

ALL HANDS ON DECK

WORDS: WILL MATHIESON

At the latest instalment in a series of discussions on the facets of superyacht refit *The Superyacht Report* met with members of the ICOMIA Refit Group and Captain Malcolm Jacotine at the Monaco Yacht Show to discuss the role that crewmembers play in ensuring an efficient and ultimately successful refit.



The relationship between senior crewmembers and the yard is an interestingly symbiotic one, as the crew will invariably be present during the course of the project and play an important role as a reference tool for project managers adapting to the idiosyncrasies of the boat.

The meeting itself examined the experiences of the crew and the yard, the issues that may arise and how these can be circumvented through action and dialogue to deliver projects that are timely and satisfactory to all parties. Attending the discussion were Captain Jacotine, who has worked aboard a number of yachts and oversaw a major refit of 64m *Lady Marina* in 2012; Alberto Amico, Amico & Co; Diego Colón, Astilleros de Mallorca; Rob Papworth, Compositeworks; Eric Robert Peillard, Monaco Marine La Ciotat; and Carlos Vidueira, Rybovich.

The captain's interpretation

MALCOLM JACOTINE

A successful refit requires a comprehensive specification detailing every single item of work needed. That doesn't mean that when you get to the shipyard you won't encounter problems. For example, you may need to redress the shaft on a stabiliser because it's been withdrawn, something you couldn't account for beforehand. So there has to be an element of flexibility, but the actual contract should be based on a proper and full work list put together by the captain, the chief officer and the chief engineer.

It is often the case, due to availability of resources and late delivery of equipment, that the whole timeline starts to slip when you miss that one delivery date.



Most shipyards won't accept the penalty for that, so the yacht is penalised instead because of extra costs for dockage, say, or electricity, something that is not really their fault. The timeline within the specification should be fixed and agreed and there should be penalties in place for the yard if it is late, but also penalties for owners if they add additional work during that shipyard period that impacts on the delivery.

The owner will start asking questions if the captain goes to the shipyard without the experience or understanding of what might be a €50,000 re-estimate and ends up spending €200,000. In that instance, the project worklist wasn't accurately specified from the beginning by either the captain or the manager.

This business relies on reputation; a lot of captains will take the safe choice of going to those shipyards with the best reputation. It may be that unknown shipyards have better technical expertise or are more efficient, but they're not going to be given the chance if no one really knows them. Yards must constantly strive to stay on top of their game to deliver the best service because they're only as good as their last re-estimate.

From the crew's point of view there has to be a rapport and a relationship with the shipyard. It won't work if everyone's fighting because without negotiation the whole thing will fall

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Captain Malcolm Jacotine

apart. You need to build an atmosphere where everybody can communicate, from the deckhand through to the chief engineer and the captain; everybody needs to be part of the project. Depending on the scope of the work, there are probably 10 or 15 jobs going on at the same time, and senior crew need to ensure the work is done properly and report back to the captain who can then inform the project manager of any issues.

The yards' interpretation

ALBERTO AMICO

Re-estimate is a game where if one of the teams – crew or yard – is not properly trained then everybody loses. The contract dictates the rules of the game and both parties are 100 per cent responsible once it is signed. Very often I hear things like, 'We need some extra work done on the yacht. What's the problem? You're a shipyard – you have the resources.'

This is frustrating because, while every yard would like to have hundreds of staff ready to take on extra work, if we did we would all be bankrupt. But 99 per cent of the yachts are asking for more work, so it's quite normal, and we have to live with it. Also, problems are very often unforeseen; they only become apparent when the yacht arrives and is inspected.

Owners don't want to be bothered with talk of re-estimate during the summer, but captains need to educate them that re-estimate work needs planning and management. A lot of captains say the same thing: 'I have to wait for the two or three days when the owner is on board, towards the end of the season, and propose it then. This is not the way it should work. In our case, during the course of a project we feel much better if there is a professional management company working remotely, and a captain who is staying on board. Most of the time the management company is not on site, so you need both, because who knows the boat best? It's the crew.'

DIEGO COLON

If I go to the doctor and say, 'I have a pain here', but cannot provide more information, then it would be very difficult to solve my problem. A yacht is exactly the same. It depends on strong communication between yard and crew. That way you can easily identify the problem. It may be an old design issue that has been delayed for 10 years, but with cooperation it can be rectified. We are, in a way, the doctor in front of the client or captain or chief engineer. They can sometimes try to hide something to protect themselves – something they may have done wrong. This will not help and will only create a bigger problem.

