

The CMMA/Walker Wilson Project CSIRO Marine National Facility Voyage Managers Development Program 'RV Southern Surveyor'

A memorandum of agreement was signed in September 2007 with the aim to establish a joint project relationship with Walker Wilson Associates to provide learning, development and other behavioural programs as appropriate to further the CMMA objectives

WALKER WILSON HUMAN FACTOR PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- leadership development for senior officers of sea and shore operations
- The development of high performing ship/shore teams
- Managing and mediating conflicts
- Leading and managing stress and fatigue
- Organisational reviews of Australian port operations

THE INITIATING PROJECT

I had an initial research and design meeting in Hobart at the Marine National Facility offices with Captain Fred Stein, and a focus group of a Senior Scientist and two experienced Voyage Managers. The meeting examined the role, training needs and requirements of the Voyage Managers position on board the RV Southern Surveyor.

This was an opportunity to jointly badge this prestigious project with the Company. Deputy Federal Master Ernest van Buuren wrote: "This is a unique opportunity to be more relevant and involved in up to date thinking beyond our traditional roles. What it will do is enhance the image of CMMA as a viable organisation involved in well thought maritime specific programs offered by Walker Wilson."

THE CHALLENGE OF THE VOYAGE MANAGER'S ROLE

The Voyage Manager position is critical, multi-faceted, challenging and directly related to the success of research undertaken on the recently modified research vessel, 'RV Southern Surveyor' which is Australia's pre-eminent world class marine research facility.

The Voyage Manager ensures the vessel crew, staffed by P&O and the scientific staff, work together as a cohesive team to achieve scientific goals. There are significant accountabilities and pressures upon the scientific endeavours in 'one off' research voyages with time critical restraints, tightly prescribed plans and budgets.

REVIEW ON BOARD THE RV SOUTHERN SURVEYOR

I joined the vessel in MacKay in mid October 2008 for a one week voyage to Newcastle. Scientific swathing activity was planned. A chief scientist and his team were on board. It was an ideal opportunity to conduct interviews and become fully acquainted with the role of the Voyage Manager.



I had been deep sea with Blue Funnel for many years and had never been seasick then or any other time. My bunk in the lowest cabin forward changed that. It was known as the elevator cabin in a rough sea. I was physically sick in the middle of an interview with the second mate. We just worked out way through the heaving sounds. He was quite unperturbed. That was definitely a first.

The outcome of the research became input to a curriculum designed to reflect the changing roles of the Voyage Manager from a mainly technical and scientific support role to that involving managing the complex and challenging human factors in a research voyage.

FINAL SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT STAGE

I now had all the information necessary to design the Voyage Managers Development Program pilot with the aim "to deliver a pilot program to the Voyage Managers that will support the realization of high level of performance and cooperation between scientists and crew to ensure successful scientific outcomes."



Capt Ted van Bronswijk (top right) role playing.

In November 2008 we delivered the pilot program in Sydney. Six experienced Voyage Managers attended. The course content included:

- Day 1: Setting the scene and building high performing teamwork
- Day 2: Managing the OH&S environment
- Day 3: Management and Leadership
- Day 4: Conflict Management and Mediation
- Day 5: Managing the Human factors in Logistics

INPUT FROM OTHER CMMA MASTERS

I was very pleased to employ Captains Ted van Bronswijk and Bob McManamon as role players for the conflict/mediation sessions. They made the activity based upon real situations realistic. They drew out the talents of the participants and were very well received.

RESULTS

Considering the initial concerns of the Voyage Managers about having to participate in such an intensive and demanding pilot the evaluative feedback was very positive. The stage is now set to run the program again.

The entire project was jointly badged with the Walker Wilson Associates and Company of Master Mariners logos. ■

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