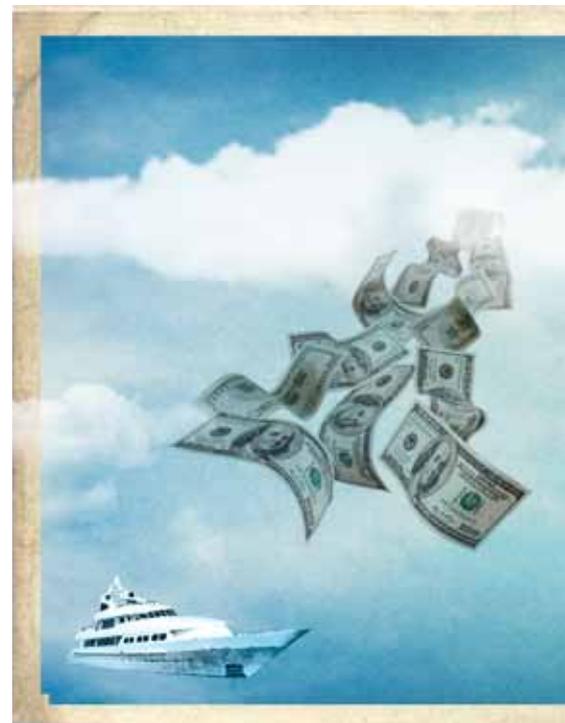


Rise of the dollar



WITH THE DOLLAR IN THE ASCENT, NOTICABLE CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY ARE RAISING QUESTIONS FOR SUPERYACHT CREW SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE EUROZONE

BY FRANCES & MICHAEL HOWORTH

It seems ironic that when *SB* last addressed the subject of crew wages in late 2008 the headlines suggested that those paid in euros were the winners in the wages war. Now four years later, many crew are eyeing up the situation in the Eurozone and wondering what the future holds.

Back then, wages were predominantly quoted in US dollars, and we suggested that crews paid in Yankee greenbacks were consistently losing out — except where they were American based and only likely to cruise in areas where local currencies were linked to the dollar. Currency fluctuations, and the strengthening euro, meant crews earned more cash aboard yachts paying in euros.

Slowly but surely, over the intervening years, the industry changed to the point where salaries are now seldom quoted in US dollars, but almost exclusively in euros.

In 2008, crew wages were steadily rising, and while the world was talking of global crisis the superyacht business had yet to

discover it was also about to be consumed by recession. Today, that upward trend towards greater remuneration has all but levelled off and there are even stories, but no solid proof, that they are decreasing.

When talking to crew recruitment agencies and management companies, the general feeling among them all, on both sides of the Atlantic, is that the overall wages in the superyacht industry are either rising very slightly, or remaining static.

“Well-established crew are seeing modest increases year on year,” according to Rupert Connor, CEO of the Luxury Yacht Group. “Five per cent is considered a good pay rise in the

year, it does not appear to have made it more, or less, difficult for new-comers to find work,” says Deborah Blazy, crew placement manager with Camper & Nicholsons in Antibes. “The crew who succeed are those who have done their homework about the industry, are well-presented, have a good attitude, and a determination to find work.”

Salary trends

It’s not only crew who do their homework. Owners seem to understand the wage levels on offer in the industry. They generally have set budgets for each crew member onboard and tend to stick to the salaries budgeted.

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current market, which should not be confused with promotion to a role with greater responsibility that would undoubtedly warrant a greater pay rise.”

Agencies report that it’s the newcomers to the industry who are finding it more difficult to find a first job in today’s market place. If there’s been a fall in wage level anywhere, it has been at this entry level.

“While there are fewer jobs around this

“As a crew management company, owners seek our advice on appropriate salaries, leave patterns, and crew benefits,” explains Mark Jaenicke, director at Viking Recruitment.

Most recruiters say it is the captains who are much more eager for guidance, and who request information on salary trends before setting their own crew salaries.

“Sometimes we provide averages, and other remuneration information to owners,



long-term job give it at least a year — unless you really can't stick with it any longer."

