

6°degrees

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



Issue 5: Fall 2010



Declining Standards

HOW TO IMPROVE DPOs

Time To Get Real
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Ready, Willing and Cable

FALL AND RISE OF A SECTOR

Hands On
SIMULATING NEWS

DP Certification
HAVE YOUR SAY

Making A Big Bang
LAUNCHING PORTFIRE40

WELCOME

TO 6degrees, THE E-JOURNAL FROM IDPOA



“Who are ya, who are ya”, chant the football fans on the terraces to deride the opposition. Similar questions were heard when a new Association for DPOs was rolled out 18 months ago.

Thankfully, and significantly, it seems we have turned a corner. Now the questions are about what we are doing, rather than who is doing them. This is in itself a great opportunity to check our own development and to assess where we have come, and more importantly where IDPOA is headed. and how we intend to get there.

This brings with it a new set of problems. There is a difficult balancing act for any professional association today. Embrace the web too readily and you are nothing more than a glorified LinkedIn or Facebook group, ignore the web and you are a dinosaur. So which way forward?

So what are we doing? Well aside from the careers support, guidance, advice, news and debate on the website – we have been throwing ourselves head long into a concerted programme of engagement with industry. The range of projects – in content and form – has been a strength for IDPOA. The flipside has been the need to communicate a clear message about our focus, mission and very reason for existing.

Which brings us neatly to what I personally see as the real driving force behind the association – that of developing a real network for members. Whether this is primarily social or professional depends on the individual, but the tools exist to make things happen. That has to be a good thing, surely? For you, us and the industry as a whole.

The people we know, and the circles in which we move, define us as social beings. Social networks powerfully and often subliminally, influence our life chances, our attitudes, our behaviour and even how happy we feel. All very important stuff.

What does that have to do with work? Well quite a lot actually. A true professional is defined by the career they have chosen, by the tasks they perform and how well they do them...and how much they care about improving their skills and knowledge. These are all in turn driven by the social factors we spoke of earlier.

The professionals in your network shape you, your attitudes, your career chances and how satisfied you are in your work. Within IDPOA there is a network, a true fraternity to make a positive difference – to you and your job. That is who we are, and what we do.

All the best,

Steven Jones
Executive Director

IN THIS ISSUE

There is a lot of controversy in this issue of 6degrees.

From the perceived lowering of DP Operator standards, through to the IDPOA RepComm's thoughts on minimum entry standards and prior experience.

It's not the IDPOA way to just spot problems - we look to some innovative solutions too.

We also look at one industry that simply cannot cope with demand, and which if the situation is not carefully and considerately managed could bring the hopes of wind farm electricity generation crashing down. It seems there just aren't enough good people for the high voltage cable construction game.

For many years there was talk of generic DP system training courses. One of the major stumbling blocks to this was the need for software to allow the simulation to take place. VStep, the people who bring you the world famous ShipSim, think they have the answer.

There is book talk too - as we look at two new titles on the market...one featuring how to keep operations safe, the other looking at what happens when they go terribly and tragically wrong. Don't miss the latest works from Captain David Bray and John Konrad.

You may have seen in the press, IDPOA has signed up as a partner of the Portfire40 initiative. Shipping is looking for a new breed of hero, and we think we know where we can find them.

The IDPOA jobs board and careers section is becoming the first stop for anyone looking for a new job or to get on the ladder - we feature some of the latest and best DP jobs inside.

TIME TO GET REAL...



Setting up a professional association is the easy part. Getting people to join is a little tougher... keeping them involved and satisfied is perhaps the hardest task of all. But it's time to get real.

The most experienced and senior DPOs are worried. They are worried about their own perceived professionalism, and the fact their professional body is looking too much at DP training and of bringing new entrants into the sector.

It is putting some off joining IDPOA, or even engaging with us, and it is clear that the "diplomacy" which has been so important in getting the Association to this point is now being seen as a weakness.

While there were concerns that the likes of the Nautical Institute (NI) would see IDPOA as a threat, it is now clear that the threat was not real, and we exist as a stand-alone, positive and important industry presence. So given that we aren't a menace to other similar organisations, and we are forbidden by our constitution from getting involved in matters relating to pay and conditions...it seems we need to re-focus our efforts.

We must look to engage with senior DPOs instead of getting embroiled in the training and recruitment side, to our own detriment. We are extremely grateful to IDPOA fellow, Nick Wallace, for making us aware of the problems we face and for laying down some cold hard truths, and some interesting ways of moving forward.

Nick recognises that many DPOs are interested in issues about pay and conditions, and the fact that IDPOA simply cannot engage in such areas. Not simply because of the legality of unionisation, but as this could perhaps give owners an excuse to ignore the many other legitimate concerns that the IDPOA can highlight.

So it is clear we need to think about a new strategy, as part of our growth and development. Nick suggests that there is a "third way", a means of meshing with the provisions that senior DPOs want, while ensuring we remain focused on professionalism.

This route is about pushing the notion of professionalism harder –

after all, the higher the regard for a profession, then enhanced pay and conditions follow. This is what we need to get across, even if subliminally, to potential members.

IDPOA would cannot and will not become involved with pay/ conditions, disputes but by elevating the professional standing we can create a positive upwards spiral. As Nick states, "I believe that we, as an organisation, should be doing as much as possible to have our members regarded as the professionals that they are (or should be!)"

It is an unfortunate truth that DPOs have become conditioned to being (or seen as being) mercenary due to a seemingly all too common lack of professional respect. Many have been seen as simply, "bums-on-seats"; anyone at the first European DP Conference will recall the label, "button pushers". with a wry smile

This perception has eroded the professional "self-worth" of many DPOs and badly affected the sense of job satisfaction. So it seems we have been left with a situation in which the professional experts are derided and belittled, is it any wonder then that many have been left to just chase the dollar/pound or whatever?

Nick recognises the potential value of our work, and whilst there are no doubt good reasons for espousing the merits of Continuing Professional Development, DP Certification Re-Validation etc. he feels that these are actually a "turn-off" to potential members. There was also some feeling amongst the DPOs sampled that IDPOA is rather too "cosy" with IMCA/NI/Owners etc.

This is unfair, and simply not true – but we are dealing with actual perceptions, rather than reality. As such it is up to us as an Association to reassure members that far from being too "cosy", these relationships and the engagement we embark on are done with the best interests of members at heart.

Drop and
give me ten
reasons to
sign up.
NOW!



It would be all too easy to bemoan the views of the unenlightened, but instead we need to focus on making sure we better communicate what we are doing, with whom and why.

