

6°degrees

News, Views and Reviews from the
International Dynamic Positioning Operators Association

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WELCOME

TO 6degrees, THE E-JOURNAL FROM IDPOA



You may not be familiar with the band, The Zutons – but they, perhaps better than anyone else have summed up the current mood pervading the industry as confusion swirls around the issue of DP training and certification.

“You will you won’t, you do you don’t / You’re sayin’ you will but you know you won’t” they memorably sang. Alas that seems to capture something of the recent developments of talks to create a singular DP training scheme. You can check it out here... <http://goo.gl/L2YZ9g>

Anyway, music aside IDPOA was on hand at the European DP Conference in the summer, and we joined the chorus of vocal demands for the Nautical Institute (NI) and Det Norske Veritas (DNV) to shelve their ideas of working in splendid isolation, and instead look to how the best elements of each of the respective schemes could be pooled for the better good and in response to the desires of many.

Eventually it was agreed that the parties should formally meet to thrash out a way ahead. Meetings were convened and it seems that, according to the breathless excitement of the media, that a deal had been done in super-fast time, and that instead of an industry left confused and dazed by differing demands, that all could look forward to some certainty of the track to follow.

Alas it seems that we may have all gotten a little ahead of ourselves. For our part we reproduced the seemingly good news about the progress being made, but were then contacted with an open letter from the NI stating that hearsay in the industry had prompted reports which were not reflective of the reality of the talks between the parties.

So what does it all mean? Well we look at the situation in more detail throughout this issue of 6degrees, and a number of Senior IDPOA Fellows assess what they want to see as the ultimate solutions to the problems now being faced.

The worst thing possible for all parties is uncertainty, as ambiguity impacts negatively on all parties and can be destabilising. Where individuals are unsure which route to follow, where Senior DPOs are unsure about the background and level of their new officers and where companies are unsure who to employ – then we are in danger of undoing all the good work which has gone before.

We can only hope that the reality soon mirrors the hearsay, and that progress is made and unequivocal and clear statements are made. We are in a really dangerous position – some oil majors are refusing to accept DNV DP certificates, while it has been reported that there is oil industry concern over the NI DP scheme review. It appears there are concerns on the grounds that the sea time reduction is too high, the resultant scheme does not have competence assessment and concerns over the removal of DP limited certificates. Many DPOs are voicing their dissatisfaction too.

Where we were in a place with nearly two schemes we could seemingly be lurching to having none. This situation needs fixing and fast, and we hope that common sense and common standards can be found. Leaving DPOs to wonder about refresher training, revalidation and whether their very tickets will allow them to work is not acceptable.

INSIDE

We probably should apologise from the off about the number of articles which feature some mention of the current debate regarding DP Training and Certification. However, we’ve tried to give a rounded view, shake some facts out and report back from the Asian DP Conference. As well as featuring the thoughts of some key DP experts.

It’s not all about training though, you will be glad to hear. We also take a look at some important future issues which will likely be vitally important into the future.

This issue we explore the world of DP and Super/Mega yachts - and we ponder whether it will take the death of a billionaire or some “A list” celebrity before OOWs on these amazing machines really take DP training and certification seriously.

We also look down under to some lessons being learned in the gargantuan gas and oil fields off Australia. With such an incredible boom in work and an influx of people and hardware it could get messy - but the Australian maritime community appear to have pulled together to ensure that all parts of the chain are fully engaged.

In “boom” times as more and more vessels come on stream to service the incredible growth of projects it is important to assess just where the people to make things not just happen, but safely, will come from.

A business boom may sound welcome. but actually it can stretch limited resources to breaking point, and highlight the weaknesses in the system - so is DP in fit shape or are their problems ahead?

We hope that you find this latest issue of interest and as ever we would love to hear your views and to engage with you. There are a small number of members who seem to always have their say, and we truly appreciate their support and efforts - but there are 5000 of you...so perhaps we can encourage some more of you to share your thoughts?

Email dpo@doperators.org to discuss any issues of interest or concern.

DP Training



Mark Pointon asks if we are On Course or Off Track?

In order to answer the question as to whether DP training is aiming at the right parts of the chain, we have to consider what we are focusing on. If we are looking at new entrants then certification and training are inextricably linked, but if we look wider and consider qualified DPO's and the greater "DP team" then the focus of training changes from being the imparting of knowledge, to the development of the individual and ultimately the verification of their competence.

In short we have to address different needs depending on whom we are training and when we are training them. In the last year we have seen a review of the Nautical Institute scheme and the launch of an alternative scheme from DNV. We have heard much about the various proposals, the means of delivery, assessment, training and ultimately production of DPOs.

It remains unclear as to the benefits which will be delivered on either side – all we can be sure about is the potential uncertainty, division and confusion as we enter a new age of competing certification. This cannot be good for the industry over all, and is a real concern to many organisations and individual DPOs.

Each scheme naturally has its pros and cons, benefits and downfalls, feedback from the IDPOA membership clearly indicates that neither is really hitting the mark. Nor is it likely to be in isolation.

