

The cruise industry's order book has reached an historic high - the perfect time to welcome aboard the latest advances in workforce optimization

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Lee Clarke at Dynama, says overcoming the crewing challenges of today's fastest growing leisure sector is all plain sailing with modern technology

At this year's Seatrade Cruise Global Conference in Florida (i), delegates learned that the cruise industry's order book has reached a historic high, with 48 ocean-going cruise ships to be delivered by 2019 and a total of 75 orders confirmed until 2026. It is widely predicted that demand for cruising will continue to grow and with more ships and higher demand, cruise lines are prioritising the delivery of an unparalleled guest experience through onboard amenities and new technologies.

The history of ocean liners and their transformation into today's leisure cruise industry is an interesting one. Let's take a whirlwind step back in time. When Cunard's RMS Lusitania embarked on its first transatlantic voyage in September 1907, thousands of spectators gathered at Liverpool docks to watch the world's then-largest ocean liner leave. Since that time, the industry has become hugely competitive with rival companies racing against time to make their ships the largest, fastest and most opulent.

Safety and technical innovation are also key driving forces and tragedies such as the sinking of the Titanic in 1912 paved the way to extra regulations that still apply today, including lifeboat berths for every passenger and 24-hour radio surveillance. The combination of a post-war liner building boom and the decline in transatlantic emigration passengers created a brand new tourist sector hankering after the glamour of yesteryear but with today's mod cons. The beginning of mass jet travel in the 1960s could have rung the death knell for cruising but instead, it ushered in a new era of luxury cruising. Floating palaces complete with spas, beauty salons, pools, libraries, cinemas and freestyle dining arrived and have never really gone away.

Neither have the obstacles associated with running a cruise ship disappeared. In fact, when you consider the history of cruising, nothing much has changed. People remain at the heart of the business and the challenges faced by the industry are still very much in evidence including constant competition, the drive for speed and efficiency, safety and technological innovation. Fortunately, help is at hand in the shape of modern technology. In just the same way that satellite communications and remote marine engineering ensure round-the-clock connectivity and safe systems maintenance, the latest workforce optimization solutions maximize crew and resources to boost business success and guest satisfaction.

Here are five ways to use modern workforce and resource optimization solutions to support and enhance:

1. People – modern integrated systems allow managers to develop an effective skills matrix to give a complete picture of all crew documentation such as certificates, medicals, passports and visas and training competencies. This aids the development of efficient schedules and guarantees the most appropriately skilled and available crew members are in the right place at the right time. Maximizing the talents of individual crew members also boosts morale and aids staff retention in an industry where skilled people are at a premium.

2.Competition – keep one step ahead of the competition by using the latest technology to highlight potential current and future crewing critical issues and allow proactive remedial action to be taken. A longer planning horizon leads to better crew scheduling and performance, and ultimately improves the overall guest experience.

3.Speed and efficiency – automation and centrally stored crew information removes duplicate effort, reduces administration, plus time and staff costs to increase margins and overall profitability. Adding new vessels to the fleet is made easier because each existing vessel and its headcount can be used as a template for the next new build, to speed up the planning and scheduling process.

4.Safety – immediate access to critical data facilitates the ability to manage a multi-skilled and often geographically dispersed workforce over time, rank and experience, vessel familiarity, training requirements and licenses held. This clear visibility of crew compliance helps safety staff meet stringent International Maritime Organisation (IMO) regulations and ensure the safety of the passengers and crew on board while minimising the risk of financial penalties through non-compliance of safety legislation.

5.Innovation - an organization's chosen technology partner should be just that, a partner working closely to develop new products that overcome real-life problems. The technology should be innovative, highly scalable and future-proof. It should be capable of analysing current resource competencies and model for future requirements using timeline management capabilities to forecast demand, whether for one cruise ship or an entire fleet.

In a growing and innovative cruise industry, it makes sense to use the right technology to help make the most of crew talents and resources, enhance onboard safety, drive continual innovation and aid compliance. By deploying a solution that addresses the five key hurdles above, the reward will be happier staff, a healthier bottom line, new customers and improved guest satisfaction ratings.

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About Dynama

Dynama, an Allocate Software company, builds on 25 years' heritage and is a leading provider of maritime and defence workforce deployment software. Headquartered in London, Dynama has a fully fledged new office in Canberra (Australia) with sales and support in the USA.

Its flagship product, Dynama OneView, is designed to underpin complex workforce optimization in safety critical and highly skilled environments, delivering both safe staffing and productivity savings.

For more information, visit www.dynama.global

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