So back to the problems - the emphasis on Training Berths and encouraging new people into DP is a barrier to some established and experienced DPOs from becoming members. The general feeling is that too many "newbies", would result in a severe dilution of professional standards, an additional (unpaid) training workload and, worst of all when dealing with DPOs, a threat to their income due to an influx of cheap labour.

Turkeys don't vote for Christmas, as they say – and as such the concept for many of supporting a professional organisation that is appearing to promote policies that might adversely affect their livelihoods is a no brainer.

So what can we do to change these negatives? Nick has some ideas that might stimulate membership, and would like to see the following addressed:

1. Quality People

The poor quality of "new recruits" into the DP environment. Particularly with regard to poor communication skills and basic educational standards being inadequate to deal with the more technical aspects of the DP discipline. It seems to be the "leitmotif" of owners and operators that "cheap is good, free is better".

2. Who's the Boss?

Over time too much power has been removed from senior Officers and placed in the hands of Client Representatives, Project Superintendents etc. These people seldom hold marine qualifications and often make decisions that should be made by marine professionals. Masters are then "obliged" by "commercial pressure" to carry out operations that are questionable on safety grounds. It

is noticeable that in the last two or three years some Masters are reacting against this but this is an area that we could address.

3. "Real" Safety

Bearing in mind (2) above. We are swamped with "safety". Much of what is required is of dubious merit and some of it downright ridiculous. "Safety" often fails to address real concerns and is thrown out the window if it is going to have any time or financial cost to the operation. We need to campaign to have sensible, realistic safety policies that reflect the actual risks encountered offshore. We do not need to be dealing with "safety Nazis" who will happily bully ABs for wearing no safety glasses but are deaf to concerns raised about navigating in a congested, unlit oilfield at night.

The tough home truths that Nick has delivered are important, and while some things are concerning – we can't sulk about things, we need to roll our sleeves up and get on with engaging with the people we have worked so hard to represent. We take the issue of senior DPO engagement seriously, and are beginning here with our outreach efforts.

We will push forward with the ideas Nick has kindly provided, but we really do need for you senior DPOs to reach out and engage with us. There is no use complaining, or bitterly deriding our efforts without first giving us the chance to impress and win you over.

So we need to know the professional problems they you wish to see the weight of IDPOA brought to bear upon.

Nick is actively recruiting for IDPOA, as he recognises the real benefit to finally having a legitimate industry voice. With an influx of the most senior and experienced DPOs we have a chance to become all that our members want, and that the industry needs.

So drop us a line and get involved. smj@dpooperators.org

As part of IDPOAs role on the DP Training Executive Group your thoughts are needed on the following issue, that of “manual ship handling experience”.

Captain Glenn Fiander, DP Lecturer at The Centre for Marine Simulation, St John’s Newfoundland writes:

Hands ON

In the document “The Nautical Institute Dynamic Positioning Operator’s Certificate, January 2010 revision” the following are stated:

“Although the prospective DPO should have manual ship handling experience before commencing his/her DP training this task should not be signed off unless the Master or his/her representative is satisfied that the prospective DPO has satisfactorily completed this task.”

“The Institute suggests that DPOs take every opportunity afforded to handle their vessels in manual control.”

The statements are there because manual ship handling skills are essential for all DPOs. With relation to DP, these skills are used mostly during the process of entering and exiting the various Auto DP modes. They are also utilized in emergency situations where a system failure has occurred and the only way to hold heading/position is to switch to manual control. This manual control might be via joystick or individual controls for each thrusters.

Manual ship handling skills are addressed within the training scheme. In the Induction course the different types of propulsion systems found on DP vessels are reviewed. If the proposal for a minimum entry requirement of OOW is adopted, all candidates will likely have at least some instruction in ship handling theory. The level of instruction will depend on the amount of ship handling instruction provided within the

syllabus of the OOW certificate selected as the minimum requirement.

During the 30 day Seagoing DP Familiarisation phase of the training, the following duties are to be performed and recorded in the DP Operator’s Log Book:

“1.1 Controlling Vessel movements using – Manual controls jointly and individually / Date evolution undertaken / Master’s signature”

“1.2 Controlling Vessel’s movement using – Joystick control / Date evolution undertaken / Master’s signature”

“6. UNDERSTANDING & USE OF PROPULSION UNITS / (a) IN MANUAL CONTROL / Date proficient / Master’s signature”

At the end of the training scheme successful candidates are awarded a DP Operator’s certificate from the Nautical Institute. A DP certificate will not be issued by the institute if the above logbook entries are not dated and signed by the Master.

These entries are open to interpretation. Entries 1.1 & 1.2 say “Date evolution undertaken”. This could be interpreted to mean that the candidate simply has to use the indicated control modes with a signature making no implication as to proficiency at the task. Entry 6.0 indicates “Date proficient” which could be interpreted as understanding

how the thruster controls work, not necessarily being able to successfully control the vessel with those thrusters. Note that these are interpretations of these logbook entries that I have heard from others. Perhaps a change of wording might be in order.

Given the references to manual ship handling above:

Does the awarding of “The DP Operator’s Certificate” imply that the recipient has sufficient manual ship handling experience to perform the manual ship handling duties that may be required of a DPO?

If the answer to the above is yes, then the following:

Some individuals undertaking DP training within the Nautical Institute scheme may have no manual ship handling experience. Others may have insufficient experience to carry out the manual ship handling duties required of a DPO and of course there are those who do possess adequate ship handling experience on entry into the scheme. Does the training scheme do an adequate job of ensuring that all who receive “The DP Operator’s Certificate” have sufficient training/experience with respect to manual ship handling?

The above questions should be answered within the context of the current training scheme review. The opinions of certified DPOs are needed, so please email your thoughts dpo@dpooperators.org

Declining Standards?

It is important for any professional association to listen to the feedback from the frontline. The observations may not always make comfortable reading, but such comments are a vital part of the drive towards improving standards.

Harry Blacklock MSc, MNI believes the standard of DPOs is falling. In his article he questions the ways in which they are assessed, and of the very training scheme itself. We would like to hear your thoughts – and of whether the problems are as widespread as feared, and of whether you believe the standards are truly in decline.

Over the past 10 years there has been a marked decline in the standard of training and quality of Dynamic Positioning Officers (DPOs); this is attributable to the system lacking the drive to maintain standards, and the natural human willingness to exploit that to their own advantage.