IDPOA and Farstad have both been involved in the recent review of the NI scheme and from the outset have voiced the opinion that the resulting DP training scheme should have the capability to provide a sufficient supply of trained, certified and most importantly, competent DPOs

It goes without saying that to succeed on a world stage the scheme must be a respected, recognised and accepted certification scheme. To achieve this, it must be built on a system using a blended approach to training and assessment.

We, in the DP industry, have always been a progressive sector of the marine industry, often pioneering operations and best practice. Yet when it comes to education and training we are almost Stone Age in some aspects.

Instead of being rigid and inflexible, our training should be flexible and innovative. There will always be a place for formal classroom teaching and simulator training, but equally there is also a place for online and vessel based training.

Schemes like DPCAP and others that use the vessel as a simulated work environment definitely have a place in the year 2013 and beyond. The same applies to assessment of competence. The key to providing a respected, recognised and accepted certification scheme is consistent assessment. Does a Master signing off a logbook and task book provide this?

At the moment we are not in a position to have these wishes fulfilled – having stated there are concerns about the newly reviewed NI scheme, there are very strong concerns and doubts about the DNV system, which can see a certified DPO produced in around 4 weeks, without having served on a DP vessel.

This has had many alarm bells ringing across the industry. With the debate we have seen that the pressure has slowly built on the NI and DNV to sit down and find common ground. It could be (depending on which reports you read) that we are inching closer to the best possible solution – that of an independently reviewed scheme which sees stakeholders playing a role in the process, but not the lead.

Looking wider, we are entering an interesting period where the Oil companies are recognising the fact, that a certificate is just a piece of paper which indicates competence when it was issued. They are becoming more stringent in requiring vessel operators to demonstrate continued training and verification of competence in order to reduce risks at their assets.

This has led to an increase in investment by a number of offshore operators keen to "up skill" their crews and gain commercial advantage as a result. Asia, for instance, is blessed with a number of organisations that have recognised the value in developing their own training centres. Swire, EMAS, Bourbon and Farstad are globally recognised examples, and it increasingly seems that these could provide valuable lessons and insight elsewhere across the DP world. Learning lessons is something you would think trainers would perhaps be better at.



DEFINITELY MAYBE...

NI and DNV Debate

There has been a lot of contradictory news emerging of late as discussions between DNV GL and the Nautical Institute (NI) have been ongoing. One report in particular caught our attention – proclaiming as it did an incredibly significant industry development, and one which IDPOA had long worked to promote.

The story began by stating that “After intense pressure from industry, DNV GL and the NI have finally agreed to merge their opposing schemes of assessment and certification of dynamic positioning system operators (DPOs).”

Finally it seemed that the announcement many had been waiting and hoping for was out in the open. After publicly being pressed into making changes, it appeared from the seemingly unequivocal reports that the days of confusion were over, and both parties were on common ground and were progressing.

The article went on to add some detail – it was stated, for instance, that DNV SeaSkill manager of simulator certification Aksel David Nordheim has said, “a common scheme, using DNV GL’s recommended practices and verification would be ready in the second half of 2014.”

This was seeming music to the ears of many, as after a worrisome period all could focus once again on the issue not of debating whose standard is better, but of creating one that provided the training, experience, competency checks and evaluation which most universally agree are so important.

The change had been prompted by Riviera’s European Dynamic Positioning Conference in London where oil majors, including BP, said they would not recognise the DNV SeaSkill scheme. Captain Nordheim said the feedback at the industry-defining conference brought NI and DNV SeaSkill together to negotiate a scheme merger process.

DNV claim they have already started the schematics of the new scheme and this should be ready by April 2014. Once in place the whole industry will be able to embark on a hearing process that will take two months

A lead player in these developments has been C--Mar Group chief operating officer Peter Aylott and he welcomed the plan to introduce a common certification scheme. According to the report DPOs with DNV GL certificates have been knocked back by the vessel charterers (oil companies, as a result Aylott believes, “it will be good to have a common certification scheme that will be recognised.”

So far so good? It would have been surprising given the enthusiastically received reports, to then hear from the NI that the process wasn’t quite as certain as the confident overtures from DNV suggest. But, yes, that is exactly what happened next. Seemingly prompted by the press reports the NI issued a letter to stakeholders and asked them to promulgate it to their constituents.

This is what they had to say:

“The Nautical Institute after both they and DNV gave presentations on their respective training schemes at the European DP Conference in June 2013, conference delegates expressed concerns of having two different Dynamic Positioning training schemes, resulting in some hesitation from operators and vessel’s owners on what training path to take in future. It was suggested that the Nautical Institute and DNV should meet to discuss this situation.

The Nautical Institute received DNV approach in July and agreed to have a meeting in August discuss the issues raised at the conference.

During this meeting the following aspects and possibilities were covered:

- a. The strengths and weaknesses of both schemes, highlighting possibilities of operating them together.**
- b. Having two separate schemes.**
- c. DNV certifying the Nautical Institute scheme.**

After some discussion, it became clear to both organisations that more consultation will have to take place with the DP industry as decisions cannot be made based on one or two conferences only. Any hearsay about merging the schemes at this stage is inaccurate and does not reflect the reality of the conversation between the organisations. Ultimately, it will be for the industry stakeholders to decide which scheme or schemes they wish to utilise to meet their needs for properly trained DPOs.

