaya zorlamaktadır.

Gemi sahipleri ve işletmeciler açısından bakıldığında, ana sorun uygun gemi adamlarını temin etmek ve kalifiye personele iş vererek onların aynı kurumda düzenli olarak görev yapmasını sağlamaktır. Gemiadamları bir şirkette bir kontrat dönemi boyunca çalışır ve kontrat süresinin dolmasına müteakip başka bir şirket ile anlaşma şansına sahip olurlar. Bununla birlikte değişen maaş skalaları ve şirketler arasındaki rekabet; kalifiye personeli temin etmeyi ve onların şirkete olan bağlılıklarını korumayı zorlaştırmaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın ana odak noktası, gemi adamlarının teminini geliştirmek ve onların çalıştıkları kuruma olan bağlılıklarını düzenli kılmak için gerekli uygulamaları incelemektir. Aynı zamanda söz konusu çalışma, farklı ülkelerdeki farklı denizcilik ve işletmecilik firmalarının personele ilişkin sorunlara olan bakış açılarını da araştırmaktadır.

Bu kapsamda çalışma; Türkiye, Ukrayna, Hindistan ve Filipinler gibi gelişmekte olan beş denizcilik ülkesine odaklanmaktadır. Araştırmanın amacına yönelik olarak, denizcilik şirketlerinin personel temini ve terfilerine ilişkin sorunlarla ilgili yaklaşımlarını belirlemek amacıyla, şirketlerin personel yöneticilerine/müdürlerine bir anket uygulanmıştır. Çalışma, denizcilik şirketleri ve işletmecilerine çeşitli alternatiflere uygun öneriler ile sonuçlandırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gemiadamı, İşe Alma, Yerleştirme, Bağlılık

HOW TO DEAL WITH GLOBAL CRISIS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES? EXIGUITY AND INADEQUACY OF THE SEAFARERS

1.INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing ship fleets around the world has constrained shipping companies to find capable seafarers and employ them in the company permanently. However, different companies apply different competition enforcements for finding and keeping seafarers. Some of companies pay high salaries, some of them reward crew members according to performance on board and some of them give priority to seafarer's family and help them when needed. All of these applications may vary from cultures to cultures. That's why different enforcements of different cultures have been investigated in this research.

Theoretically, the development of a global labor market means employment opportunities for all qualified seafarers world-wide beyond their national fleets. However, patterns of employment vary greatly with seafarer nationality. This depends on a number of factors, e.g. the demand for seaborne transportation in the prevailing environment of world trade, linkages between crew managers, manning agents and national labour markets, and forms of multinational crewing patterns adopted by shipping companies. (Wu, Winchester, 2005).

From an analytic viewpoint, employment opportunities are shaped by the relation between national and global labor markets which, from the seafarer's perspective, raise the question of how they approach and respond to the recruitment opportunities within these two markets. Conventional approaches to the analysis of labor market for seafarers tend to remain at the level of the nation state. Analyses of supply imply that the global labor market can be understood as the sum of all seafarers from individual countries worldwide. Irrespective of the significant disparities in the availability, comparability and quality of information across nation states, this approach is unable to reflect both the difference in the demand preferences of international shipping companies and the movement of seafarers between national and foreign fleets (Wu, Winchester, 2005).

From the view point of crew and recruitment managers, the main problem is finding out qualified seafarers and keeping their loyalty to the company continuously. Collecting and analyzing information from the crew managers in four countries, not only create a complete picture of crew managers' and crew members' tendency, but also provide an aspect for the methods and applications that used in different cultures and countries.