Length of service

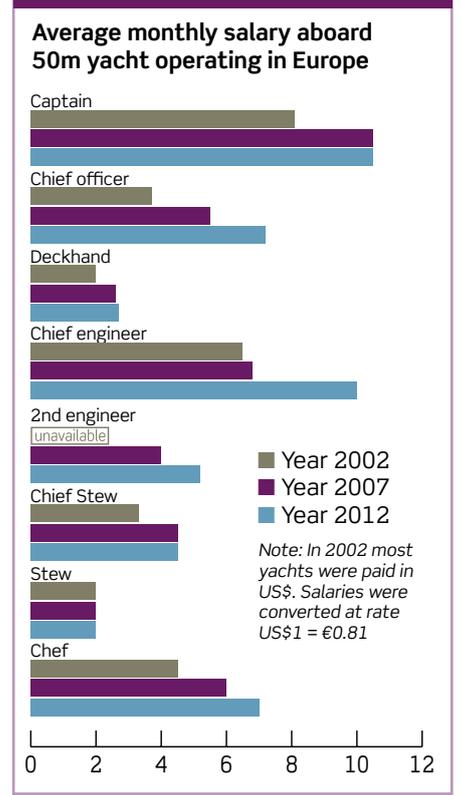
Longevity is a key word in our conversations with those on the receiving end. Crews with the best wage packages are those who have been with the yacht or owner for the longest period of time. Talk to a captain with more than eight years of service and you will find he gets a three per cent year-on-year increase and a 10 per cent annual bonus on a monthly salary of around €12,000.

Others with equally long service report working for six months of the year on that money sharing a job with another, perhaps more junior, captain. While captains crave the luxury of job rotation it is the engineers who are mostly achieving it. Many come from a commercial shipping background where two months on and two months off is the norm.

Since the engineer's could be considered the hardest bunk to fill, it is perhaps not surprising that they are the ones waving the stick and achieving what wage increases are available in the industry.

Chefs also do well on the pay scale, perhaps because there is a high turnover, with many qualified and restaurant chefs thinking that working on a superyacht might be

AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY



but they will also discuss this matter with their captain," says Lucy Medd of Burgess.

Historically, certain nationalities of owner paid better than others. Today, because of data protection or the fear of lawyers, most recruiters are unwilling to discuss the point.

"You might find it interesting that Anglo-Saxons are usually paid a bit more than Italian and East European crew," remarks Alessandro d'Angelo, who manages The Crew Network in Viareggio, Italy.

Similarly, sailing boat crews were paid less than motoryacht crews, and Joe Hodgson of J4Crew believes this still to be the case, as well as larger yachts being paying better wages than smaller ones. However, owners and charterers of larger yachts do expect a higher level of service, work ethic and professionalism from their crew.

What has changed, is that charter yacht crews are no longer paid at a lower rate than their counterparts on private yachts.

"Tips are not always guaranteed, and crews work harder on charter yachts," says Angela Wilson of Elite Crew. "Competitive base salaries paid by these yachts help attract and retain the more experienced crew."

Reality check

Crew can at times make unrealistic demands when seeking jobs. Allan Jouning of 37 South in New Zealand recalls a stewardess quitting because she couldn't get enough access to Facebook. In Ft Lauderdale, Rupert Connor regularly overhears a tedious list of

Since 2008, the dollar has surpassed the euro as the currency of choice for crew wages

requirements from job seekers.

"That list shrinks very rapidly once the reality of the job market sinks in," he says.

Ami Ira runs Crew Unlimited and served as crew for many years before stepping ashore.

"I'm happy with the current level of crew wages, except in the respect that crew can easily become rich in their minds, and then become demanding — somewhat like the guests they serve," she says. "Maybe if the wages were lower, more in line with reality, they wouldn't be so demanding"

"Yacht crew are being spoiled already compared to most shore side employment opportunities, and the historical uncertainties of employment on superyachts are now more or less mirrored ashore," warns Rodney Aird-Mash of Sea Gem International.

Phil Edwards, managing director of Dovaston, says, "It's not often that I have experienced a crew member wanting to move on from their current yacht purely due to salary. There are often far more important issues underlying the decision besides this."

"Crew should not be rash and leave without doing their research," says Rachel Harrison of the Integrated Marine Group in New Zealand. "You should try to remain in your current role for at least a year.