The Nautical Institute has recently reviewed the DP training scheme with the industry stakeholders, and has been trying to finalise the revision with the consultative body -DPTEG, providing more flexibility and reduced time to train the DP operators but maintaining the necessary standards. The new scheme should have been published in July this year, but one of the DPTEG stakeholders addressed concerns with regard to the removal of the Limited certificate, which has held back the final publication of the scheme.

The Institute is endeavouring to resolve the remaining issues with the stakeholders towards the end of the year in order to provide more guidance and clarification to the industry. Until the revised scheme is finalised and implemented, the existing scheme will continue to operate as normal. Due to delay of the new scheme, the Institute may postpone the revalidation of DP certificates, providing more time to the industry to understand and incorporate the new changes.”

So what does this mean?

Well it appears to call into doubt the idea of a new scheme by April 2014, especially as they feel that much more consultation is required. They are right to state that ideas cannot be based on a couple of conferences, though of course the fora have been useful to test opinions.

With DNV seemingly eager to stick to a defined timetable and with DPOs, training centres and employers needing some certainty and confidence it does not augur well that these potential partners cannot agree on what was said at a conference, let alone what needs to be in a new DP training scheme.

As ever IDPOA stands by to assist and support both parties, and will gladly share the collected views of our thousands of DPO members and fellows. We just hope this apparent confusion does not jeopardise or derail the change that is so vitally needed and which will have such an impact on all parts of the industry.





ASIAN DYNAMIC POSITIONING CONFERENCE

September 2013, Singapore

Given the focus on talks between the Nautical Institute and DNV it is with real interest that the Asian DP delegates looked for an update on certification from DNV Seaskill's Aksel David Nordheim at the excellent event run by Riveria Maritime out in Singapore.

In setting the background the presentation covered the basic relationships between the guidelines and the actual certification. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) through STCW (part B) and IMCA M117 set the International guidelines, but the certification "bodies" issue the DPO certificate. As of today NI and those who are joining the DNV DP Test Centre system are the certification bodies.

DNV stated that although the NI has been working hard through DPTEG (their consultative group of international stakeholders) to revise their existing industry scheme, DNV has at this stage not developed a "Scheme" as such, but has focused on systematics through standards to certify the training and test centres to deliver content to meet the Competence Standard.

According to the presentation, the NI and DNV think there may be 3 possible options:

1. Two schemes?
2. DNV Certifies the NI Scheme?
3. Agree on a common Scheme?

Perhaps anticipating progress on an agreement, DNV has pressed ahead with work on a "Common DPO Certification Scheme" and according to Nordheim there is a schedule of work for delivery before April, 2014. Indeed DNV is starting a project to create Recommended Practises (RP) based on existing systematics enabling the whole Industry to participate in order make it possible to have one scheme.

If you look at the 2 schemes, it seems fair to say that the Nautical Institute Scheme has a good training structure, but is weak in its assessment (there is no "Competence" assessment

for instance, while DNV focuses on competence assessment. According to the DNV presentation the result of the meeting was that they would consider option 3 – which was to agree on a common scheme. However, when described the "process", it seemed apparent that option 2 would more likely be the reality.

The process described was that DNV would instigate a "recommended practice process". In effect, a public consultation hearing that would result in the publication of a DNV "standard" for DP training and Certification. The NI scheme, or any other, "learning schemes" would be accredited against this standard.

So therefore the assessment process would remain as it currently stands under the DNV proposal and result in the issue of a DNV DP certificate, issued by accredited assessment centres.

This could have significant impact on the status quo, and it remained unclear to some delegates familiar with the process as to whether the other parties in the process were wholly clear on the implications of this.

One commentator suggested that it seems there is potential misunderstanding of either the intentions or desires of both parties, and it seems that in the confident progress of DNV and the statements of the NI that agreements are based on "hearsay", then there is something of a problem developing.

There are clearly going to be logistical / political implications with this agreement, and the ramifications are potentially large. Even if, as has been suggested, the NI run the training and DNV the assessment and certification, it is seen likely that many training centres will cease their NI accreditations.

It seems likely that such centres would instead look to the DNV learning centre accreditation route instead and probably be assessment centres too.

The questions were raised at the conference as to why any centre would pursue 2 separate accreditations for the same thing. It was also noted that DNV learning centre and assessment centre accreditations are not restricted to just DP, and so there could well be a commercial imperative to go for the route which provides a wider training remit. Indeed there is already industry rumour of a “super group” of centres combining to run / administer the DNV assessment / certification process.

IDPOA was represented at the conference by Captain Mark Pointon, the former DP Training Manager within the NI, he now heads the DP components of the hugely respected Farstad Shipping Offshore Simulation Centre in Perth Western Australia.

Mark has a wide-ranging understanding gained over more than two decades in the business (his DP ticket numbers in the hundreds), but more than that knowledge of the past he wants to use his experience to provide a unique and valuable insight into the current state of play, while also looking ahead to the future.

Speaking at the conference he looked to try and set the scene on the current uncertainty surrounding DPO certification and training, something which is causing major concerns.

A key element of developing success in the future is to apply the lessons which are working today – and he claims that it is training centres such as the Farstad facility which have begun to push the boundaries of offshore training, while making a tangible difference to the standards in the Australasian region.