In the early days of DP the progression of training would be something along the lines of (not all were the same but were similar) serving on a vessel for thirty days before being sent on the induction course, on successful completion of which then starting training proper. Most DPOs around the same era spent the next 6 months as a trainee, or Junior DPO as it is sometimes termed, after your 6 months as a trainee / junior which generally took a year to achieve you then took the simulator course and subsequently, having been awarded your licence sought your first position as a 2/O DPO, but still always under the watchful eye of a very experienced C/O SDPO or 1st/O SDPO.

Hours recorded in the log book had to represent actual hours at the desk or the Captain would not sign it.

DP in the earlier years was in general restricted to DSVs ROV and large pipe laying vessels and the standards were high as was the quality of training. The DP world was small and a very exclusive group to be associated with.

DPOs were predominantly European and would come through the system in much the same way.

The DP world was such that most DPOs knew, or know of each other. Most DP vessels were run along the same lines, though the equipment would be different the integration of DPOs through-out the various fleets was smoother partially due to the standards of training, and good bridge practices worldwide being consistent. Knowing the fundamentals of DP, was a very important part of being a DP operator, and DPOs were also very blunt about their peers capabilities because much depended on them

In later years the majority of offshore oil and gas industry vessels are being built, and being fitted with more affordable DP systems, mostly DP I. Additionally vessels not particularly suited to the role are having DP systems retro fitted, and in some cases upgrades from DP I to DP II.

Possible reasoning behind this is the willingness of vessel owners to diversify into various construction roles, and with more advanced power management technology and various thruster configurations being available in the smaller vessels i.e. Supply (PSV), Anchor Handling tug (AHT), Anchor handling tug supply (AHTS), etc. DP has become a reality for these vessels.

Owners are installing the most affordable option as they see a niche in the industry a lot of operations now are asking for DP I / DP II vessels and vessel owners are building vessels with versatility in mind. Prospective charterers with high costs in mind are looking more and more to these vessels as a more economical option.

THE PROBLEM

What is apparent, certainly in the Middle East and probably elsewhere, is a high percentage of poorly trained DPOs with certificates of dubious heritage and highly inflated hours that are not supported by suitable documentation. Worse, these DPOs are often offered by organisations who are members of reputable trade organisations and who have therefore not audited / or are unable to audit them, or simply choose to ignore the issue on commercial grounds.

Examples of the problem are:

- On one vessel it was noted that one certificate had a high issue number but the same issue date earlier than a lower certificate number.
- Another vessel, where on discussion with the Master it transpired that he never sailed as a DPO and always got the oncoming master to sign his book, further investigation showed that the majority of the stamps in his book were for a period when the vessel was disallowed from using the DP due to a previous run off where it had hit a platform.
- A recent review of a CV from an eastern bloc candidate revealed that he had booked 12 hours for everyday on board the vessel including his sign-on and sign-off days and this was for 3 of the 4 recorded tours of duty and he was applying for the position of Chief Officer / SDPO.
- At the time of writing a check of an applicant for C/O SDPO revealed that in reality the gentleman had only just completed his training period.

The above are a few of the examples that are being encountered almost on a daily basis.

There are numerous cases where DPOs have booked 12 hours for every day on the vessel, whether working DP or not, and in some case when the vessels were in port.

Another facet of the problem is vessel owners and organisations marginalisation of DP I. They feel it does not deserve the respect and recognition of the Class II & III systems when in reality the DP I system because of its inherent failures deserves much more attention and the quality and attention of the DP operator is ever more vital.

IMCA recommend for ROV vessels with Class I systems should not be allowed closer than 100 metres to a structure and to take other points into consideration such as a Blow off situation, yet they feel PSVs can work, and to quote IMCA M 182 – 1.2 Basis of these guidelines: These guidelines are based on the specific characteristics of DP OSV operations. In particular that, unlike most other DP vessel operations, OSVs can, under normal operating circumstances:

- Terminate supply operations and move away from the offshore installation at a moment's notice.
- Can be safely manoeuvred in joystick / manual control while supply operations are being carried out.

For the above to apply the DP operator would have to be sitting at the desk and paying attention, and be competent at what he is doing. Given the practices and lack of experience discussed above 99 times out 100 this will not be the case.

Also the same can apply to ROV vessels the difference being there is more chance of the DP operator on a vessel engaged in ROV operations being in attendance and paying attention to what he is doing than on a supply vessel.

In reality you will find that the ROV DP operator in the majority of cases would be more attentive to the job in hand.

However this is not to say that there are not good PSV vessels with Masters and DPOs operating vessels on DP to the highest standards. What is fact is that there is a massive influx of poorly trained / inexperienced DPOs and a considerable amount of forged certification and hours in the system and it is only a matter of time before they infiltrate all sectors of the DP market if measures are not undertaken to curb this.

This Paper in no way serves the problem justice and there are a lot more issues that could be addressed within the same sphere but it is hoped that this paper highlights this particular growing problem and prompts if not action some thought on the subject.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

After reviewing the present situation, though there is certification and policing, both appear to be inadequate and I would like to suggest some changes that would in my opinion improve the situation.

A better policing of the system i.e. DP hours, DP Schools, and DP certification a more rigorous checking of candidate's eligibility to become a fully-fledged DPO / SDPO and an upgrade of the certification process

The induction course. To be done either before employment on a DP vessel or as soon as practical after. There are different lines of thought on this all with valid points and feel this particular point should go out for comment.

Hours logged to be actual hours sat at the DP desk and operating the system, backed up with incontestable proof that the vessel was indeed on DP and the candidate was one of the operators on board. After 6 months as Junior DPO and meeting specific hour's requirements and completion of specific tasks (Tasks in training program to be reviewed to be appropriate to DPO status) the candidate returns to DP school and completes a DPO proficiency test where the course teachers name is on the certificate, and is responsible for the quality of the DPO.

After returning as a proficient DPO he then trains to become a Senior DPO as per IMCA requirements. I would suggest a minimum amount of hours based on another 6 months DP time, plus tasks and return to college to do a SDPO proficiency course designed to put them under pressure / crisis management, similar to the OIM crisis management courses where they are put in different scenarios to see how they react, cope, how conversant they are with the equipment not just the DP desk but fan Beam, DGPS, Taught-wire, HPR systems, Gangway links, in such a way that it would assess their competence to sail as a SDPO and deal with and record the multitude of problems that can arise.

I also recommend proficiency tests be implemented for serving DPOs / SDPOs.

What we must not lose track of is SDPOs are in charge of a twelve hour watch where junior watch keepers look to them for advice and guidance, and look to them in times of uncertainty for direction. People's lives are dependent on their decisions and actions.