2. SEAFARER

The seafarer's occupation can be segregated by skill/ qualification level, and by departments onboard ship, e.g. deck, engine. The competencies needed to obtain a given qualification have been embodied in STCW'95, which came into force on 1 February 2002. This International Maritime Organization (IMO) Convention regulates the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping that all member countries are required to achieve in their national administrations (STCW'95). It supersedes an earlier convention, first introduced in 1978 (STCW'78). There are two principal officer classifications, deck and engineer. The former train to operate and direct the vessel, whilst the latter train to manage and maintain the engines and other equipment vital to the safe operation. In addition, there are a number of other officer departments, such as radio officers, pursers or hotel managers (these are limited to cruise ships); but the most significant are the deck and engineer. So, a seafarer is either a rating, a cadet, or an officer (Glen, 2007).

A definition of seafarers must take into account that they live in confined spaces, crisscrossing maritime space around the world, circulating in long-term contracts between home and work, and maintaining the transnational links mentioned earlier. Seafarers have to be seen as being bound in both a global economic system, where they are competing for jobs with other nationalities, and as social beings, working apart from their families. These occupational features are the basis for a common identity that has led to an almost 'cosmopolitan' attitude among all nationalities of seafarers (Borovnik, 2004).

3. SEAFARER'S RECRUITMENT

The contemporary seafarer labor market is among the most globalized of any sector. Shipping companies can hire seafarers from almost any part of the world, fly them to their vessels to work and fly them home at the end of their contract. Fleet personnel managers are driven by company and shareholder demands for profit maximization to search for the cheapest possible sources of seafarers deemed by them to be of acceptable quality. Today this process is well-organized and takes place both via networks of crewing agents offering third party services and sometimes more directly via satellite company offices (Sampson, Schroeder, 2006).

Today's seafarers are commonly recruited from different world regions through networks of crewing agents and abroad modern international vessels it is common to find crews composed of men and women from several dozen countries (Sampson, Zhao, 2003).

Hence, the contemporary shipping industry is staffed with multinational crews in international waters under multinational management but outside national boundaries. Seafarers are recruited worldwide by using formal and informal recruiting mechanisms (Borovnik, 2004).

According to 94th International Labour Conference in 2006, International Maritime Labour Convention defined the features of recruitment and placement as below:

Standard A1.4 – Recruitment and placement:

- Each Member that operates a public seafarer recruitment and placement service shall ensure that the service is operated in an orderly manner that protects and promotes seafarers' employment rights as provided in this Convention.
- Where a Member has private seafarer recruitment and placement services operating in its territory whose primary purpose is the recruitment and placement of seafarers or which recruit and place a significant number of seafarers, they shall be operated only in conformity with a standardized system of licensing or certification or

other form of regulation. This system shall be established, modified or changed only after consultation with the ship owners' and seafarers' organizations concerned (www.ilo.org).

4. SEAFARER RECRUITMENT APPLICATIONS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

A global labour market for seafarers has emerged, irrespective of developments in the transition economies, with developing economies such as the Philippines and India drawn into it on the supply side and the demand side largely driven by labour shortages in the developed economies of the West and Japan, and the newly industrialized economies of east Asia. (Wu, Morris, 2006). Nevertheless, four countries – India, Philippines, Turkey and Ukraine - that are under study here have been drawn into this global local market and they are major actors in the seafarer supply side.

According to data presented in BIMCO, in 2005 seafarers in Philippines, Turkey, Ukraine and India are among the top 10 labour supplying countries

Table 1: 4 out of top 10 Seaman Labour Supplying Countries

	1995			2000			2005		
	Officers	Ratings	Total	Officers	Ratings	Total	Officers	Ratings	Total
Country									
India	12000	31000	43000	12930	30375	43305	13932	29763	43695
Philippines	49430	195352	244782	52089	241129	293218	54892	297632	352524
Turkey	15000	65000	80000	15000	55376	70376	15000	47177	62177
Ukraine			38000			37000			

