

# The Crew

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CAREER • TRAINING • TECHNOLOGY • MONEY • OPERATIONS • ADVICE



# REPORT

## NOTICE PERIODS

How do yachting's notoriously short notice periods affect employer and employee?

## SMART TECHNOLOGY

What role does smart technology play in the lives of superyacht crew and how will it change in the future?

## GOLDEN TICKET TRILOGY

We bring you the first set of results from our Superyacht Golden Ticket crew survey, taken by more than 1,000 of you.

## IS THERE A CREW SHORTAGE?

Captains who believe there is a crew shortage share their thoughts on how to tackle it.

# FUTURE FORECAST: PURCHASING

Chief stewards are faced with requests for new interior items, from table placements to cashmere blankets or toiletries, on a daily basis. But often, with little guidance from the owner, they can be left with a number of questions about exactly what is required. Gemma Lloan McCoy, director of interior solutions provider Fiona's Atelier, talks to Lulu Trask about the most common purchasing scenarios in which chief stewards find themselves, why it's always better to go to the owner for more information and the need for a purchasing course.



## SCENARIO ONE: THE VAGUE OWNER

This owner will give the chief steward very brief instructions with limited information. For example, an owner on a superyacht that has never chartered before, and on which everything is high-end, now decides the yacht is going to be put up for charter. So the owner says, "I don't want the charter guests to use my crockery," because it costs 20,000 euros per set, and then simply says to the chief steward, "Please get a crockery set for a charter." The poor chief steward is clueless and doesn't know what to do or which way to go.

Of course, you can go online and find all sorts of things, but you probably need some advice. You might have found what you think the owner is looking for, but the yacht is going to be for charter, so crockery is going to get dropped or get misplaced, therefore you need to make sure you get a set where a replacement is immediately available if necessary. You should go to a company that can send out replacements tomorrow. These are all the issues a chief steward faces when an owner simply says, "Just get anything".

## SCENARIO TWO: THE SPECIFIC OWNER

This owner causes a different problem altogether. They know exactly what they want, but they don't know where to get it. The owner, for example, hands the chief steward a magazine, points to a page and says, "I like this, get it for me." Despite having the picture from the owner, the chief steward has no idea where to get the item and doesn't want to ask the owner, "Where did you get this picture?" because they are probably quite insecure about asking the owner for more information.

If a chief steward comes to us, for example, we will tell them what the item is – it might be a very popular line on board. Sometimes, though, the item might be a new design from a niche brand and, on the occasions when we can't find it, the chief steward can safely go back to the owner and say, "I've been doing some research; can you please give me more information about that picture?" Once they have that information, the chief steward can find out what brand it is. It may be that it is unique and comes from a very small factory that gives you a replacement time of six months. This does



happen and can be problematic when a replacement is needed. Sometimes, chief stews will order something online, only to find an email in their inbox two weeks later saying the cost has been refunded because the item is no longer in stock, and then the chief stew has to go back to the owner, which can be embarrassing. Therefore, chief stews should always look for alternative options, similar in style but from a company that offers a replacement service in a decent period of time. Then the chief stew can present the owner with a number of options and a good explanation of why there are these options.

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#### THE NEXT STEP: A PURCHASING COURSE

When I started this business, I wasn't aware of just how grateful chief stews are to be able to talk to someone about a yacht owner's preferences and budgets, about what they have, what they like and their attitude, to help get an understanding about what that owner wants on board and how the purchasing process can address that. This sort of advice is something chief stews really appreciate and I think there needs to be a course on purchasing. Any of the training schools can arrange the course, but it has to be run by someone who has experience of buying for a good number of years.

There needs to be some good advice out there that can be given to chief stews, some rules to follow, and this is something I'm passionate about doing. Captains might be happier paying for a course for silver service or flower arranging because everyone can see those things on board. Nobody really thinks about what goes on behind the scenes when the chief stew buys new glassware for the yacht. The captain approves it or doesn't approve it, but he's busy and doesn't want to know the details of the glassware order. And that's how these things have been done up to now – I see it every day when I talk to chief stews.

#### LESSON ONE:

##### UNDERSTAND YOUR OWNER

Something I always come across is chief stews who need more information from the owner but are worried about asking questions that may sound silly. The chief stew has to feel confident in asking the right questions. For example, if an owner wants new placemats, the chief stew should be confident in asking, "Do you want something in linen? Or something for the outdoors? Do you want something modern? How many? Do we have a maximum budget?" For the owner, it's very simple. They just ask for placemats without appreciating all the problems that it can create behind the scenes. If you ask sensible questions, the owner won't come back and say, "Why is my chief stew asking me these things?" As a chief stew, you need to know more or less what the owner wants.

That's why I think it's important to ask questions and not feel insecure about going to the owner because then, as long as the questions are reasonable, you can put all your energy into presenting the owner with options that are going to be useful, rather than going in blind. ■

TO COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE, EMAIL [LULU@THESUPERYACHTGROUP.COM](mailto:LULU@THESUPERYACHTGROUP.COM) WITH SUBJECT: TCR 75 FUTURE FORECAST



On deck ...

## HELICOPTER SAFETY TRAINING

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# HR

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