A re-estimate is won or lost on a crew with good knowledge of the boat. When we take our cars to the workshop, we give them custody of the vehicle and can go home and forget about it. A yacht is not the same; the crew live on board and the crew have to communicate with the yard

yard every day. They have their own jobs to do and can undertake certain tasks instead of the shipyard to reduce the final bill. This is why relationships have to be maintained.

ROB PAPWORTH

Part of the aim of this group is to improve professionalism, which is why we have the ICOMIA re-t contract. We wouldn't expect to sign a contract with anyone without signing a re-delivery date, and then after that adding clauses for extension from the owner's side, from the yard's side or for unforeseen circumstances.

The reality is that captains are sailors, and running a superyacht is a small business; perhaps we need a training module to instruct captains how to run the boat from that perspective. As long as you've come well prepared as a captain, and you've signed a contract for the re-t, then you're the one who is going to be protected; anyone else less organised is going to be at a disadvantage. You have to protect yourself.

With the increasing amount of paperwork captains are now faced with, especially during the season and on charter yachts, it must be hard to find time to prepare for a re-t properly. Unlike management companies, who go through the same processes for a fleet of yachts, how are captains expected to know the cost of specialist work such as superstructures or decking? When we're devising a quote we rely on the specialists to determine how much certain things are, so it's almost unfair to expect crew to understand them.

The crewmembers are running the boat day to day and have an intricate knowledge of it, so we can ask them questions. We're working towards the same goal. Often the crew think the shipyard is trying to cheat the owner, but that wouldn't be in the shipyard's interest. All yards want repeat clients so the relationship has to be based on honesty and working together.

ERIC ROBERT PEILLARD

Yachts come with the additional workload of needing to be prepared, and that needs to be communicated to the crew. We all start the season pretty well prepared. We spend hours on planning, but in the end, we accumulate 30 or 40 per cent of additional turnover, so who's responsible for that? With the pressure of working at capacity we can't always be as prepared as we would like. We try to be fair with customers, but sometimes we're punished for that.

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Rob Papworth

You'd be surprised at the level of imprecision we encounter when asked for quotations. If someone wants to know exactly how much it will cost to fit a set of zero speed stabilisers then that needs to be specified; more importantly, a budget needs to be identified for it too.

CARLOS VIDUEIRA

One valuable thing we could do in the re-t sector is give examples of a good work list or a work sheet on some of the bigger boats. The big players are often very well organised and can supply a document with the job title, the code, a picture of the problem, a description, what they want you to do and where it is. It would be good if similar documentation could be completed for every boat coming to the yard, because you'd then know the quote you provide is based exactly on what was asked of you. Preparation, as with anything, is key.



Summary

After over an hour of discussion and debate, in which the efficacy of delivery times, the correct prioritisation of work, the effective communication of problems and the onus of liability for spiralling costs were all scrutinised, it was hugely satisfying for all in attendance that a concrete action plan could be agreed upon.

The point of this series of meetings between *TSR* and key ICOMIA stakeholders has always been to produce tangible outcomes that can be transformed into documents, procedures and policies. In this instance it was overwhelmingly agreed that crew preparedness is key to guaranteeing a successful re t. A crew that can effectively communicate the problems that need to be addressed, or the work that needs to be carried out, will invariably ensure a timely delivery. The Re t Group members accepted that the costly nature of crew training programmes would deem a supplementary re t preparedness module unviable. Therefore, the onus is on captains to mentor their senior staff and instruct them on what is required to ensure a good re t, and to instil the same sense of diligence as one would apply to a charter schedule or a logbook.

It was agreed by the attendant group members that of greatest benefit to the group, and the re t sector, would be the drafting of a document that can be circulated to crew preparing for re t. This document, once drafted, will outline what is required from

the crew prior to a re t commencing. The finished document will specify the contents of any information that the captain should provide, ensuring that the work requested and the final cost mirror each other closely.

It is hoped that, if and when it materialises, this document will serve as a template for assisting crews in effectively preparing for re t, which will improve the quality of re t projects as a whole. ■



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