Source: BIMCO/ISF., (2005), Manpower update

4.1. Filipino Seafarers

The Filipino labor diaspora is one of the largest crew supplier in the world. In one of the world's most globalised industries, it is a curious fact that nearly one in every three workers at sea is from the Philippines. Over 255,000 Filipino seafarers, by far the largest national group, play the world's oceans and

seas, primarily as deck hands, engine room oilers, cabin cleaners and cooks aboard container ships, oil tankers and luxury cruise liners (McKay,2007). Filipinos were recruited initially to serve as lower ratings on deck and in the engine room. In 1976, of the 45,000 registered seamen, only 10 per cent were officers, and these were at the junior rank of 4th engineer and 3rd mate. By 2000, only 15 per cent of registered Filipino seafarers were officers, and in 2003 only 8.5 per cent had reached the senior officer level (Amante, 2003).

The Philippines' seafaring industry has created productive opportunities for thousands of Filipino marine officers and ratings in foreign-going vessels and has pumped into the economy foreign exchange in the form of salary remittances which contribute significantly to the dollar reserves of the country. Despite the emergence of other developing countries as alternative sources of seaboard labour, the Philippines remained as the premier supplier of seafarers for the international merchant fleet. The ensuing recruitment, deployment and actual employment of seafarers as well as other skills are however regulated by the Department of Labour and Employment, in particular the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). (www.unescap.org).

Equally sharing responsibility with the POEA in the recruitment of seafarers are well-organized and professional manning agents which provide services from negotiation to actual selection and sending-off of contracted seafarers. While these agents basically supply crew for vessels, they are also ship owners and/ or shipping companies engaged in shipping services such as ship chartering, brokerage, import and export trade and cargo handling. They actively participate in tripartite decision and policy-making in such areas as training, mobilization and compliance to international standards governing the maritime industry (www.unescap.org).

4.2. Indian Seafarers

India has positioned herself as a major human resources-supplying nation to the maritime industry. As a result of the initiatives taken by the government in encouraging private participation in maritime training, the number of maritime training institutes under the assurance of quality training by the Directorate General of Shipping DG(S) rose to 128 in 2005. India's share of global maritime human resources rose to 26950 officers and 75650 ratings, comprising an estimated 6% of the world's seafarers. India ranks twelfth in the world in the global supply of officers and fourth in the supply of seamen. In the

GATS 2000 negotiations, India can commit to open up Mode 3 that is, liberalise access to foreign investors in maritime transport services sector and in return ask for liberal access to Indian officers and seafarers in the labour markets of developed countries.

India is not a large shipping nation in terms of its merchant fleet and at the beginning of 2006 it was ranked 20th in terms of its fleet size in gross tonnage (gt) by flag of registration, constituting 1.16 per cent of the world fleet size. The Indian shipping fleet's share in the carriage of India's own overseas trade has in fact been slipping over the years (www.planningcommission.nic.in)

Indian officers are particularly sought after by foreign ship owners because of their training, discipline and seafaring traditions. A combination of favorable factors have been responsible for the country's success in increased employment of their seafarers. The country has several well established maritime training institutions which are staffed by experience trainers and provided with modern training equipment from several sources including the government, foreign and local ship owners and agents as well as the strong seafarers' unions. The system of administration and certification and recruitment of seafarers is progressive and has been well accepted internationally. The industry has received strong support by the government which has been able to work hand in hand with both employers and labour unions. The presence of many foreign shipping companies operating through their agents in the thriving port-cities of Bombay and to a less extent at Calcutta is an additional favorable factor (www.unescap.org).

4.3. Turkish Seafarers

Despite being a peninsula, maritime transport has not traditionally been a strong industry in Turkey. The capacity of the Turkish Merchant fleet grew from 5.8 million dwt to 10.9 million dwt between 1987 and 1997. Similarly, the total number of vessels (over 150grt) expanded from a total of 830 vessels in 1985 to 1197 vessels in 1997. The average age of the Turkish fleet over 150 grt was 23.5. This represents a relatively old average age for any fleet (Parlak, Yildirim, 2006).