Having invested massively to train DPOs it would be easy to suppose that “flashing the cash” and building expensive simulators does not necessarily guarantee results. Just as that doesn’t always work in football, it doesn’t guarantee results in business either. In order to give his training centre the best chances of succeeding with its strategic aims, there was a long period of reflection and inner assessment. To such an extent that he and his trainers looked to deconstruct the very concept of DP and the component parts of the “DP team”.

By breaking down the model, it was then possible to rebuild the training elements around the needs of the students, clients, and the industry. To satisfy not just the needs of the training and certification elements, but in order to produce DPOs who think and act differently. The aim is to be ensure a supply of DPOs who understand their critical role in the safe operation of a dynamically positioned vessel, and who have the knowledge to perform, but also the integrity and ethos to stay one step ahead of the machines.

The future of DPOs isn’t to be led by the technology, but it will be to integrate as a vital part of the overarching process. DP is

not just the equipment it is the people who are vital. Now of course its all well and good to have such a visionary take on the whole DP conundrum, but what if we are incapable of producing the right people? If we cannot do that, then we have failed at the first hurdle. That is why the training and certification debate is so fundamental and pivotal. It is also why IDPOA expends so much time entrenched in struggles to ensure that the right decisions are made in this area.

Alas, the actual status quo is not overly positive – and that calls into question our ability as an industry to deliver as we find ourselves on the horn of a dilemma, with a difficult dichotomy to overcome. This is because when we look at where the vast majority of focus and effort lies in DP Certification and training, it’s with new entrant DP Operators. A case in point is the title of this introduction – “DPO certification and training”.

We are putting an undue emphasis on those who are not readily receptive or in a position to fully appreciate the true importance of what they are being told. It seems to many, that the training scheme is slanted the wrong direction. What we should be focussing on is the awareness and competence levels of the whole “DP team”. They are after all, the majority!

So we have to ask some serious questions.

- ***Where is the discussion on the continued professional development of existing DP operators?***
- ***How many DPO’s with 1000’s of hours of watch keeping time have received formal training on the systems they operate?***
- ***How many have received refresher training?***
- ***How many really understand the architecture of the DP control system?***
- ***How many Engineering DP personnel have undertaken training equivalent to the DPO “Basic course”?***

In answer to those questions, a few minutes reading on the IDPOA and other Facebook and LinkedIn fora will provide you with the answer – Not very many!

It is significant and important that we never lose sight of the fact that DP is actually just a form of technology. It is vital that we remember that we are constantly aiming at a moving target when it comes to the administration of training and certification that underpins its safe operation.

Continuous professional development of DPO’s, in whatever form it takes, is essential given the complexity of vessel systems and operations routinely used and carried out today on a DP vessel. Anyone who tells you that they don’t need it, just because they can demonstrate 6 months DP time in a 5 year period is missing the point.

JOINING

THE

DOTS



Senior IDPOA Fellow Captain Kuldip Singh Sandhu has been pondering the potential route ahead for DP training and certification and of how we can join the dots

It was good news in the realm of DP training that Nautical Institute (NI) and DNV GL should have agreed to merger talks concerning their rival schemes of assessment and certification of dynamic positioning system operators (DPOs).

With two schemes potentially coming together, it means we are left to “join the dots” and create a new system which is fit for purpose. While the NI has been the custodian and leading light in the field of DP training, having given direction to DP training since the eighties. The NI scheme is currently undergoing a paused review to ultimately meet the demands of excellence in addition to expedience as required by the industry.

Lots of work has gone into various aspects of the scheme and the outcome of the review was presented at the first Brazilian DP Conference at Rio and at European DP Conference in London this summer.

DNV, on the other hand, came out with a new scheme which was both revolutionary in concept and groundbreaking. The scheme aims at qualifying DPOs on ‘fast track’ with intensive class room and simulator training followed by a daylong independent theoretical and practical simulator assessment.

The scheme has no or very little requirement for sea time; it assumes that the DPO after qualifying this programme will get enough opportunity to learn practical aspects of DP at sea when he/she joins the ship. Just like one learns driving and then gets the driving licence. The scheme appeared flawed without the element of sea time in its programme and it is not surprising that the feedback from the industry for the last one year is not very encouraging. It is also, therefore, not surprising that in such a short time of its existence the industry feels that the scheme needs to be reviewed.

Both the schemes meet the outcome of training, to whatever standards, but fall short of industry’s expectations in improving the professional ability and competence of the DPOs. IDPOA, a body of more than 5,000 members from all wings of the DP

industry, did extensive opinion survey amongst its members on the proposed changes in NI’s draft revised scheme. IDPOA expressed its concern that the changes being proposed were considered peripheral / cosmetic in nature and were not expected to address the most important issue of producing better, safer and more competent DPOs.

No wonder then that the ship operators and the oil majors too voiced their concerns during two Riviera conferences at London and Singapore this year about the efficacy of both the schemes in their present form. They suggested that both NI and DNV sit together and come out with a unified scheme, which will meet the training needs of the industry.