Feature Training Centre

Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz

The Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz (MIWB) consists of the Higher Nautical Academy, providing education for masters and chief engineers FG, the national Maritime Simulator Training Centre (MSTC) providing full mission ship simulator training, and their own seagoing training vessel.

MIWB is part of the Noordelijke Hogeschool Leeuwarden (NHL) and the largest of the Dutch Maritime Universities of Professional Education and with some 330 students whereas the MSTC caters annually for some 800 own students and external trainees from the other Dutch maritime institutes and 400 course participants from companies and other training institutes.

The mission of MIWB is to continue to provide high quality ships officers for the Dutch and foreign merchant fleets and to be the centre of excellence of maritime simulator training in the Netherlands. These goals are reached with a dedicated staff of about 50 persons, most of whom have a seafaring background, up to master and chief engineer level.



Find out more on the website www.miwb.nl

Activities and projects related to safety assessment in waterborne transport are in fact the core matter of the competence based maritime education and practical and simulator training, which is the daily activity of the institute.

Furthermore the institute has been involved in the development as well as the testing of safety critical aspects in both Safeco projects, and the EU's Leonardo da Vinci programme HICOSS project on the harmonization and improving instruction in communication and safety at sea.

In addition to the professionally qualified staff, the Institute employs some 10 MSc and PhD holders.

The institute has been accredited by national and professional authorities in order to ascertain that a continued high standard of quality is assured. R&D tasks and EU project participation is becoming an increasing area of interest for the relevant operational and academic staff members under supervision of the heads of department and the board of directors.

As per academic year 2002/2003 the fulltime Bachelor course in hydrography commenced at MIWB graduating hydrographic surveyors for the dredging and offshore industry and governmental agencies.

The Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz is celebrating its 135th anniversary this year and can be considered one of the most advanced ship's officers training institutes in the world. Through the participation in Neptune the hope is to assist in the further international enhancement of safety and economics in the shipping industry.



Ready Willing and Cable



Around fifteen years ago it looked like the cable industry was set to boom with the sheer weight of projects and work set to come on-stream. There were so many plans on an incredible global scale - almost every country and so many companies all wanted to get in on the connected future that cables promised. Sadly for all involved, (and yes I was one of them), the boom became a rather spectacular bust.

Some of the biggest names in the world nearly went to the wall, companies were horse traded and fleets of new DP capable cable vessels were mothballed. This spectacular fall from financial grace had a huge knock on effect on the "talent". The most senior officers sought out new jobs with small start-up companies, or offshore outfits that stepped in when the "big boys" dropped out. While the younger emerging officers were pretty much cut adrift.

So what does that mean in today's market? Well cables are becoming hot news once more. With the need for enhanced communications which has been prompted by the smartphone revolution, and the attendant need to link continents once more then the need for new cables and urgent repairs gains pace. Add to that the evolution of the next generation of deepwater wind farms and we can see that the cabling sector is the vital cog in making our communications work and the dreams of alternative power exploitation become reality.

With cables serving as the umbilical cord for the new fields of offshore wind farm's there is need for professionally installed and maintained arrays. It is becoming increasingly clear that neglect, inexperience, substandard planning or lack of resources are emerging as the real Achilles heel of such offshore projects.

According to a recent statement on "Cable Gridlock" by Rob Grimmond, managing director of multi-disciplinary marine solutions provider Offshore Marine Management and vice chairman of Renewable UK's Offshore Wind Delivery Group, there are three main problems to contend with.

These include:

- Cable Breaks "caused by vessel movements and/or inexperienced crew"

- Cable loops "due to vessel movements, lack of control or bad equipment and software"; and
- Cables being cut short "due to people not using the right measurement techniques and methodology to install the second end - when you get to the second end you should know how much to the meter is required".

In a recent report by RenewableUK, "UK Offshore Wind: Building an Industry", conservative industry estimates call for cable requirements to soar from 400km installed to an additional 800km in 2015, peaking at 1,000km in 2016, and averaging around 850km per year for the next four years. That is a lot of cable... but if not installed properly it is a lot of bights, kinks, breaks and frustrated clients.

Similarly demanding projections apply to high-voltage, direct current (HVDC) installations and these are expected to peak in 2020 at just below 1,000km a year.

It seems that the lost generation of skilled operators and kit are needed into the next decade. According to Ton Geul, Business Development Manager at Visser and Smit Marine Contracting, "We need large sized dynamic positioning vessels with good station keeping capabilities, good stability, combined with sufficient accommodation capacity, large cable storage and free work deck to handle cables and cable protection provisions".

"Typical dimensions would be between 70-90 m long, with a beam between 16-18m. For crew transfers and rotation a helideck should be considered." he adds.

ABB recently made a proactive play to stay ahead of the curve, teaming up with Aker Solutions earlier this year to charter the "Aker Connector", which will be kitted out to install long, heavy power cables and subsea umbilicals during 2012 and 2013.

French cable giant Nexans, meanwhile, is quick to herald its vessel "Skagerrak" as "one of the world's most advanced cable-laying vessels", with a 7,000 tonne capacity turntable, a state-of-the-art DP capability and multiple cranes. It lifts, it lays...and it "stays", as it were.

The pressure that such demand means that the hitherto "hit and miss" approach of laying wind farm cables needs to come into the best practise which has been developed elsewhere.

In the UK fields for instance, with the next phase of installation "Round 3" set to yield up to 23.2GW of offshore wind by 2020, this young industry has to not only learn from the experience of related expertise, but must look to generate its own best practice.

Telecommunications has it and has been developing it for literally centuries, oil and gas has it but as there are currently no universal standards for offshore wind cabling. This has to change - as without it there will be accidents and commercial losses.

The RenewableUK Offshore Wind Delivery Group hopes to change this in the coming years. "For the industry to become cost-effective we have to move away from a project by project basis, and the clients and the contractors have to work in partnership," says Grimmond.

This is where good planning comes into play, meticulously mapping out survey works, dealing with route engineering issues and defining robust response plans.

"If you have a damaged export cable and you don't have a maintenance model in place - what are the vessels that are going to repair it, is there spare cable around, do you have jointing expert available - if that hasn't been worked out you could be down for months," according to Joel Whitman, director for corporate strategy, marketing and communication at Global Marine Systems..

While it is good to hear that the industry recognises the need to build best practice and to explore the expertise necessary to do things right, this throws up some obvious problems. So for all the technology, planning and investment, the real issue is likely to be people. Or rather the distinct lack of them.

"The cable industry always trained up people in a structured way, with experience being passed on. At the moment, we're trying to do good quality work with the same amount of people from the earlier days, but now we're trying to spread them across 8

different vessels. It is the biggest issue out there." Grimmond bemoans.