Assuming that all Turkish flagged ships are manned by Turkish nationals, the total seafarer employment on Turkish vessels is estimated to be about 40.000 according to Akten in 1998 (Akten 1998: 61). This figure was estimated on the basis of the number of minimum personnel to operate a ship safely according to technical, managerial and legal requirements, the number and size of the Turkish merchant fleet, reserve seafarers and those working for the foreign flags (Parlak, Yildirim, 2006).

In terms of recruitment patterns and methods, it is possible to distinguished two groups of companies regarding their recruitment. In the first group, which mainly consists of those companies that have secure lines and freight, ships comply with good standards of safety and employment conditions. These companies are few in terms of quantity and constitute only the 5 percent of the shipping companies. The second group is mainly composed of smaller companies that tend to apply the lower standards of employment and safety. Most of the Turkish shipping companies fall into this category. Officially there is not any licensed crewing company or manning agents in Turkey (Parlak, Yildirim, 2006).

4.4. Ukrainian Seafarers

Ukraine is the 3rd largest seafarer supplier to the world's maritime fleet: the estimated number of Ukrainian seafarers is 45,000 (20,000 Officers and 25,000 Ratings). The same source indicates approximately 15,000 seafarers engaged on the national flag vessels and Ukrainian vessels trading under a foreign flag and 30,000 Ukrainian seafarers (13,00 Officers and 17,000 Ratings) are employed on the foreign flag vessels. The supply of seafarers to the world therefore a vital element of Ukraine's foreign earning (Patrick Bond, 2007).

Ukraine is member of IMO since 1995, subsequently ratified the STCW Convention in 1997, and was included in IMO "White List" in 2001. Ukrainian seafarer training and certification is recognised at the end of year 2005 by about 50 countries. (Maritime Training Ukraine Progress Report, 2006)

In 1995 Ukraine was the 22nd in the world ranking of the most important maritime countries. According to the domicile of deadweight tonnage - currently Ukraine is not in the top 35. Many reasons have been postulated for the loss of the fleet but its decimation was probably the cause for the Ukrainian

seafarers seeking employment in the fleets of other countries (<http://www.iamu-edu.org>).

Ukraine has a vast and diverse system of waterways and lakes that includes the rivers Dnestr and Dnepr the latter linking Kiev to the sea. In addition, Ukraine has a long tradition of seafaring and as to Odessa, its maritime history dates back more than 200 years. It is not surprising therefore that Ukraine's heritage has produced a well-established system for the seafarers training. It seems the philosophy of the government considers it more important to provide graduates with the full education rather than merely to produce 'vocational' specialists (<http://www.iamu-edu.org>).

5. METHODOLOGY

In order to test tendency of crew managers of shipping companies and/or crew recruitment managers of manning companies a questionnaire has been applied in July 2009. This form has been developed by using focus group method. This group consisted of crew managers and seafarers. Then questionnaire was conducted to 10 big companies at each four countries (Turkey, Ukraine, India and Philipines). The companies were selected according to number of ships owned or managed and number of crew members that managed. Participant companies have/manage 5 vessels or more and number of employed crew members in these companies are more then 100. Total 50 quationnaires have been sent to the 50 participants and all of them have sent back completed forms that were taken to evaluation. Questionnaires were evaluated by using SPSS.

6. FINDINGS

To find out seafarer recruitment and employment practices in order to manage seafarer's loyalty for the company, 10 compaines were selected from each of the 4 developing maritime countries. 50 questionnaire forms them returned as filled forms and they were evaluated by using SPSS 14 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

In terms of position, all the respondents were crew managers' of maritime companies in each four countries – India, Philipines, Turkey and Ukraine.

