

THE ART OF GREAT MENTORING

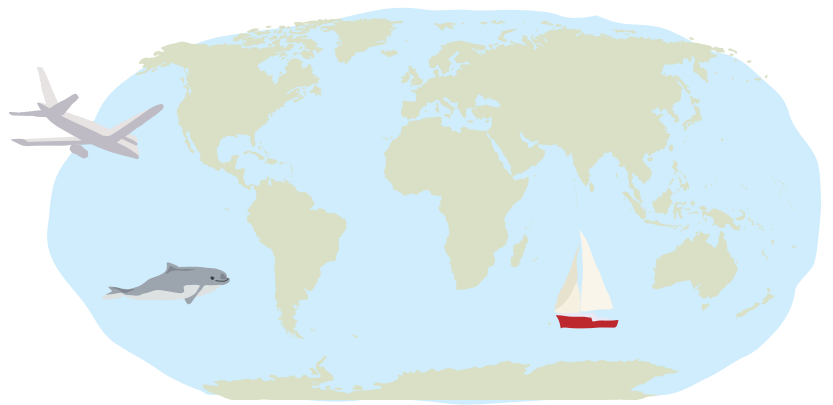
MENTORING IS ONE OF THOSE TERMS THAT IS OFTEN HEARD IN PROFESSIONAL CIRCLES BUT JUST **WHAT IS MENTORING EXACTLY**, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT AND HOW DOES IT WORK IN YACHTING?

WORDS **ALISON RENTOUL**

LET'S START BY looking at what mentoring is. A mentor facilitates personal and professional growth in an individual by sharing with them the knowledge, insights, skills, information and perspectives they have learned over the years. In yachting terms this relates to the informal training that occurs onboard over and above formal courses, where an understanding of the subtleties and practicalities of the job are transferred from experienced crew to those with less hands-on experience.

The relationship between a mentor and mentee is a developmental partnership in which mutual respect, rapport and trust develop over time. While mentors have a responsibility to be positive role models, the behaviour of mentees is just as important. Malcolm Jacotine, former captain of 64m M/Y *Lady Marina*, who has enjoyed mentoring many great crew over the years, explains: "It's a two way street: the mentor needs to have the confidence and attitude to want to improve people and the mentee must have the desire to learn. They must show an open mind and willingness to look at things in a different way with the ability to listen objectively."

Having been the recipient of some excellent mentoring that carefully prepared him to take his first command this summer, Captain Nick >



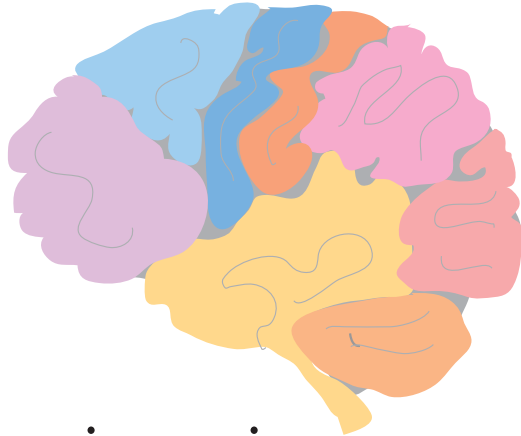
“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

Gandhi

> Simmons of 44m M/Y *Harbour Moon* agrees: “If you don’t enjoy learning, the mentor won’t be interested in giving their time to you. If you want to know everything they know, you can have that. But if you show no interest in the boat and what you can do for it, your mentor will show no interest in you.”

While the approach and dedication of the mentee is important, it is clear that being a good mentor takes practice too. One key rule of mentoring is that it’s essential to resist the temptation to solve problems or take over before the mentee has had a chance to first try and figure it out for themselves. As Captain Jacotine explains: “You have to give people the lead to experience things because that’s the way for them to develop, but it has to be done in a controlled way so you build their confidence. For example, to develop boat handling skills, the first time I show and explain how I do a particular manoeuvre. Next time I stand by their side and have them do it. Thereafter I progressively reduce the supervision until finally I move outside their peripheral vision so they feel they are alone but I am close enough to take over if it’s absolutely necessary. After each manoeuvre, an important part of the development process is to have a debrief where they can go through their actions and decision making process with me.”