Since both the schemes have good features in different elements of their DP training programmes, they felt that the amalgamation of both the schemes will result in better and more effective unified training scheme. I can’t agree more with Capt. Mark Pointon, who during the discussion on this issue said “The NI scheme is good for training, but not a good assessment model, while DNV GL is good for assessment but has issues. A DPO can be trained on a simulator and walk on a ship with no onboard experience. So both schemes will be a good combination.”

We need to understand and accept once and for all that knowledge and competence can’t be fast tracked. The DNV scheme has strong elements of simulator training and ensuring the end result through an independent tough assessment but it is equally essential for a trainee DPO to clock desk time to learn the ropes of DP. Sea time is a very important element to lay a sound foundation in the training phase during which the trainee relates class room learning to actual DP operations afloat. Without sea time, the subject will remain only a concept in the mind of the trainee and thereby incomplete and will affect the understanding. NI and DNV will, therefore, do well to incorporate all the positive aspects of their respective schemes with the aim of making the training programme all encompassing and wholesome.

I am optimistic that when the 'think tanks' of NI, the pioneers, and the respected classification society like DNV, who have such vast experience in maritime audits and risk management, sit down to work out the scheme a good wholesome training programme and certification concept will emerge.

Whatever may be the gains of the unified scheme, the non-availability of sea time for the trainees will remain the biggest stumbling block in the mosaic of DP training. Let us hope that the conviction with which the ship owners and oil majors have come together to address the DP training scheme will also address the problem of non-availability of sea time for the prospective DPOs.

As has been voiced a number of time in various fora, this lacunae will have serious implications on the availability of qualified manpower on DP platforms in days to come. Therefore it is strongly opined that this issue too be given very serious consideration and addressed by the industry.

I only hope the euphoria of this new prospect does not evaporate in thin air as it happens when two giants are required to adjust their goal posts and consensus becomes impossible.

Therefore some prickly issues, as given below, are expected:

- Being pioneers, will NI even consider abdicating the monopoly and dominating status in DP training?
- Will both parties be prepared to make compromises on issues they feel so strongly about in their respective training schemes?
- With both NI and DNV having stakes in the scheme, who will be the custodian of the scheme?
- Who can remain independent, but also control the process?
- Who is going to have the managing rights? What arrangement can be worked out by both the organisations to ensure that the scheme is jointly managed effectively?
- Will there be department wise administering of the training scheme and certification or will they set up a joint division to do so?
- Association of DNV will bring with it a sound experience and strong traits of micro auditing and goal oriented commitment to the scheme. Up to what extent will that be acceptable since it will push the training cost upwards?

There will be lots of ifs and buts about the scheme as cost of training is expected to be higher under the unified scheme. Will the training provider be prepared to accept / absorb this extra financial liability and would the new scheme be economically viable? What if like the US Coast Guard other flag states also comes out with their own training programme and certification under the STCW Manila Amendment of 2010? Will that nullify the gains of a unified scheme?

Till the proposal take some tangible shape and comes out with some concrete working understanding / arrangement, number of question marks will remain on the outcome of NI & DNV exercise. Despite that, I am optimistic that if sincere efforts are

made by NI and DNV they should be able to come out with a scheme which is respected, recognised and accepted by industry; a scheme which is built on a system using a blended approach of examinations and formalised shipboard training, also online, class room and simulator training and assessment.

A good wholesome programme once formalised will be good for the industry, especially if it is also implemented properly. In my opinion it should meet the aspirations of the DP fraternity. Let us hope for the best! I am keeping my fingers crossed!!

So what are the potential advantages from a unified scheme?

- **A unified scheme will help set universal single tier standard for DP training and prospective DPOs will not be torn between choosing from the two available schemes**
- **A good combination of class room simulator and onboard training will result in better and knowledgeable DPOs**
- **Standardisation of training outcome through knowledge based independent global assessment system**
- **High quality control will lead to better training methodologies and ensure better training standards through qualified good instructors**
- **DNV's vast infrastructure will result in better auditing of DP training centres which will make them a place of excellence**
- **Training and document frauds are expected to reduce significantly**
- **Greater learning satisfaction for the trainees**



Lessons From Down Under

The inaugural Asian DP conference was a chance to debate the question whether regional best practices can be harnessed and applied elsewhere to influence standards globally.

Australia was the example discussed at the conference, and given the Australasian region currently has 7 Major exploration /production projects under way or planned this is perhaps an obvious case study. With a range of operators that includes Chevron, Shell, Woodside, Conoco Phillips, Santos and Exxon Mobil to name just some, it is perhaps easy to see why there is so much focus down under.

These projects are sucking in hardware in the shape of vessels and expertise as human resources from all over the world roll up. As a result a lot of work is being undertaken to develop Oil & Gas / Maritime clusters - as a means of bringing all stakeholders together. Based on the Norwegian models, organisations such as the Australian Maritime Safety Administration (AMSA), the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) and APPEA (The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association) are working in tandem to great effect.

The fact that the Australian offshore resources have long term viability, (50 – 100 years) it is very likely the region will only expand as a world influencer, and so getting the ground work right is vital to all.

Mark Pointon, himself lured down under by the burgeoning market, used his Asia DP Conference presentation to discuss his employer, Farstad's core business which lies in the AHTS and OSV sector with an increasing presence in the subsea IMR sector.

