



The American Club

Seafarer Wellbeing Programs



Seafarer Wellbeing Programs

The **American P&I Club** has compiled a list of simple ideas and suggestions that can be implemented by Masters and Chief Engineers looking to enhance crew wellbeing and morale. These initiatives promote crew happiness, and crew cohesion, and promote positive mental health by allowing seafarers an outlet to wind down from a busy workday.

Friendly Competition

Sports can be played individually or by teaming up with members of different departments. Hold a teammate draft, pick a fun team name, and keep a scoreboard or organize a tournament on a whiteboard.

- Ping pong requires only a table, paddles, and ping pong balls.
- Foosball can be played as a team or individual matches.
- Darts can be of the traditional kind or magnetic sets, which won't leave little holes in the bulkhead.
- Electronic gaming systems like Microsoft XBOX, Sony PlayStation, or Nintendo Switch are fun and have added benefits of improving cognitive function, problem solving, and teamwork when played with shipmates.
- Board games and card games are great stress relievers and help promote group socializing. Many are played and understood internationally, for example, chess, checkers, mahjong, catan, dominos, backgammon, etc.



Competitions onboard should be played for fun, game playing for money or betting should be prohibited as it could have an opposite effect on morale.

Fitness together

- If your vessel has a pool, fill it up. It's simple to do! Allocate time for a adult swim after the workday or on weekends. Implement a buddy system for safety and to promote crew interaction.
- Exercise is always better with friends. If your vessel has a gym or workout space, set up crew workout times and make sure the equipment is in good condition and the stereo is working.



Celebratory Meals

- Prepare or purchase a cake or dessert to celebrate a special occasion for someone onboard. This could be a birthday, name day, anniversary, birth, or other milestone or achievement.
- Steel beach picnics or barbeques allow the crew to enjoy a meal and some fresh air outside of the workday. On tankers, grilling may be restricted to the galley due to the vessel's operations, but for most cargo ships, grilling can be safely done outside on the poop deck.
- Parties can be organized in a different space than the messrooms, such as the galley or even the vessel's outer deck areas. This can be a tradition to welcome a new crew member or celebrate reaching a safety objective or goal.
- Modern vessel crews are more multinational than ever. "Cultural Days" can be a way to bring people together and celebrate cultural diversity. Allowing a crewmember to make traditional food from their culture is a symbol of pride for their ethnicity and also a means of coping with homesickness.

- Cooking days are fun opportunities for crew members to volunteer to cook lunch or dinner for all the crew. This gives the cook a break and allows the crew to engage in an activity they enjoy and reminds them of home.



Supplies of Happiness

When in port, certain countries do not allow crew members to go ashore, and sometimes port stays are short or outside normal working hours. For these voyages, onboard comforts are imperative.

- The availability of necessary items for purchase in the bonded stores is key as it allows seafarers a sense of control, accomplishment, ease, and comfort. Examples of some items to make available to the crew, other than cigarettes, may be shampoo, shower gel, chocolates, and snacks. As part of this initiative, it is recommended to survey the crew's preferences and requests.



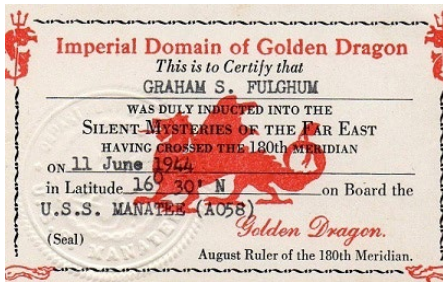
- Another downfall of limited access to ports is being unable to bring a part of your travels home to your family. One idea is to have the ship's name and logo on t-shirts or hats available for purchase by the crew. Another idea is to arrange with the local agent to bring on board some local items or treats (besides donuts) for the crew.
- In the seafaring profession, quality rest is a major factor for morale, mood and productivity. Company issued bedding that is itchy, unbreathable, worn out and uncomfortable provides no comfort away from home and could lead to poor sleep greatly reducing performance and wellbeing. Regular replacement, or an upgrade to quality linens, pillows, and bedding for the crew can make a great wellbeing initiative and does wonders for the culture of the ship.

- Lastly receiving gifts from the office with the vessel name or company branding is a great way to show appreciation and boost morale. One example of this is a company sending branded duffle bags to all their seafarers working at sea during the winter holiday season, spent miles away from family and friends.



Time Honored Traditions

Organize a first-time crossing ceremony as part of a the **“Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep”** (Shellback, Blue Nose, Golden Dragon, etc.). These certificates can be treasured keepsakes for seafarers and may be ordered online at a reasonable cost. Ceremonies may include obstacle courses which must be voluntary, respectful, fun, and painless for the seafarers. They should have no sexual component nor resemble hazing in any way. It is good practice to have the Master approve the details of the ceremony beforehand.



Stay Well!

To get started, shipboard leaders should ask what their crews like to do or take a poll of the ideas above. Many other safe and fun activities can be done to promote the welfare and happiness of the crew.



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