

Can Training Take a Back Seat?

There is an economic downturn and in most places, training and development has become the first casualty. Experts suggest that “Even a minor looking mistake on the ship can cause a major loss.” This draws our attention to the question, ‘Can training be avoided?’ Sadan- and Subramanian reports.

With sophistication coming in the realm of ship engines and its components, several junior engineers pass up an opportunity to experience an actual overhaul of ship engines and its major components for as long as 5 years or more into their tenure in seafaring. “How then would they learn the vital ship maintenance skills expected of them as they graduate from a junior engineer to a senior engineer?,” asks Capt. K. N. Deboo, Director of Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre. He points out that in today’s times, keeping mind the stiff requirements, a junior engineer rises to the rank of chief engineer in less than 10 years.

Capt. Deboo explains that both aspects of theory as well as hands on experience is important to deliver shipboard competencies to officers on ocean going vessels. When out at sea, there is always an element of uncertainty. Emergencies of various kinds take place and officers have to be alert and equipped to handle situations to steer the ships as well as to manage its safety. He goes on to say that today’s maritime training institutions like Anglo Eastern Maritime training Academy offer

courses that are extremely crucial and therefore essential to building the much needed skills on board ships.

The courses at AEMT are comfortably spaced out. Innovatively created modules provide skills and abilities to the candidates to help them cope with various situations they may come up against while at sea. Under actual circumstances, these situations may or may not occur for several years in a person’s career, and yet they can confront them any time without warning. So it is important to learn how to cope with them even as their career progresses to the next higher level. Today’s high tech maritime institutes are equipped with the best of simulators and equipment that can create real life situations on board ships.

“Training improves efficiency and reduces losses,” asserts Capt. Deboo. “Even a minor looking mistake on the ship can cause a major loss.” The losses can be as tragic as loss of human lives or major accidents resulting in injuries and loss of millions of dollars of goods. According to Capt. Deboo training indeed helps bring down the percentage of



Capt. K. N. Deboo

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losses and this has been proved on the basis of studies.

Capt. Deboo agrees that training is a time consuming affair. Is it fair for officers to spend a substantial amount of their time when on leave from the seas in the class rooms upgrading their work skills? Capt. Deboo says that information technology has thankfully come to their rescue to remedy this problem. He informs that several of their courses are divided into the class room and the theory elements. Candidates are expected to gain objective information and knowledge as well as achieve subjective knowledge related to the complexities of their job functions.

He explains, "We carry out an evaluation prior to training. Evaluations help us to cut down on contact time. And depending on areas where a particular officer requires to be trained, we divide training time into contact modules and e-learning modules. In this way, an officer completes his theory aspects using our e-learning portal that can be accessed at a place of his convenience and time." After the officer has completed his study thus, he is assessed and if he is found successful, he is admitted into the contact program. This strategy also ensures that a candidate is well versed in the fine points and the practical training and orientation becomes more meaningful to him.

Capt. Deboo informs that feedback from ships tell them that officers thus trained by

them are able to adapt well to the onboard situations on ships much the same way as experienced officers. However, if there is a lacking or training gap is detected, they would consider it a challenge to see that they are bridged.

Can training be avoided? "Not at all," says Capt. Deboo. In times of crisis, however, especially during an economic slowdown, most organizations including maritime organizations reduce or cut down on training drastically. Capt. Deboo insists that training indeed pay over the long term. He says that training enables and improves the performance of officers and these are evident by the figures that are revealed by Key Performance Indicators monitoring and measuring systems.

Capt. Deboo urges that it is unwise to cut down on training because there is a downturn. He points out that even though investments on training do not show direct results or don't seem as directly linked to operations as fuel, it is linked to the longer term needs of the organization. He argues that skilled persons cannot be produced in 6 months but ships can be built in lesser time. "And when times change and the demand for seafarers rise, where is the pool to draw them from?"

The author is Capt. K. N. Deboo, Director, Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre.



Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre tie-up with MAN Diesel



Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre (AEMTC), a pioneer in maritime training, believes that operational training is best done on Full-Mission simulators which bring you as close to realism as practical.

AEMTC the authorized training centre in India for MAN Diesel marine engines, is fitted with the full mission engine simulator modeled on MAN B&W 6S50MC, the pneumatic control system for MC Engines and the MAN B&W Holby 6L 28/32 diesel engine.

MAN B&W and AEMTC have agreed to carry out MC Engine General Training program twice a year, at AEMTC by Prime Serve Academy, which is the training division of MAN Diesel. Memorandum of Understanding to this effect was signed in the year 2000 between AEMTC and MAN Diesel.

Now, AEMTC has installed South East Asia's first MAN Diesel Marine Electronic Engine Simulator. It is one of the three installed in the world so far and adds one more feather to their latest training equipments fitted at their state-of-the-art training centre. This is to train crews specifically in the management and operation of its ME range of electronically-controlled camless engines.

The first 4-day course for ME engine was launched by MAN Diesel in India at the Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre for their customers in this region, on December 10, 2007.

The course covers both the mechanical and electronic systems that make up the engine, as well as theoretical prin-

ciples on how they work together. Besides teaching the students how to operate the electronically-controlled engines, there is a strong focus on how to optimize their performance for different prevailing conditions. Educating crew to have better control of the engine parameters in order to meet local environmental regulations are of great relevance in today's world. Full competence in the use of automated systems involves both knowledge and skill and hence there is a requirement for both understanding the system as well as developing the skill to deal with it.

The ME Simulator provides a high level of fidelity replicating the effects of operational problems that cannot be recreated onboard an actual vessel for practical or safety reasons. In this way, the ME Simulator provides an effective platform to hone and test a student's ability to take corrective actions and acquire troubleshooting skills.

The knowledge needed by a marine engineer has to match the complexity of the engines and other equipment that they operate. To ensure that this remains the case, AEMTC has been in the fore front of establishing training programmes that are regularly modified and updated. In recent years, there has been a significant shift away from a competent-based approach to a system based one.

There are approximately ten ME Engine Simulator courses planned in the year 2009, and these may be further increased as more and more ships with electronic engines get built and delivered to the shipowners.