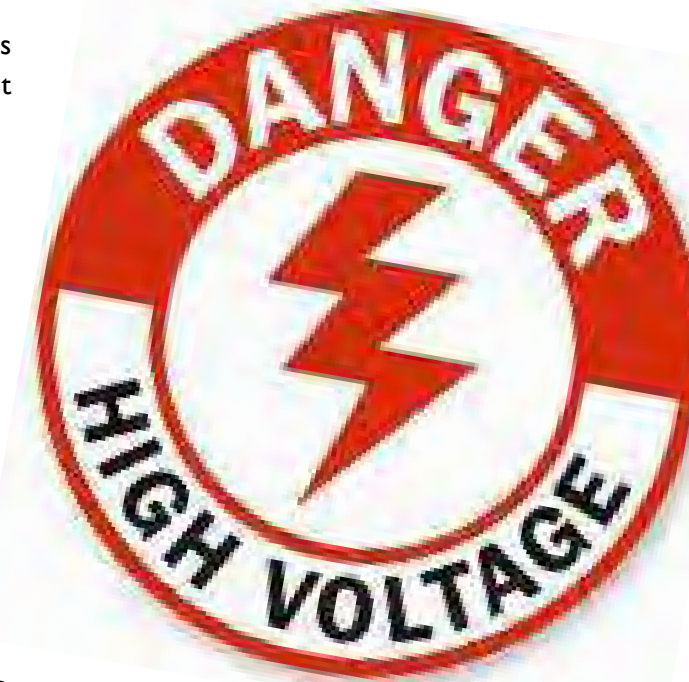
"We can build as many cable vessels as it [the industry] wants. I could go out and buy five tomorrow and convert them, but if we don't have the skillset the quality of work is going to slip.

Moving forward, Offshore Marine Management's is investing heavily in training via its offshore marine academy where it is devoting £250,000 to training six to eight graduates over 12 month periods. Currently based Bristol and Cambridge, there are plans to roll out the scheme nationwide.

"We've got to really push this and put our money where our mouths are to ensure these kids come into the industry," says Grimmond, who feels staff levels for the offshore wind cabling industry need to treble.

Geul echoes this sentiment. "With technology everything can be resolved," he says. "We can fly to the moon or mars. It is a matter of putting money in the basket and talking to the right people. But with cable laying we have a relatively small group of people and activities are rapidly increasing and we all want 10 years experience on the back deck."

The fact that so many young officers were forced out of the cable sector those ten/fifteen years ago means there is a desperate shortage of experience. The power it is looking to exploit may be "alternative", but the problems of a lack of talent are very traditional indeed.



A Lost Generation?

IDPOA's Steven Jones on the Plough deck. Apparently, "true professionals make the job look easy..."

your dp handbook

DP Operator's Handbook - The Nautical Institute

There are many who can legitimately claim to be “Grandfathers” of the various aspects of dynamic positioning. Across the range of and scope of DP operations, there are the grandfathers of the system, the grandfathers of the vessels, etc. Undoubtedly the grandfather of DP training is the now retired, Captain David Bray.

Captain Bray successfully headed up the DP training courses at Lowestoft College – and along with the able support of lecturers such as Richard Lodge, Mark Pointon, and Rob Clarke – delivered world class training across more than 20 years.

The decades may have seen many changes in both the kit and the applications – but there are many basics which have remained the same. The fundamental essence of DP from the human operator perspective is contained within the DP Operators Handbook.

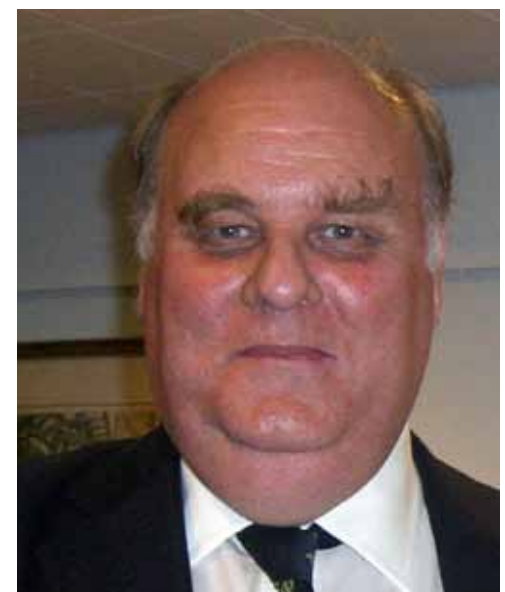
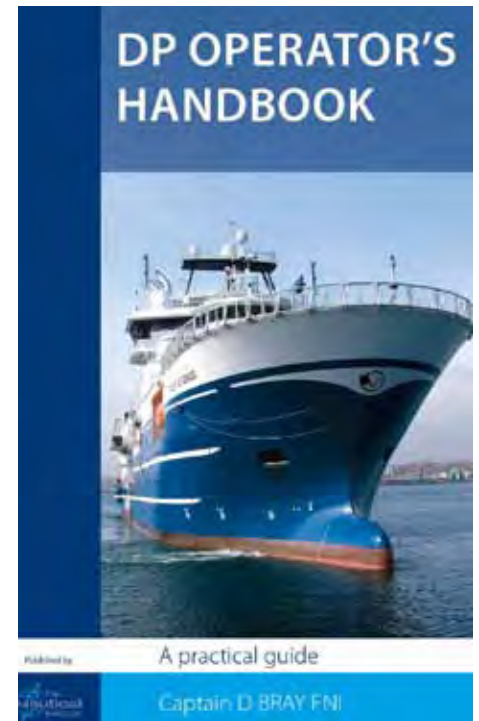
The handbook was first published back in 2008, and has proven to be very popular. A number of training centres actually provide students with a copy as a core text. With high sales and an ever evolving training landscape, the Nautical Institute has revised the original and reissued it.

The aim of the new publication is to provide a baseline of knowledge for operators – particularly useful when transferring from ships, and between one type of DP system and another. As such it is an excellent and handy reference guide, which can be used as a refresher, a source of good management and operational practice and a guide for organising onboard training.

While the shore based elements of the DP Operators Certificate training course are oft debated, there is all too little attention given to what happens onboard. The shipboard training and guidance received are every bit as important as what happens in the classroom, and with the DP Operators Handbook there is a chance to really enhance the learning experience on a real desk.