One chief engineer of a 66m vessel explains that he manages the delicate balance of mentoring versus instructing by holding back on giving advice until it is absolutely necessary: “I don’t directly teach my second, I make him think for himself. If he says: ‘No, I can’t figure it out,’ I push him a bit further to see if he can.”



“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a push in the right direction.”

John Crosby

“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”

Albert Pine



Captain Simmons adds: “A mentor has to allow for you to build your own confidence and skills. It’s not about giving advice; it’s all about allowing the other person to develop. But you must also be ready to help, explain what is happening and why, as well as how to correct things rather than just telling them what to do.”

Unfortunately this kind of development takes time, which is not always available, as our chief engineer explains: “The problem is you can’t wait for the person to figure it out if, for example, the owner wants hot water right now. You have to fix the problem. You can’t say to the owner: ‘Hold on, I’m just seeing if the second engineer can fix it.’ Mentoring happens more in downtime, so there’s not always time for it on a busy charter boat.”

Steven Maynard, chief officer of 64m M/Y *Shahnaz*, believes mentoring is not a choice but an obligation: “It is the responsibility of the officers to ensure the deck crew are not just chamois pushers and deck scrubbers. I always ask what they want to get out of the industry and, if they are looking at it as a long-term career, I make sure they have a training record book (TRB) and regularly come to me to have it signed. This does take a little bit of effort but the TRB is an integral part of the MCA training scheme and most of the tasks are relevant to the job. It is the duty of the first officer to ensure the deck crew who are serious about progressing have the

> smoothly and efficiently and helps take some of the pressure off the captain.”

Mentoring also helps expand your networks, which becomes very important once you reach head of department or captain status where there is nobody above to approach when you need help. “Once you have a good mentor relationship, you never lose it. I can still ring my ex mentors and mentees now to discuss things like cruising plans and local knowledge. It becomes a really interesting and rewarding relationship as you grow,” says Captain Simmons.

While mentoring is currently quite common for exterior crew, it seems to occur less within other departments, and this could be for several reasons. One chief engineer explains: “If you have a third engineer, they can be more junior and it’s possible to mentor them because the pressure is not so great. But you need your second to be able to hold their own if you don’t want to be woken up in the middle of the night every time they have a problem on watch. It’s in your best interests to hire someone as highly experienced as possible rather than someone who needs developing.”

Likewise in the interior, some stewardesses come up through the ranks working first as sole stews on smaller yachts and go on to lead teams on larger yachts rather than work under someone who could mentor them, meaning they miss out on this opportunity. Although the forthcoming standardisation of interior courses (through the Professional Yachtsmen’s Association’s GUEST© framework) is aiming to address this, currently much of the core interior skills and knowledge are passed down through mentoring. So if you are not fortunate enough to land a job with a good mentor early on, you could take years to find out what others learn more quickly and easily from their superiors.

Ilze Jonker, chief stewardess of 35m M/Y *Stella Fiera* says: “When I started I only had one month working under someone before becoming a sole stew, so I had to learn a lot of things on my own the hard way over the years. I am lucky enough now to know many other chief stews so I ask them for advice when I need it, and I’m happy to help others too. This season I met a chief

“If each of us hires people who are smaller than we are, we shall become a company of dwarfs. But if each of us hires people who are bigger than we are, we shall become a company of giants.”

David Ogilvy



necessary tools and information.”

So if mentoring people is time consuming and takes effort, why would anyone shoulder this additional responsibility? The answer is that the benefits of being a great mentor are many and varied. For some, the personal satisfaction that comes from knowing you've had a positive impact on someone's professional and personal development is a great motivator, along with the desire to pass on hard-earned knowledge and skills so that they will not be wasted.

Becoming a mentor can also help you develop leadership skills and build your own confidence as you become more familiar with the subject area yourself. As one captain of a 35m superyacht says: “Mentoring keeps me on form and keeps my skills sharp: you have to step up when someone's looking up to you.”