Table 2: Applications for keeping crew members loyalty to the company

	Turkish		Ukrainian		Indian		Filipino	
	Applies	Not Applies	Applies	Not Applies	Applies	Not Applies	Applies	Not Applies
1. APPLICATIONS BEFORE JOINING VESSEL								
Payment of stand-by wage which is calculated when crew is ashore	9	1	2	8	5	5	8	2
Sending crew members to the vessels which they prefer	6	4	9	1	9	1	4	6
Giving priority to ex-crew member's families when choosing new crew members	6	4	8	2	8	2	7	3
Giving importance to familiarization before joining o/b	10	0	9	1	9	1	10	0
2. APPLICATIONS DURING CONTRACT ON THE								
Payment of seniority according to crew members service at company	7	3	6	4	5	5	7	3
Credit facility and advance payments	8	2	4	6	5	5	5	5
Giving importance to general conditions at vessel	10	0	9	1	8	2	8	2
Having fitness center at ships	4	6	1	9	6	4	6	4
Let crew members to use ship's phone for communication	8	2	3	7	7	3	7	3
Having internet connection and let crew members to use	2	8	3	7	6	4	8	2
Supplying weekly e-journal to the vessel in crew member's	4	6	1	9	2	8	5	5
Supplying local magazines and journals by on signer crews	9	1	5	5	6	4	5	5
Supplying ethnic needs by onsigner crew members	8	2	2	8	7	3	5	5
Giving importance to quality of provisions	10	0	10	0	10	0	10	0
Supplying vessel's needs fully and on time.	10	0	9	1	9	1	10	0
Encouragement joining of crew's wives and children o/b	6	4	6	4	5	5	3	7
Giving importance to relationships with crew members' families when crews are o/b and support them	8	2	7	3	10	0	8	2
Payment of wages on time and correctly	10	0	8	2	8	2	9	1
Payment of premium for life insurance or health insurance	5	5	9	1	4	6	9	1
Signing off crew members on time and not longer their contracts	6	4	9	1	9	1	10	0
Giving training and job developer seminars to crew	9	1	7	3	7	3	6	4
Giving notice to the vessel on birthdays of crew members and giving information to the masters to celebrate them	3	7	3	7	4	6	4	6
Giving notice to the vessel on religious holidays and national ethnic holidays for celebrating them	9	1	3	7	9	1	5	5
3. APPLICATIONS AFTER SIGNING OF THE								
Payment of contract bonus	8	2	3	7	6	4	3	7
Calling crew members or inviting them to the office in order to thank them for their service o/b and planning their next contract.	10	0	10	0	8	2	8	2

Source: Author

25 applications were selected for keeping crew members loyalty to the company by using focus group technic. These applications are listed in Table 2. According to answers about the applications; all nations give importance to “familiarisation of crew members before joining to vessel”, “giving importance to general conditions at vessel”, “supplying local magazines, journals and ethnic needs by on signer crew members”, “giving importance to quality of provisions”, “supplying vessel’s needs fully and on time”, “giving importance to relationships with crew members’ families when”, “payment of wages on time and correctly”, “payment of premium for life insurance or health insurance”, “signing off crew members on time and not longer their contracts”, “giving training and job developer seminars to crew”, “giving notice to the vessel on religious holidays and national holidays for celebrating them”, “calling crew members or inviting them to the office in order to thank them for their service o/b and planning their next contract”.

According to Anova test regarding to applications in different countries; there are some differences found between countries on some of applications. There are some differences between Ukraine and other countries on having fitness center at ships. From the viewpoints of respondents, while other countries give importance to have fitness center at ships, Ukrainian companies give less importance to keep fitness center at ships. Also there are some differences between Ukraine and India about supplying local magazines and journals by on signer crew’s mother tongue. Ukraine and India give more importance to supply local magazines and journals by on signer crew’s mother tongue. Additionally, there are some differences found between Turkey, India and other countries on supplying local magazines and journals by on signer crew’s mother tongue; Turkey and India give more importance to this application than other countries.