In its latest incarnation, the book now features colour diagrams, which have been redrawn and brought up to date, and photographs throughout and truly complements The Nautical Institute's DP Operator's scheme, concentrating as it does on operational functions, bridge management, communications and the correct way to set up, test and monitor equipment.

Naturally it does not replace specific manuals and company instructions but it does provide a summary of good practice which can be referred to when planning and in conversation to clarify intentions.



David Bray

Buy now from
www.nautinst.org

deepwater disaster

Fire on the Horizon – The Untold Story of the Gulf Oil Disaster

IDPOA fellow and gCaptain's founder and editor in chief, John Konrad, has got a book deal! It is impossible to be interested in shipping and not be impressed by the scope, growth and presence of GCaptain, and this eye for a good story has now been turned onto the tragic events of April 20, 2010 and the loss of the Deepwater Horizon.

The upcoming Konrad book titled "Fire on the Horizon: The Untold Story of the Gulf Oil Disaster" is being published by HarperCollins and co-written with help from the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Tom Shroder.

Deepwater Horizon became a household name when it blew up, killing 11 people, shattering a multinational company's reputation, and leaving an unprecedented swath of devastation in its wake. Fire on the Horizon is the remarkable story of this tragedy—the worst environmental disaster in the history of the United States—a riveting chronicle of engineering hubris at odds with the Earth itself, of corporate greed and unforgettable selflessness.

An extraordinary true-life adventure tale reminiscent of *The Perfect Storm*, *Fire on the Horizon* captures life aboard the rig, vividly detailing in "real time" the events that preceded its demise. The authors identify the factors behind the accident, including the culture clashes—between Southern roughnecks, college-educated Yankee engineers, and faceless corporate bureaucrats—and expose what the inspectors overlooked.

Gripping and harrowing, *Fire on the Horizon* is set to be both a page-turning account of that day and a narrative of the lives involved before, during, and after the explosion. Revealing a warts-and-all portrait of deepwater drilling it will also capture much of the swashbuckling history, astonishing technology and disturbing vulnerability of this vital but little understood industry.

The book is a collaboration of discussions with gCaptain members & friends both online and off. John says, "I would not have been able to write the book without the efforts of the bloggers, forum members and friends of gCaptain. This book is truly a collaborative effort – a look at the industry and the people, by the industry and the people."

The book isn't out until March 1, 2011 – but we're sure it will be worth the wait.



John Konrad

Follow developments on
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IDPOA JOBS BOARD

At IDPOA we work hard to bring you the latest DP job opportunities from across the world. We actively engage directly with employers and careers agencies to find permanent vacancies and contract roles at all levels on the DP career ladder.

You can use your membership of IDPOA in order to access and apply for all the jobs we advertise, upload CV's and give recruiters direct access to their careers information in the jobs section of the IDPOA website.

We are working hard to become the only industry jobs board worth visiting. So keep watching as the jobs grow and grow.

The 'Get a Job' listing in our careers section brings you the latest vacancies we find online and is open to all. Here we give you a flavour of current vacancies, find more DP jobs at www.dpoperators.org



www.genesis-personnel.com

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MAKING A BIG BANG



At IDPOA we see the DP Industry as being something set apart from the mainstream. An industry sector where the best come to test their skills using state of the art equipment, working on projects which would have seemed unthinkable and impossible a few years ago.

This profile means that we also see DP Operators as a new breed of “shipping superstars”, and so we were only too pleased to put our support behind a new scheme to recognise the new power players in the maritime industry.

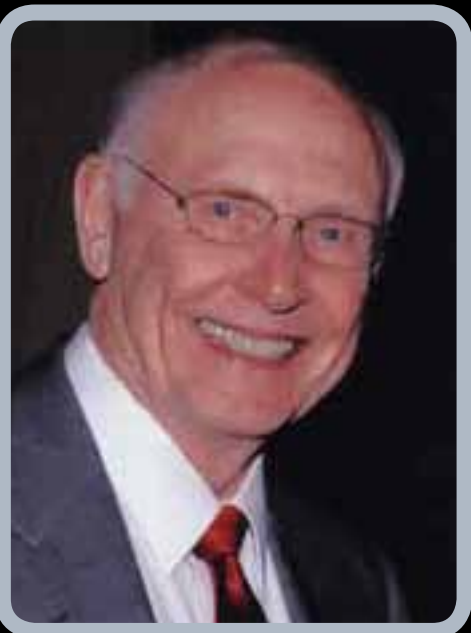
We all too often see lists of the Top 100 powerful people in shipping - and sadly it seems the compilers of such lists are too seduced by the wealthy and become dazzled by celebrity. So we applaud Portfire40, a new scheme to recognise those who bring positive change to the industry? But who are they and how will it work?

A maritime blogger and PR expert Ryan Skinner has launched the Portfire40 Project, an initiative that IDPOA is happy to support.

Says Ryan: “Some power and influence cannot be bought; it stems from great ideas and the courage to follow them, based on a desire to enrich society – not just oneself. The marine industry is full of people like this, so here is the Portfire40. 40 personalities who are having a lasting impact on the industry by the novelty and vigour of their thinking, the strength of their passion for improvement and the impact they have on colleagues and partners.

“This is an open and growing list, based on a list of submitted candidates adjudicated by a board. Do you know someone who fits the Portfire40 description? Send an email describing why.

The Portfire40, is about people and stories, so share those that move you. This is your chance to draw attention to that person you admire. Send an email with your candidate’s name, details and why you think he/she belongs among the Portfire40. Tell us what you think - email dpo@dpooperators.org



Howard Shatto

We have already received one nomination. That was for Howard Shatto, the “Godfather” of dynamic positioning (DP). His pioneering research and development efforts have over 50 years allowed us to reach out beyond the shore to achieve more on the sea than was ever possible before.

Shipping used to be about moving things on the sea - the ocean being just another means of transport. Now thanks to Howard’s innovation and vision, ships are capable of performing hitherto impossible tasks. The sea can be used to provide energy, as a conduit for communications and as an extension of our activities on land, rather than a barrier to them.

While some who have given over 50 years dedicated incredible service to shipping and the offshore industry may be slowly moving into retirement, Howard continues to contribute to the industry, especially through his work with the Marine Technology Society (MTS).

A worthy recipient of any maritime “alternative” power accolade. Thanks to IDPOA Fellow Sean Hogue Editor of Dynamicpositioningnews.com for the nomination...so come on, who inspires you? Do tell...

a vision for the future

The use of “visuals” to support DP Training has long been debated. Since virtually the advent of the Nautical Institute (NI) scheme there have been arguments over whether the use of “an outside view”, or “visual channel” can aid training. Those against the mandatory use of such technological enhancements always argued that it was more about the lecturer and the DP kit than some flashy, head nod to realism.

