

Salty *Sea* Dog

Money for Old Rope

Salty Sea Dog asks,
“Are there too many super yacht conferences?”

Malta, Singapore, Fort Lauderdale, Palma, Auckland, Amsterdam, Las Vegas and several more in Spain and other European countries, super yacht conferences are everywhere and take place at least once a month. They seem to attract the same speakers, cover the same subjects and if you carefully study the list of delegates you will find that they are invariably the same old faces.

So why do they do it? The answer is they love to network, in fact they would rather network than attend any of the sessions that interrupt the opportunity to thrust a business card into someone's hands in the hope that at some time in the future the recipient will need a specialist lawyer, a paint job or a new satellite communications system. And that's just the point! That is why there are so many conferences! They are the perfect place to flog your kit and find out who might at some time in the future want to buy the kit you are flogging.

Conferences are, for the most part, organised by magazine groups and specialist conference organisers. Both see the functions as cash cows and as a way to promote their own product. Every part of the function that they organise is sponsored by someone, from the hotel, to the refreshments and then the gala dinner with its separately sponsored drinks session beforehand. Even the badges that delegates wear to let you know who they are and what they are selling, are sponsored.

Powerpoint fatigue

Guest speakers and those who sit on the expert panels are not paid to supply their expertise but are instead, cajoled into making up time consuming powerpoint presentations and freely giving their speeches by organisers who swear that by making such an appearance in front of their audience will raise a speaker's profile. Ask for your expenses and you will quickly find you are not invited to come again to the next junket.

When a conference begins to wane in popularity the magazines either change its name or move its location to another city. If that fails to bring in an increasing number of delegates



each paying several hundreds of cash units to attend, the magazines invent a new conference, which targets just one group of the super yacht industry. This explains why we now have conferences for yacht managers, yacht financiers, yacht designers and even yacht insurance brokers.

Then there are the Gala Awards Dinners. These are just yet another excuse for an extravaganza that the industry pays for which piles up cash for the organisers who get everyone else to pay the expenses. Gala events take place around the world in swanky locations and everyone can enter a category. There are so many categories it will not be long before you can get a gold painted Oscar-like award for having supplied the best bathtub plug to sailing yachts between 25.5 and 27.6 metres!

Everyone a winner

Yes everyone is a winner or at least could be a winner. To secure an award it helps if you buy a table for ten at 3000 cash units and invite nine of your best customers to join you so that they can clap as you go up to collect the gong from the invited celebrity who is someone who used to be on the telly selling dog food in 1973.

So far, my masters at On Board have not caught onto this money spinning idea but if they do, then let's hope they are more honest about it. They could hire a dining room in Monaco, seat everyone at their tables and move them around after each course. Call it a networking dinner and tell everyone to bring business cards and pay their own food and drink. It's a more honest networking idea that might just catch on!