

Staying ahead in the competitive cruise industry – part two, from Dynama

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Large cruise companies are getting even bigger, posing the question of how to manage their formidable crewing resources? In the second of his two-part blog series, Lee Clarke takes a closer look at integration and the big data benefits afforded by today's Workforce Optimization solutions

In our first blog, we focused on the way small cruise lines are capitalizing on the exponential demand for transformational and expedition cruising to capture the mindshare and pockets of a new set of travellers. Now, it appears that large cruise companies are facing another challenge far closer to home - consolidation. For some time, acquisition has been a fact of life. Royal Caribbean Cruises acquiring two-thirds of Silversea and American-British Carnival Corporation's operation of ten separate cruise lines under different brands are just two examples of the trend. On the upside, merging forces gives these floating giants formidable clout in terms of increased buying power and resources plus a greater choice of brands and services for passengers. On the downside, change is rarely painless and integrating different organizations including people, assets, corporate identities, systems and cultures – can cause a major headache!

Addressing the critical pain points

It pays to acknowledge the critical pain points. During periods of consolidation, these three are most likely to lead to sleepless nights:

People – at first glance, it might appear that size really does matter and that having a much larger number of crew and wider talent pool can only be a good thing. However, with cost efficiencies and labour costs typically high on the list of priorities post acquisition, how do you use your combined workforce, including third-party employees such as concessionaires, effectively? How do you apply the cream of the crop across all brands to maximise the quality of service on board?

Resources - staffing requirements need to be combined with physical assets, such as the cruise ships themselves and ensuring the equipment on them meets the latest diversity regulations such as facilities for less mobile passengers, as well as safety equipment for drills and emergencies.

Technology Systems – typically IT departments in cruise organizations are already stretched to the hilt with a limited headcount and an equally limited budget that necessitates a 'do more with less' culture (while also deploying IT onto the next hull in service). Adding complexity through extra systems and the increased security threats associated with data transfer across different IT infrastructures simply exacerbates the problem.

Think big to relieve the pressure

The way forward is to drive efficient workforce planning across all operations using Workforce Optimization (WFO) technology. Look for a partner who thinks big and has a proven track record in offering the following capabilities:

1. Integration – the latest solutions interface to the back office systems to capture real-time

information that is accessible from one platform, at the click of a mouse or using a mobile device, in a totally seamless way. This encourages consistent ways of working, removes duplicated effort, reduces time and staff costs and builds trust and collaboration across multiple departments and between different parts of the organizations.

A joined-up approach to doing business is critical to maintaining competitiveness especially during periods of change. The latest WFO solutions are highly flexible, leaving you free to play with the clever, strategic stuff. For example, they support multiple 'what if' scenarios for forecasting crewing demand, while advanced planning functionality enables management teams to rapidly assess and evaluate the human capital, resource and financial implications of those scenarios on the combined organization.

2. Big Data – the beauty of today's WFO solutions is they can handle large volumes of data. They quickly capture and consolidate the information required to run a successful cruise ship. From crew profiles, their skills and availability to managing concessionaires, this data can be used to match crew against new job roles and deploy them swiftly to give passengers the first-class service they deserve. Knowing what crew, talents and resources you have is crucial to creating an efficient structure that builds on the combined strengths of the organizations involved and reduces costs. Management should have the 10,000 view, while planners and crewing admins should be able to drill down into the detail.

Finally, don't go it alone!

3. Managed Services - there's enough to worry about so why not make life easier for the people behind the scenes. Outsourcing your workforce deployment software to a reliable partner with the bandwidth and know-how to make technology work for you will free up your own internal IT resources to focus on the bigger picture and play to their strengths including strategic infrastructure, data and systems security and general business solutions.

A managed service model also adds certainty to budgeting requirements - a sound business case for introducing outsourcing when every dollar counts. You no longer have to recruit, train and pay for internal resources to manage your technology and regular maintenance, upgrades and other improvements are usually included as part of the managed service contract. Combine this with cloud-based technology to give increased protection against data security threats as organizations move data and merge their respective IT infrastructures.

Unification is the name of the game and this is where the latest innovation in WFO comes into its own. Workforce optimization can consolidate three significant capabilities of workforce management - deployment, workforce compliance and business planning, within a collaborative environment to retain control during times of change.

Lee Clarke is General Manager, US/EMEA at Dynama (<http://www.dynama.global>)

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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 management in safety critical and high skill level environments, delivering both safe staffing and productivity savings. For more information, visit Dynama (<http://www.dynama.global>)

Editors contacts:

Mary Phillips

PR Artistry

Tel: +(44) 1491 845553

mary@pra-ltd.co.uk