Diversity in the Maritime Sector - The benefits of Cross Cultural Training

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Overview of Culture in the Maritime Sector

- 80% of international trade; higher % developing countries
- Most seafarers come from “labor supplying countries”
- 65% of the world merchant fleet use multi-national crews
- Over 10% of fleet staffed with crews composed of 5+ nationalities
- Social integration increases with number of nationalities in crew

“Ships with multinational crews function as miniature multinational societies with all the attendant problems with communication and racial tension”
Overview of Culture in the Maritime Sector

• Management must take into consideration dynamic and continuous changes while solving cultural identify issues

• Issues will impact
  – Productivity
  – Work Activity
  – Crew Cohesion
  – Alienation/Isolation
  – Communication
  – SAFETY
How does culture impact work?

**Negative:**

i. Loss of cultural contact
ii. Alienation, Social isolation (safety)
iii. Discrimination- affecting social and working relations
iv. Linguistic identify issues
v. Communication (risk/safety)

**Good:**

i. Promotion of idea sharing/creative problem solving
ii. Social interaction, diversity helps not hinder teamwork

“Cultural identity might be influenced by community size, cultural values, language, religion, communications and social networks”
What is culture?
Underlying Values and Assumptions of a Society?

Visible
- observable
  - concrete

Invisible
- assumed
  - suspected
Visible

- Observable, concrete parts of culture
- Food clothes, music, games, holiday traditions
Behaviour

- Social Behavior, Gender Roles, Family Structure
- Religion, Hierarchy
- We link values to behaviors, symbols
- Attach emotions to perceived values
Culture in the Workplace
Dimensions of Cultural Difference

- **Individual or Group** (individualism versus collectivism)
- **View of Power or Authority** (hierarchy versus equality)
- **Concern with Protocol** (formality versus informality)
- **Rules or Relationships** (rules prevail versus relationships)
- **Time** (linear versus cyclical)
- **Sense of Personal Space** (low versus high)
Personal Space and Physical Contact
Culture in the Workplace
dimensions of cultural differences

• Concept of power and power distance- *is an attitude towards power, inequality and attitude* (High versus low)

• Attitude towards uncertainty and the unknown

• The Concept of Status (Achieved versus ascribed)
Culture in the Workplace
Dimensions of Cultural Difference

• Communication - beyond the language barrier
  – Implicit versus explicit
  – Direct (low) context versus Indirect (high) context
  – Non-Verbal Communication
    » Gestures
    » Eye Contact
    » Conversational Style

Para-verbal- 55%, body language- 38%, words- 7%
Cross-Cultural Communication

- The sending and receiving of messages is an integral part of culture
- In cross-cultural context interpretation is more complicated
- Messages sent and received are done so through cultural context and filters
- Problems created by poor communication
Cultural Context

- My Idea
- My filters
- My Message
- Other persons Filters
- Other persons understanding

Filters

FEEDBACK

Source- Centre for Intercultural Learning
Language

- Speaking the same language does not mean that understanding/communication has taken place or that there is an understanding of culture.

- Practice being **active listeners**; Use communication techniques until both parties are in agreement.
In the context of the workplace......
Culture Shock - Adjusting to a New Environment?

- Living with room mates
- Sense of Isolation
- Language barriers
- Time Management
- Social time
- Distribution of work, new routines
- Food Rituals
### Stages of Cultural Adjustment

**Productivity and well-being**

- **Honeymoon Stage**
  - Initial enthusiasm
  - Positive attitude
  - Energy, Excitement

- **Culture Shock**
  - Discouraged, Homesick,
    - Tired, Negative,
    - Angry, Sick, Confused
  - Bored, Scared, Frustrated

- **Recovery Stage**
  - Interested in work,
    - Ask questions,
    - Routines
  - Sense of humour,
  - Less judgmental, Feel useful

- **Adjustment Stage**
  - More adventurous,
    - Seek new opportunities,
  - Feel motivated,
    - Seek company of others,
  - Acceptance of things that can’t be changed,
    - Assimilate the changes

**Reactive Strategies**
- Fight, Flight (withdrawal, isolation)
- Drugs, alcohol

**Proactive Strategies**
- Assertiveness,
- Strategic step back,
- Intercultural communication

*Source* - Centre for Intercultural Learning
Cross-cultural training in academic programs

- Analysis of Academic/Training institutes (60)
  - Wikipedia: Maritime Colleges by continent, country, etc.

- Assessed curricula/syllabi for ranges of cultural, communication, human development courses

- Found there were NO institutions delivering a course focused on inter-cultural issues and communication
What are the benefits of cultural training

• Reduces Culture Shock
• Creates Inter-culturally Effective Persons
• Increase morale and social interaction
• Increases collaboration and better working relations/communication (important for safety)
• Promotes cultural, religious tolerance
Definition of “Intercultural”

The term “intercultural” describes an attitude from which one discovers how to apply knowledge and develops appropriate skills as circumstances dictate.

David Le Breton
Profile of an inter-culturally effective person

1. Adaptation skills - IEPs have the ability to cope personally, professionally and in the family context with challenges of living and working in/with another culture.

2. Attitude of modesty and respect - demonstrate modesty about own culture’s answers to problems, respect others culture, knowledge and are more willing to learn and consult with others before coming to conclusion.

3. Understanding of the concept of culture - Have an understanding of culture and the pervasive influence it will have on life and work.

Source - Centre for Intercultural Learning
Profile of an inter-culturally effective person

4. Knowledge of countries and cultures - have knowledge of culture/countries and try to expand this knowledge

5. Relationship Building - possess good relationship building skills, social, personal and professional

6. Self-Knowledge - knowledge of one’s own background, motivations, strengths and weaknesses

Source - Centre for Intercultural Learning
Profile of an inter-culturally effective person

• 7. Intercultural Communication - effective intercultural communicators

• 8. Organizational skills - strive to improve the quality of organizational structures, processes, staff morale and promote a positive atmosphere in the workplace

• 9. Personal and professional commitment - have a high level professional commitment to the life assignment and the life experiences of another culture

Source - Centre for Intercultural Learning
Recommendations

- Provide Training (school and work environment, repeat!!)
- Promote language/cultural training and active listening
- Develop/promote policies regarding ethnic diversity/tolerance
- Recognize, celebrate and integrate diversity on vessels (food, music, religious celebrations)
- Role of Managers/Masters in supporting cultural differences
- Staffing consistencies, Coaching, Mentoring
- Focus on Commonalities
Culture
- shared with a group
- learned

Personality
- unique
- inherited and learned

Human Nature
- universal
- inherited

Source- Centre for Intercultural Learning
Thank you for listening......

Questions?