Such arguments raged as the price and ability to provide such enhancements were perhaps prohibitive - certainly had the NI prescribed them, then many a training centre would have gone to the wall. In a pragmatic way the use of visuals was slowly sidelined, and the debate tailed off slightly.

In reality what has happened is that the use of such technology has increased, the prices have fallen and most new centres coming on stream do indeed have the visuals included in the training packages that have purchased. Slowly we have reached the point where visuals are more common than not, and the old school of “talk, chalk and painted bridge scenes” are seen as almost quaint.

Back in 2006, IDPOA Executive Director Steven Jones speaking at the Global DP Trainers meeting in Kongsberg said that the debate on whether visuals should be mandatory or not was fairly irrelevant. Based on dropping prices and increasing availability he said that such arguments would look rather old fashioned in hindsight. It seems perhaps he was right, and the decision to allow the market to choice has allowed innovation and investment to blossom.

Does the use of visuals make a poor lecturer good? No of course not. Does the use of visuals make up for poorly maintained or outmoded equipment? Once again, no. Can visuals enhance the learning experience and deliver 21st Century training to 21st Century trainees? A resounding yes.

We asked VSTEP, one of the leading names in maritime visual development for their thoughts on where this was now headed. VSTEP make the extremely successful Ship Simulator PC games - but their involvement in maritime simulation is not more games master than ship master. Here Pjotr van Schothorst tells of the company’s vision and of the satisfied client base they are cultivating at DP Training centres around the world.



Many DP training centers do not use an outside view yet on (all) their DP training systems. Those that do are very positive about it. According to Capt. Tony M. Moeller, Operations Manager of Maersk Training Denmark: “The outside view makes the training much more realistic. It combines the manual manoeuvring with the DP training. It also makes it possible to do vessel to vessel operations. I can’t see a DP Simulator course without it, it is vital for quality training.”

Capt. Noel Leith of Swire Marine Training Centre Singapore: “The benefits of the outside view are immeasurable. An important part of our DP training programme involves students being assessed in their ability to move inside the exclusion zone, approach and set up on DP. The outside view allows this to happen in a very natural way and also allows the environment to be used as a visual queue.”

Capt. Homer Gloria of Bourbon Manila DP Training Centre: “The benefit of having an outside view is that it makes the simulation exercises more realistic. During practical exercises, trainees can practice their estimation and judgment by looking at the outside view and not totally rely on what they see on the DP monitor. In cases where the DP system experience failures and does not give correct data, it is important for the DPO to use his human senses to let him make a correct judgment. Seeing the condition outside the vessel during simulation exercises help the trainees improve judgment and build confidence. The DP operator also uses the outside view as part of his situational awareness and assessment of required actions.”

Capt. Glenn Fiander of the Marine Institute, Newfoundland: “A good DPO should always observe the outside world to confirm what is

being reported to him/her electronically (DP screens, survey screens, etc.). Without visuals, training is simply not realistic. We have had students tell us that in the real world they would not position their vessels in close proximity to other vessels/structures when those structures are not visible. Having no visuals in training is the equivalent to working not with reduced but with 0 visibility. If training is conducted without visuals, are students getting the impression that they can trust the electronics 100% of the time and don’t have to look outside? If anyone doing the DP training is left with this impression, there is a problem.”

The current generation of outside view simulation solutions is not yet perfect. Says Bengt Karlsson of Kalmar Maritime Academy, Sweden: “What I am waiting for is a system that allows us to estimate distances by means of eyes only. In today’s system you can’t say if the distance to a platform is 300 or 50 m.”

Some of the DP systems used in training centers are not equipped with an open interface like NMEA, so they cannot benefit from the lower cost simulators like VSTEP’s Nautis. Instead, they can only be used in combination with the much higher priced solution of the original DP equipment manufacturer.

With all the interest in DP Sea Time Reduction by means of intense DP simulator training, the positive experiences with the outside view added to existing DP training systems and the reduced costs of this outside view with modern software and hardware technology, it looks like there is a bright future of this new concept. I am sure we won’t see a DP training system without in a few years time.



HAVE YOUR SAY...

NEWS FROM THE IDPOA REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

Following IDPOA's attendance at the last DP-TEG, we were asked to engage on the issues of "minimum qualifications" and "DP time prior to Induction". As part of this process we garnered the views of our Representation Committee.

DP-TEG provides us with the scope to feedback DPO representation, and we are fortunate to have on the RepComm people who represent a range of roles. As such the debate was far from one sided, with the views expressed running the full gamut between lecturer/course standards, the role of the training scheme and the standards of the trainees themselves.

This article represents some of the views expressed, and may not reflect the final DP-TEG submission. From the feedback received it seemed to be the consensus that the NI accredited training courses provide the positive initial building blocks for the operator scheme. As such the Basic/Induction course is simply the first step in what should be a long process of training, and mentoring. While the Advanced/Simulator courses are a good opportunity to open the eyes of trainees to ensure they are aware of what can go wrong, and to ensure they know how to prepare the vessel to avoid it, or quickly react to it. However it was recognised that they are not designed to, nor capable of producing fully functioning, competent DPOs.

Advanced trainees should be aware of the complexities of DP and that there is still much to learn. This will hopefully ensure they make the most of their next 6 months

of "Supervised DP Watchkeeping" and know where to find the information. It is at the completion of this time that they are assessed as being competent, or requiring additional mentoring.

It is at this stage, of course, when the established DPOs and Masters have to truly assess new entrants, and the validity of the competence assessment relies on their expertise and knowledge. With so much emphasis and pressure on this point of the training scheme, it is important that we as an industry look inwards and ask questions about DP revalidation courses and of the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Minimum entry requirement:

- The proposal from the NI: "It is the Institute's intention to adopt a minimum standard for entry onto the scheme. We are proposing that the minimum qualification should be set at Officer of the Watch (OOW Deck level)".
- There was broad agreement, (though not without dissenting voices), that only a person holding OOW Deck can be issued with a DP certificate.
- However there was some disagreement with the concept that the OOW certificate should be required to enter the scheme. This would mean that cadets etc. cannot start the training to become a DPO.
- Based on this rationale, there was a proposed amendment to the NI/DP-TEG debate. Minimum qualification to be issued with a DP certificate: "In order to be issued with a DP

certificate, the prospective DPO must first hold an STCW Deck Officer certificate. The prospective DPO can start the training and complete all elements of the training scheme, but cannot apply for the DP certificate until he/she holds an STCW Deck Officer certificate."