At the Farstad Offshore Simulation Centre Perth, in addition to DP, the centre provides a wide portfolio of training across the offshore spectrum. This spread of knowledge creates a joined up effect, which in turn means that it is possible to leverage influence and affect standards because of a specific set of circumstances and a hyper-connected training community.

As a result, Farstad has been able to establish working relationships with the relevant authorities and the full range of Oil company clients. In addition they are active in fora such

as MarineSafe Australia and Company of Master Mariners of Australia (CMMA), this is a working example of what can happen when the gravity of major offshore work shapes a rounded communal approach to operations, safety, training and excellence. The dense nature of the Australasian market, and its distance from others has ensured that a unique model has emerged, one that many can learn from.

While Mark could only speak from the Farstad perspective he felt that the unique environment has led to unique and interesting progress in 3 key areas:

- 1.** Exploratory discussions are being held with AMSA, for example, with a view to developing "Offshore" specific endorsements for Officers and crew along the lines of existing STCW Tanker and Chemical vessel endorsements, using the courses and programmes mentioned above as the template.
- 2.** In the DP area, Farstad is pioneering a "DP Induction course for Engineers and ETO's". This course incorporates all the recommendations in STCW, IMCA and MTS guidance on DP Engineer training. To date they have trained approximately 50 Farstad Engineers and are receiving increasing interest from other local providers and clients. In the long term they would like to see this adopted globally and are currently looking at a number of options to achieve this.
- 3.** Farstad is in advanced discussions with Woodside Exploration Ltd in connection with the development of a "DP team" Verification of Competence programme for vessels chartered to WEL. In conjunction with this process we have provided "DP awareness" training to a number of WEL project team members and client representatives and have had input into the development of the companies revised DP vessel specification requirements. This will have implications globally because the vessels will be chartered in from the "world pool".

This seems like excellent news for all, and hearing of trainers, shipowners, senior maritime personnel, clients and even government all working collaboratively is a shining example of progressive industry engagement. The fact that where the conditions are right diverse interests can indeed work together for the betterment of all. This seems to be something that many DP stakeholders could stand to learn from and even more may benefit as a result.



Maritime Labour Convention

Faith, Hope and Wifi

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), “decent work is the most widely shared aspiration of people and their families in all countries”. So it is to this very humble but compelling backdrop that the Maritime Labour Convention is now in force.

The Asian Offshore Support Journal Conference in Singapore featured a significant focus on MLC 2006, which governs crew rights and working conditions, came into force in August for all types of shipping. Up to 55 flag states have ratified MLC 2006 and port state control (PSC) is policing the regulations.

The first ship to be detained for not meeting MLC 2006 rules was an OSV in Denmark, found not to be carrying crew contracts. So it is pretty clear that owners should ensure they have the right documentation and seafarer complaint procedures on board ships.

During the same conference session, Singtel Satellite director Song Lee Meng said vessel operators should improve crew welfare to meet the expectations of social networking officers. Owners can use IT and communications technology to provide Internet and social media access for crew.

Thankfully the offshore industry has been at the vanguard of providing internet access to crews. Senior IDPOA Fellow Marc Bragg, DP Master/Owner at Bragg Marine Consultants Inc, shared his thoughts recently on how the DP sector provides such amenities.

According to Bragg: Most reputable companies have free internet access provided onboard. A lot of times though it is not the fastest and many sites that uses a large amount of bandwidth such as “video” Skype or iTunes are banned to enable use by all onboard.

He says that most times now when crew are shipping out in the offshore, the first question is, “Does the vessel have internet and phones?” If not on occasion seafarers will refuse to join. This is how serious the issue of connectivity now is - I honestly believe that in this day and age it is the common or the norm for good companies to provide such services free of charge to crew members as part of their terms & conditions being away from home we all need to maintain communication with home and a

surf on facebook and seeing the family pics does wonders for the seafarer, companies should realize this, Have joking, he suggests if you want to test the effect of disconnection maybe take the Superintendents brand new smart telephone away for 10mins, watch the panic and squirming!! Then ask him/her to go a month without any contact! A good point well made.

Back to the issue of MLC, it seems that many have fallen for the convention being some kind of silver bullet aimed at the woes of shipping and of ending the abandonment of seafarers. Alas it is not - at present, as the obligations within the Convention relate just to repatriation and do not extend to payment of outstanding wages in circumstances where the crew are abandoned.

The important issue of abandonment is due to be addressed during an ILO meeting in early 2014, but it will be some time before measures to tackle this issue are agreed. Until the issues of abandonment and non-payment of wages are fully resolved, then the aspiration of “decent work” will remain some way off.

Professional mariners being left penniless, far from home, stranded on a substandard, ill-equipped vessel in a forgotten corner of a port – it’s just not good enough.

To ignore the issue of pay is to ignore the very reason why people go to sea in the first place. Yes of course welfare should extend to getting people back home safely, but it should also be with their wages tucked away safely in the pocket.

We were interested to hear of a new insurance product, CrewSEACURE which provides an effective system of financial security to put an end to the threat of seafarers becoming the “cashflow casualties” of their employer’s insolvencies.