There is also the possibility that you can learn from your mentee, as our chief engineer explains: “It can be a trade off as you can both learn from each other. For example, my second knows more about computers than me and teaches me about that in exchange for my knowledge of engines and machinery.”

One of the most important benefits of developing others is that it makes your job as a captain or officer much easier and better, says Captain Jacotine: “Because if you bring them up and train them in the way you see most fitting to your occupational standards and methods, you have more confidence in your crew. In this way, mentoring helps the whole operation run more >

A GOOD MENTOR SHOULD:

- Be confident and secure in their own position and knowledge
- Be authentic and a good role model who practises what they preach
- Be genuinely interested in the mentee as an individual
- Be a careful and patient listener
- Provide helpful feedback
- Be encouraging, positive and supportive
- Ask open questions and act as a sounding board
- Only give advice when asked for it, and without dictating actions
- Inspire trust
- Encourage independence
- Be willing to spend time, share skills and knowledge

A GOOD MENTEE SHOULD:

- Be open to learning new ways of doing things
- Be enthusiastic and receptive
- Ask lots of questions
- Strive to do their best at all times
- Accept criticism graciously and positively
- Learn from mistakes
- Have the courage to try new things
- Accept responsibilities
- Be respectful and appreciative
- Listen, watch, learn and grow
- Be open and honest about abilities, shortcomings and concerns

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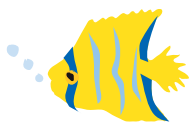
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“A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could.”

Anon



In the interests of further promoting the continuous professional development of yacht crew worldwide, the PYA is currently researching the development of an international crew mentoring scheme in conjunction with other international industry associations. If you have any suggestions, comments or ideas regarding this please contact info@pya.org

stew who only had five months' experience in yachting and her whole team were new, so she was frequently texting or calling me for help and advice.”

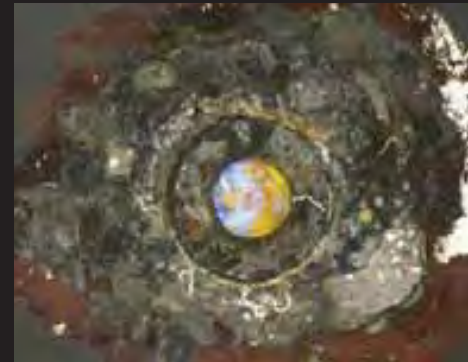
Many yacht chefs also work alone at the beginning of their careers and, although they may already be experienced in haute cuisine ashore, they quickly find it's important to build connections with fellow yacht chefs to share local knowledge, provisioning and culinary ideas across the capping rail. Mentoring also makes it possible for talented beginners to become a chef with no formal training through the unofficial apprenticeship of working as crew chef on board a larger yacht. “I would never have gained the confidence to become a guest chef after only one season if I hadn't had such a great mentor,” says one such lucky mentee. “Our head chef really taught me everything she knew and was always so encouraging and supportive.”

It's clear that mentoring has an important role within the yachting industry and, although there is currently no formal mentoring scheme in existence, many crew have built their own mentoring networks to give them the support and advice they need to continue developing. Mentoring is crucial for the transfer of essential knowledge and skills from experienced crew to those entering the industry, and should be encouraged in every way. With approximately 33,000 crew on board superyachts today, it's so important we share our knowledge, skills and insights as much as we can. And if you are entering the industry, it's critical that you show you are a worthy recipient of a mentor's time and assistance. What could you do today to either find or be a great mentor? **TCR**

Alison Rentoul is The Crew Coach, providing personal development coaching and onboard productivity workshops for yacht crew worldwide.

thecrewcoach.com

Symptoms of H.I.D. Underwater Lighting



Burnt fiberglass caused by overheated HID underwater light

- » Excessive heat exposure
- » Massive power draw
- » Frequent bulb changing
- » Toxic mercury discharge
- » Poor colour quality
- » Short life span

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