

COMPASS HR PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

With significant workforce shortages in marine transportation, human resources professionals realize that recruitment and retention present challenges and issues requiring industry-wide responses. At the *Maritime Human Resources: Recruitment Solutions and Professional Development* conference in October, 2014, a number of HR professionals proposed that COMPASS establish a Marine Transportation Human Resource Professionals Network to facilitate information sharing and the development of responses, recommendations, and solutions relating to industry-wide human resources issues and challenges.

The COMPASS HR Professionals Network will benefit the industry as a whole and could be instrumental in achieving a number of other COMPASS strategic objectives, including the establishment of an employment access web portal, the development of marine transportation career paths, and the identification of new recruitment target populations.

Employment Access Web Portal

Those seeking employment in marine transportation, particularly youth, often have difficulty knowing how to apply. There are a large number of companies engaged in a diverse array of marine activities. For those not already familiar with the industry, determining how to get jobs with companies engaged in activities that interest them most can be quite challenging.

For employers, the readily identifiable recruits are graduates of marine transportation programs. There are few other discernable avenues for recruiting prospective employees.

A strategic objective of COMPASS is to incorporate into its website an Employment Access Portal where employers post company information and employment opportunities, and those seeking employment post resumes and profiles and access a company's HR personnel via a direct link. This would facilitate applicants' access to employment opportunities and employers' access to available talent. The Portal would also incorporate general career and employment information, career ladders, career progression pathways, labour market trends, training supports and incentives, access to career information seminars and webinars, etc, to assist prospective employees with career decision-making.

Marine Transportation Career Paths

Recruitment and retention in marine transportation are negatively impacted by a lack of clarity regarding job progression, promotion, and career-end objectives. This, together with the high level of mobility in the industry, also presents employers with challenges relating to succession planning.



Likewise, many who are considering a seagoing career may assume this means a lifetime of going to sea. Few realize that many seagoing personnel move to shore-based positions, a move facilitated by their wealth of seagoing expertise and experience. Also, potential recruits often do not recognize the opportunities for advancement the industry offers. ISF's *Promoting Careers in International Shipping* points out that the rate at which an officer can become captain or chief engineer would be considered a rapid rise to a senior position in other industries.

COMPASS plans to develop a series of marine transportation career paths that illustrate career progression options and the training and experience requirements associated with them, together with options for transition from seagoing to shore-based occupations.

New Recruitment Target Populations

The most critical workforce need identified in marine transportation is for ships' officers, especially marine engineers. Marine training supply doesn't meet the demand, and many current ships' officers are close to retiring; the industry needs other sources of qualified personnel.

Immigration is one potential source. However, to be employed in Canada as ships' officers, immigrants must have their home country qualifications assessed by Transport Canada. The assessment (and upgrading where necessary) can't even begin until immigrants have resided here for a year. Reviewing requirements could benefit the industry and qualified immigrants.

With many Naval personnel eligible for retirement in their forties, they may be an excellent recruitment pool if their skills and experience were deemed portable to commercial shipping. However, their service has not received much recognition for Transport Canada certification. Canadian Coast Guard has recently hired some naval engineers and Transport Canada has begun to consider some naval sea time, but apparently not training, towards certification.

Some components of the fishing industry have experienced overcapacity. Displaced fishers too young for retirement incentives may also represent a potentially valuable source of recruitment for the marine transportation industry.

COMPASS proposes to research marine-related immigration policy and statistics and also survey shipping interests regarding the extent of workforce shortfalls. Data collected could be used to advocate for an accelerated process of assessing foreign marine qualifications. COMPASS also proposes to assess the scope and feasibility of recruiting former military personnel and displaced fishers and contribute to developing a model to facilitate recognition of relevant training and experience.

In addition to providing an effective avenue for industry-wide human resources information sharing and problem solving, the COMPASS Marine Transportation Human Resources Professionals Network would possess the collective experience and expertise to contribute significantly to achieving these objectives.