The insurance covers the cost of repatriating abandoned crew, as well as providing accommodation, subsistence and medical treatment before repatriation. It also covers unpaid wages, so crew do not feel they have to stay on the ship in order to secure their wages.

The act of denying seafarers their hard earned wages is despicable, and if MLC is to deliver on its promises, we will soon end this embarrassing stain on shipping’s conscience.

DP GOES SUPER



The “Super” and “Mega” yacht sectors are experiencing incredible change and growth, to an extent that even the prefixes are struggling to keep pace. From design, construction, management and manning there is very little of the “old-school” luxury market left. What does remain however, is the vision and desire to allow owners, and clients to go where they want, and to do what they want when they get there.

The aim of superyachts is to provide a superlative experience, and recently there have been almost as many developments under the waterline as above it. One subtle development now very much in vogue, is the increased use of thrusters to allow ever-greater control of the vessels movements.

This desire for enhanced control and manoeuvrability has led to the increasing use of Dynamic Positioning (DP) systems. These can loosely be defined as automatically controlling a vessel in order to maintain position and heading, through the controlled, and often combined, use of engines and thrusters.

The use and evolution of DP has been taking shape over the past thirty years, and DP systems are now routinely fitted to vessels such as Drilling Rigs, Dive Support Vessels, Floating Production units, Survey vessels, Shuttle tankers, Cable ships, “Flotel units”, and many others, with the increasing inclusion of Cruise ships.

At first glance many may look quizzical at the idea of equipping a pleasure craft with equipment akin to the most sophisticated oil field vessels, but there are obvious advantages for any Superyacht to retain positional control in tight spots.

One of the enduring attractions of such leisurely pursuits has been the ability to go into small harbours, to visit coves and beaches far from the madding crowd; but in building ever bigger, this freedom has been eroded. DP, however, provides the ability to get closer to the areas that matter, and to escape the beaten path once more. “Vorsprung, und Spaß, durch technik”, as German Superyacht owners might say.

When quaint harbours are too small to enter, reefs too sensitive and protected to anchor near, DP provides the ability to make the most of secluded hard to reach areas. With the ability to stop, turn and to shift in any direction in a controlled manner, the ocean becomes a playground once more, and in fitting sophisticated control systems the architects, designers and builders are bringing influence, freedom and adventure back.

Having assessed why Superyachts are increasingly embracing the equipment of DP – there is one other vital ingredient to address, and that is the DP Operator (DPO).

Having the equipment to allow you to get close to rocks, coves and other boats is fine, but can cause more trouble than its worth if the people controlling it are inexperienced, and lack the necessary skills and training.

When disciplines, equipment and people are brought from other areas of the industry, or when hitherto alien skills are required of your existing crew, there is obviously some degree of change management necessary. It is vital that a formal process is developed to ensure that the introduction is a smooth one without loss of life, or damage to the environment and property. DP systems have been growing in sophistication and as the equipment has evolved and developed, so to have the DPO's. Who are trained, certified and have the skills to mitigate the vast array of risks facing them.

In the other more mainstream incarnation of DP, the vessels are often conducting operations of a safety-critical nature, i.e. close to platforms and other fixed structures, or with divers operating in their vicinity. Obviously in such an environment it is essential that the vessel is able to work to its maximum efficiency and safety, and this includes the competence of the key personnel on board.

The demands of leisure sector usage may lack some of the more critical elements, but there are real concerns over personnel safety of owners and clients who need to be guarded from harm at all costs, and of sensitive sea areas. So whatever the ship type, the DPO should be properly trained, and fully conversant with the capabilities of his/her vessel and the DP system.

Having the right people onboard is a vital ingredient in keeping the vessel safe, but also in attracting the right clients. In other sectors the requirement for certified DPO's has been one driven within the terms of Charter parties, and it is likely that DP-enabled yacht charters will evolve to specify similar demands.

In the event of an accident use of non-certified DPO's could have serious implications on any insurance in place, whether marine, third party, or perhaps even an individual's travel insurance policy. Sadly as in all other parts of the maritime industry it takes a disaster to prompt real change.

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BOOM AND BUST



As the offshore sectors evolve there are certain new and interesting challenges facing owners, the management ashore and onboard personnel. Just as with anything else, growth drives change. One of the most challenging developments today is the need to harness technology – not just for safety, but to compete in increasingly tight markets and to deliver on the demands of clients.

Having more vessels with DP capability tells only one side of the story, how can we ensure vessels have both the quantity and quality of people necessary to operate such highly technical equipment into the future.

There are parts of the offshore industry which have long used DP, and to a point their growth has been fairly well matched by an expansion in the training and certification of qualified and skilled DP Operators (DPO's). As new fields and sectors open up, they will tap the existing finite human resources.

As such urgent steps are needed to ensure the development and capabilities of qualified DP operators globally, and no area can allow itself to fall behind in this regard.

The rapid expansion of an already booming sector has brought with it a new focus, new problems and a new sense of perspective. Regulators are struggling to keep up, authorities are squabbling and employers are left struggling to find the very best new people. While onboard experienced Masters and senior personnel are left wrestling to ensure newcomers know the ropes.

There are potentially grave implications for failure, and so all must focus on attracting, retaining and developing the current and future personnel at the DP desk.