When the applications are evaluated in three sections as “before joining o/b”, “during contract” and “after signing off” , Table 3 shows the results. Regarding to applications “before joining o/b”, and “after signing off”, there is no significant differences between countries. When we consider the applications “during contract”, there are significant differences between Turkey and Ukraine. India and Filipines have similar applications.

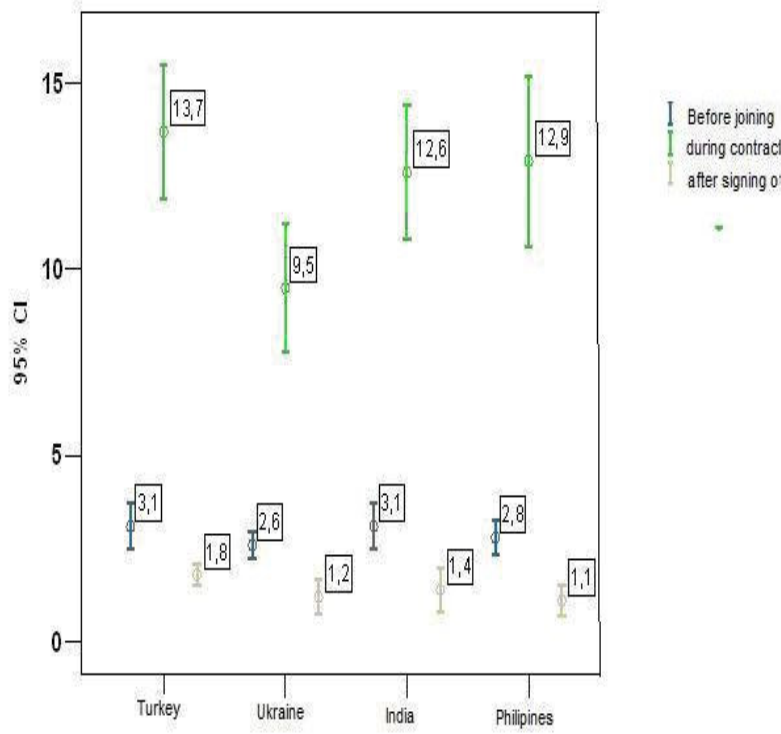


Figure 1: Applications in three sections

Source: Author

When respondents are asked to give suggestions or solutions to keep crew member's loyalty to the company, the following ideas came out;

Some of Indian respondents' ideas are listed as below:

- When a crew member joins one of the vessel, we call up his family and inform them that he has reached safely. Likewise when crew member sign off we make it appoint to enquire about their stay o/b and request them to share their experiences. In cases when we are informed that a crew members family back home needs assistance we offer to help out with their problems. We plan to hold seminars and crew members who have sailed with us will be invited to attend these and share their

experiences with us. During these seminars we will anchorage them to put forward their suggestions so as to have a mutually healthy working atmosphere between company and crew members and also crew members themselves. The difficulty is; sometimes it's not easy to find suitable crew members to meet the requirements. The reasons for this could be either the wages offered are not agreeable to the crew member, his requirement of contract duration or type of vessel may not be available. Permanent solutions to these problems unfortunately can not be found. As most of the times these problems arises when the demand for qualified crew members is far greater then those actually available.

Some of Turkish respondents' ideas are listed as below:

- Wage payment duirng 12 months, keeping demand and complaint lines o/b o get crew members' ideas about vessels and respond their needs accordingly, paying some bonuses on national feasts and christmas.

There is no any additional idea was indicated by Maldivian and Ukrainian respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper has been to find out viewpoints of crew managers in different countries on keeping crew member's loyal to the company. It can be said that all nations have different ideas and applications on this matter. Different nations and cultures apply different applications to keep seafarer's loyalty.

The limitation of the study is the number of filled questionnaires as 50; the respondents of the questionnaire were 10 companies from each 5 countries. In the future studies, more number of participants will provide more comprehensive aspects and assessments on keeping crew member's loyalty to the company.

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