

Crews control



How do you guarantee that a ship's staff is ship-shape? **Tracey Kifford** asks Carnival Cruise Lines and Regent Seven Seas.

The success of a cruise line rests on its personnel. Read any passenger review of a cruise and it will mention ship staff – how nothing was too much trouble for the cabin steward, for example. More worryingly though, it might report that staff did not live up to expectations.

As a cruise line manager, it is important to bear this in mind. Staff training must be taken seriously and nothing left to chance. Your reputation depends on it, and there are plenty of other cruise lines out there.

World Cruise Industry Review talked to two of the cruise industry's major lines, Carnival and Regent Seven Seas, about their crew training programmes and policies.

Roberto Martinoli, executive vice-president of operations for Carnival Cruise Lines

'I go to all of these courses myself, and I enjoy them a lot.'

'I think we are the first cruise line to have training centres onboard the ship. Training programmes are quite diverse, with professional, safety, managerial, environmental and hospitality courses.

'To start with the basics, we have a language assessment for all of the crew – an English test. This is usually a formality, as real language problems would be screened out at the recruiting stage, but if there are problems we run language courses. We also run professional development courses for staff to improve their management and leadership skills. This is quite important on bigger cruise ships where there are a large number of crew. As some of the staff have risen from the lowest levels to what is effectively a management area, we feel we have to provide them with the skills to do their jobs more effectively. We think that by having our own training courses, we can give these people a better understanding of what we expect from them, and we can concentrate on the rules that we want followed properly.

Case study: training excellence

One of the most comprehensive crew training programmes has to be that run by Norwegian Cruise Line (America) at the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education in Piney Point, Maryland. This school has to be attended by all new NCL employees for safety and fire training and also crew preparation courses. The school passes out between 100 and 130 graduates per week. The courses last for three weeks and involve both gruelling physical tests and written examinations.

Courses include safety, interpersonal skills, job skills and training in the employee's speciality. The centre has every possible scenario for training, from its own working galley to state-of-the-art bridge and engine simulators. Every crew member from the captain to a housemaid is trained to be expert fire fighters in a whole week of fire and water safety training.

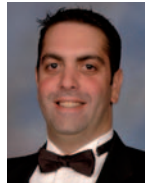
Safety training is seen by every cruise company as the most important aspect of crew education. The importance of safety was demonstrated in the *Sea Diamond* incident in April 2007 when the ship sank off the coast of the Greek Island of Santorini. Without the expert training of the 400 crew members, there could have been a catastrophe. Happily this was averted and 1,200 passengers were brought to safety.

'For new hires we do some training in the countries where we recruit. We also run what we call "carnival college" where, as part of our onboard training programme, we might put, for example, 15-20 trainee bartenders on a ship and give them on-the-job, hands-on training. This accelerates the training programme and introduces them to the ship and the way we do business. It also helps them develop skills, a rapport with passengers and confidence. We also send a lot of people on specific, professional courses that we cannot run on the vessel.'

'For senior management, we have shore-side training. We try to put together people from ships with people from the office for four or five days in university. It is extremely helpful because people get to know each other and understand much better the problems others face.'

'We find these courses extremely helpful, and I must say I go to all of them myself and enjoy them a lot. If you combine them with good managerial training, you create a win-win situation; you offer further education and also bring people together.'

Stephane Armengol, director of hotel operations for Regent Seven Seas Cruises



'The crew must learn to anticipate guests' expectations.'

'All our staff have to go through a comprehensive safety and environmental training course before they start work onboard ship. New hires will all go to a recognised training school in the country they are recruited from to learn the basics.'

'One of the most important aspects of training for us is cultural training, which means staff must be able to understand and interact with the passengers in a comfortable and informed way. They must also learn what the "regent experience" means, as this is the basis of our cruise product.'

'We also find it valuable to give small booster training sessions onboard the ship to groups of 60-90 crew members, on a weekly or sometimes daily basis for about

15-30 minutes, to recap on the 'regent experience' and deal with any problems. We find that training by supervisors for small groups onboard gives excellent and immediate results.'

'Regent Seven Seas is part of the Carlson Group, one of the largest hospitality companies in the world. It is based in Minneapolis, where the company's Carlson University teaches management and hospitality staff. A lot of the courses run at this school have been adapted for managers and captains to improve their leadership and management skills. Communication is vital, so that every crew member understands the culture of the cruise line and who they are dealing with.'

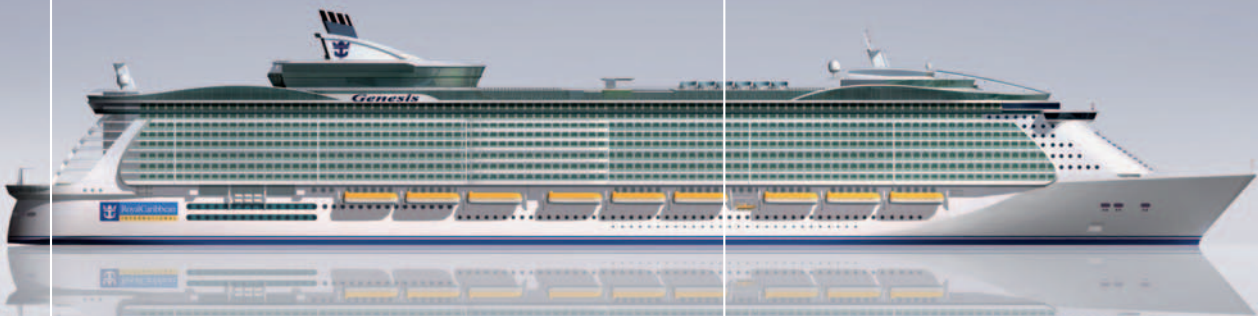
'Staff are trained to be in tune with what guests like and don't like and act accordingly, so there is a consistency of service. Guest profiles are built up and stored in our central database. When they re-book, as over 50% do, their profile is sent to the ship one month prior to their boarding and all their requirements are then geared to the profile. This is an invaluable tool.' *wc*

THE FULL PICTURE

In support of excellence

Kongsberg Maritime provides the new generation giant cruise vessel – the Genesis class – with an integrated technology that supports operational excellence. The integrated system solution combines safety and comfort for the passengers, with safe and efficient operation – qualities suitable for the world's largest cruise liner.

photo by Aker Yards



- > NAVIGATION
- > POSITIONING
- > MANOUVERING
- > AUTOMATION
- > DETECTION
- > COMMUNICATION
- > HYDROACOUSTICS

We are determined to provide our customers with innovative and dependable solutions that maximize marine performance.

www.km.kongsberg.com



KONGSBERG