Time prior to Induction/Basic course:

- The proposal from the NI: "It is the Institute's intention to adopt the policy that no DP time prior to attendance at the Induction / Basic course will be accepted toward the award of a DP certificate".
- This caused some consternation – especially as many believed that in most cases some practical experience before the Induction/Basic course helps the course participants to gain more benefit from the course.
- It was stressed that time from previous experience "prior" to initial documentation does have a value. Indeed a number of members felt that practical experience before the Induction/Basic course helped course participants to derive enhanced benefit from the course.
- Based on the above, one proposal was to amend the wording slightly: DP time prior to Induction/Basic course: Ideally the courses should be undertaken as set out in the scheme. However, a maximum of 60 days can be recorded before the Induction/Basic course to count towards the required 180 days supervised DP watchkeeping experience.

When it comes down to the standards and experience of trainee DPO's the emphasis was on questioning their very role in the bridge team. Those who thought that navigational experience and qualifications weren't important seemed perhaps to take a very different view of the bridge team dynamics.

This was countered by the experience and management systems imposed by some of the most senior DPOs and masters around. While some saw the role of trainee or JDPO as simply looking and learning, others saw them as integral to the running of the bridge and desk.

Under this approach there is no room for simply handing over problems to someone else. Indeed we were reminded that most DP "problems" are actually resolved by solid teamwork, good leadership and, of course, technical knowledge/ability. Where Senior DPOs make it very clear to watch-mates that the watch is run on a Pilot/Co-Pilot basis then the team approach is most effective.

In demanding that co-watchkeepers monitor operations alongside their superiors then there is a real chance to learn and an emphasis on their burgeoning talents. This also allows them the chance to question what is going on and why. The ability to question intelligently, requires some level of knowledge, and this is where the understanding gained from prior OOW experience can be so important.

As such the general feeling that all DPOs should hold OOW certification appears to be valid.

There is recognition that such as view can smack of a "protectionist" perspective. However, after years spent working hard to achieve professional recognition this is perhaps understandable, and where it can increase safety and efficiency, then should perhaps even be seen as positive.

DPOs are hired to provide a professional service. That service is to control the vessel/unit in a safe and stable manner for the conduct of operations, in line with the requirements of the client. It is the view of many that an individual cannot provide such a service without being in possession of the appropriate certification. Indeed one member of the committee stated that the that the US Coast Guard (USCG) will be requiring a Nautical Institute DPO Certificate AND a STCW Deck OOW Certificate in order to obtain a USCG DP Certificate.

The most commonly held view was that in order

to be a fully competent DPO the training must be underpinned by the maritime knowledge already specified in the STCW OOW syllabus, which would therefore serve well as the backbone of the DPO scheme.

There was an interesting reminder, however, that just having an OOW CoC is not necessarily a guarantee of a demonstrable capability of manually handling the vessel. Trainee DPOs may come directly from a large ship (tanker/container vessel etc) where virtually no ship handling experience would have been gained at a junior rank compared to those which come via a "natural offshore progression" of working on AHTS/PSVs etc where ship handling skills were passed down to the deck officers. The certificate may fit, but there are still doubts even then about the experience underpinning it.

Regarding DP Time and the problems with DP 'Days', there was a feeling that the issue could be solved if the Nautical Institute required DP Watchkeeping hours (and not days) to be logged. This issue of time spent on the DP desk is of course vitally important to the overall debate. There are allegations of fraud, of misconduct and even ignorance when it comes to logging time.

For many the simple "hours spent on the actual" desk is the answer. However one interesting point raised, stressed that DP is not just being at the desk but the whole system and a DPO will spend time maintaining, repairing, planning DP operations as well as being involved with many of the other parts of the DP system, including the installation of temporary/replacement reference systems etc. These periods do go a long way to extending the understanding of a whole DP system and should not be ignored. For this reason it was stated that the "days" rule took a more holistic view of the role of DPO.

As the debate continued, we looked at the very role of IDPOA, and of the provisions of our mission statement – "To help promote the observance of high professional standards of Dynamic Positioning Operators.", and "To establish and maintain guidance and advisory facilities in relation to the activities of the Dynamic Positioning Operators". It was felt that in engaging with the Nautical Institute and in rolling out the RepComm that were indeed providing vital input to the industry.

Members and Fellows of IDPOA are invited to join the RepComm – if you want to take part just email to let us know., and get your views heard. Email RepComm secretary, Gianna marketing@dpooperators.org to find out more

The RepComm is currently made up of the following Members and Fellows of IDPOA:

Anders Carlson Hovde
Bart Hakze
Colin Soanes
Dan Whitaker
Gary Reay
Ian Smith
John Gorman Charlton
Lee Brown
Marc Bragg (Chair)
Matt Barney
Mike Popescu
Mohan Dhanrajani
Narciso Montilla
Sean Hogue
Steve Macdonald
Valerio de Rossi
Jill Friedman
David Martin
Charles Bryan
Peter Corbett
Tim Newton
Adrian Flower
Nick Wallace

We are extremely grateful for the time, and effort they put into guiding IDPOA and our input to industry.



Gianna Molica-Franco is Secretary to the Representation Committee

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Ship Simulator Extremes

VSTEP, the big hitter of Ship Simulator gamers has announced the latest in the series, "Extremes". The game "pushes the boundaries of simulation gaming", and allows you to take over vessels in the most demanding conditions.

Granted you will need a monster of a computer, as this game is hungry for memory, graphics the lot. Sadly the IDPOA pc struggled manfully to get the ships to do over 3kts before collapsing in a slightly burnt smelling heap. However, if you have the power you can feel the thrill of navigating a million ton Supertanker in a perfect storm, or you can take on illegal whale hunters in the Antarctic.

When leave is dragging and you need the buzz of the sea once more reach for Ship Simulator Extremes. Look kids see what Daddy does for a living..."not again Dad".



What's On 2010



Asia Offshore Operation & Development
27-29 October 2010
Grand Millenium Hotel, Beijing, China



IMCA Annual Seminar
23-24 November 2010
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai, UAE



Deep Offshore Technology International
30 Nov-2 Dec 2010
Amsterdam Rai, Amsterdam, Netherlands

DP Training Courses

Australian Maritime College

AMC DP LAUNCESTON

DP Induction:

- 22-26 November
- 6-10 December

DP Simulator/Advanced

- 15-19 November
- 29 November – 3 December
- 13-17 December

AMC DP PERTH

DP Induction

- 15-19 November

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