Safety, as ever, must be the overriding concern, and the basic fundamentals – that of keeping people, the environment, and vessels safe, while maintaining operational capability and commercial viability have to be the target.

In recent years it has become ever harder to find, and to then keep good quality DPO's. The present and worsening shortage of not just qualified, but "experienced operators",

is reaching a critical mass, and given the importance of change management and continual improvement, new ideas, innovation, and quality people are urgently needed.

DP training requires specialist facilities ashore, but it is the periods of supervised sea-time (i.e. shipboard learning) that are a cause for concern. For pre-certified DPO's, employment is necessary in a substantive position in which they are able to gain experience.

Despite some developments, such as DNV's simulator focused scheme, there are still problems developing. The DP sector is just managing to get enough people through the door, however many currently in the training scheme find it difficult to get a place onboard to complete their training, and to gain the requisite sea-time and experience to gain the "DP Operators Certificate".

From the research conducted and experience gained elsewhere it seems the offshore industry must devise mechanisms for making places available on all suitable DP vessels for the use of DPO's undertaking training. Those companies which remain "non-trainers" should perhaps be encouraged to make space available as part of their contribution to the renewal of the DP manning pool. Specific proposals on how sufficient training berths might best be secured will need to be developed and kept under review by industry. This is not a simple fix, and some companies are yet to even reach the realisation phase of the problem, but they will.

Today we have experience and skill onboard, and this is being cascaded downwards to new entrants. We have a system and network of accredited training centres – but we need to ensure that we do not let our guard down, nor our standards drop.

As more seafarers look to the DP sector, we need to manage the entry of new people – we need to ensure that the cultural and technical skills are effectively passed on, and that this new generation of DP Operators are worthy of the past, present and future of this most demanding and skilful of professions.

UNIQUE HYDRA (PTY) LTD



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Visit www.uniquehydra.com for further information relating to our experience and expertise, the excellent services we offer and for a detailed explanation of our world-class product range.

Unique Hydra, a Unique Maritime Group (UMG) company is a leading manufacturer and supplier of marine and diving equipment and services to the oil and gas industry since 2000. Unique Hydra personnel have accumulated substantial experience in marine electronics, engineering, hyperbaric, military, defence, aerospace and chemical engineering. Our experience has given us a leading edge in obtaining contracts involving sales and installations of electronic equipments, and the design, production, supply and maintenance of specialized sub-sea equipment. Services offered are comprehensive and tailored to suit individual client needs. Unique Hydra became part of the Unique Maritime Group of companies in 2007.

Unique Hydra's marine division specialises in Dynamic Positioning systems, and our services include dynamic positioning repairs, installations, hardware, DP Trials and FMEA surveys. Unique Hydra proudly offers local and international clients with fully accredited Nautical Institute Dynamic Positioning courses conducted at our on-site, fully approved, training centre. Additionally, the division offers supply, service and repairs of control/automation, vessel monitoring/stability, and a complete and comprehensive range of navigation, communication (terrestrial and satellite) and hydrographic survey systems. Unique Hydra also offers a range of products and services to meet the exacting demands of the military market and has extensive experience in naval systems.

The marine division also manages a substantial range of rental equipment to conduct hydrographic surveys from on the surface or from ROV and AUV platforms, and for NDT inspections on sub-sea structures.

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PEBBLE

The Pebble digital watch has shipped 15,000 units a week since January. With rumours of an iWatch from Apple, the Pebble may be kicking off the Year of the Smartwatch – a vintage year, we trust you'll agree.

The timepiece is compatible with Android and iOS, and comes with a bevy of pre-installed apps to play with on its gorgeous, energy-efficient, e-ink screen.

Price: \$150..pretending to be Dick Tracey, priceless.



15 OCTOBER -16 OCTOBER 2013

Dynamic Positioning MTS:

Westin Hotel Memorial City, Houston, USA
<http://goo.gl/3vXvyP>

22 OCTOBER -24 OCTOBER 2013

DOT International:

The Woodlands Waterway Marriott
Hotel, Houston, USA
www.deepoffshoretechnology.com

23 OCTOBER -24 OCTOBER 2013

OSV Conference:

Håndverkerstuene, Oslo, Norway
<http://goo.gl/qnShLz>

29 OCTOBER -31 OCTOBER 2013

OTC Brasil:

Rio Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
www.otcbrasil.org

5 NOVEMBER -7 NOVEMBER 2013

RenewableUK Annual Conference:

NEC, Birmingham, United Kingdom
<http://goo.gl/xCFRLY>

6 NOVEMBER -7 NOVEMBER 2013

IMCA Annual Seminar 2013:

Shangri-La Hotel, 22 Orange Grove Road, Singapore
<http://goo.gl/dTJ7dY>

11 NOVEMBER -12 NOVEMBER 2013

Subsea Vessel Operations North America:

Hilton Greenway Plaza, Houston, USA
<http://goo.gl/WZqWNO>

19 NOVEMBER -21 NOVEMBER 2013

EWEA Offshore:

Messe Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany
<http://goo.gl/yG7P6R>

9 DECEMBER -11 DECEMBER 2013

International Conference Health & Safety in Offshore Wind

Swissôtel Hillmannplatz, Bremen, Germany
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