"Captains really struggle with a lack of longevity on a CV. It's hard when there are more and more seasonal roles, but if it's a

a good holiday job. It isn't always that straightforward. One chef we spoke with has over 15 years of service with the same owner.

"I enjoy my career as a superyacht chef, and hope to continue with my present position until either my health or my enjoyment of the job tells me otherwise," she says. "My wages go towards house purchases, because I eventually hope to open a B&B."

The flag the yacht flies at her stern does not seem to affect the wage level, nor does her ownership, or even where or how the yacht plies her trade. What is clear is that the larger the yacht, the bigger the salary, and yachts that work for just one season per year seem to pay as well as those working two.

Interestingly we found that almost every member of crew who confidentially shared their salary information with us declared they thought it a fair wage. That even included one long-serving captain who saw a 25 per cent reduction in his basic wage 18 months ago.

"My hope is that the situation will improve, but I see little chance of this until the overall world economic situation also improves — particularly for the western hemisphere," he explains. "I think many

wealthy owners, via their managers, are taking advantage of the increased number of crew available, especially for junior ranks."

Industry changes

Some captains despair of younger crews and what they expect from the business.

"Yacht crews are the highest paid cleaners in the world," remarks one. "There are no formal qualifications required to get started.

"Many pay no taxes, and most do not appreciate just how lucky they are to be in the industry. I believe that a more professional approach is needed in the lower ranks. Far too many of them believe they are in a holiday camp and get moody when told to do a job."

The value of the euro and how it is holding up against other currencies is causing concern. One Australian captain told SB that the euro's poor performance is making Australasian boats look like an good option."

He may have a point. Laurence Reymann, a director with YPI Crew, started the division 10 years ago and has noticed some changes over the past couple of years.

"We're losing some of our established Australian crew to the booming Australian

offshore and mining industry," he says. "Not only that, I fear that many youngsters who, three or four years ago would have come to Europe to get a job in yachting, are now staying in Australia, lured by high wages and good rotation schemes.

"This is bound to eventually push salaries up elsewhere in the world. I feel that in the future, salaries will go up again, certainly at senior level where skill shortages are becoming more noticeable."

Given the rise in the cost of living, the jury is divided as to whether crew are financially better off now than they were five years ago.

"Crew are somewhat immune to cost of living as theirs' is paid for by the owner," Rupert Connor believes. "Crew are therefore much better off, as their employer has absorbed any cost of living increase by paying for their food, clothes and insurance."

Others disagree. Alessandro d'Angelo is one of them, believing that they were better off five years ago.

While Rachel Harrison told SB, "I think crew salaries have not risen as much as the cost of living, however the salaries superyacht crew earn are still pretty good." **SB**

	RANK	YACHT SIZE IN METRES	MONTHLY US\$ SALARY RANGE	MONTHLY € SALARY RANGE	JOB DESCRIPTION
DECK	Senior captain	35-60+	\$8,000 - \$20,000	€10,000 - €16,000	10-plus years captain experience • History of longevity of service Admirable record of low crew turnover
	Captain	30-50	\$7,000 - \$15,000	€7,000 - €10,000	Five-plus years of captain experience • History of longevity of service
	Chief officer	50-75+	\$7,000 - \$10,000	€6,500 - €8,000	Typically five-plus years of industry experience including chief officer or captain on smaller vessels
	Mate	30-50	\$3,000 - \$6,000	€4,000 - €7,000	Three-plus years experience as deckhand or bosun • Longevity a plus
	2nd officer	60-75+	\$7,000 - \$9,000	€3,500 - €5,000	Typically three-plus years as a bosun or mate • Minimum certificate OOW • Knowledge of ISM/ISPS/safe working practices
	OOW	45-75+	\$5,000 - \$6,000	€3,000 - €4,500	Three-plus years of industry experience as bosun or mate • Minimum certificate OOW • Knowledge of ISM/ISPS/safe working practices
	Bosun	45-75+	\$3,000 - \$6,000	€3,000 - €5,000	One to three years experience as deckhand • Longevity a plus
	Deckhand	35-80+	\$2,500 - \$4,000	€2,500 - €3,000	Entry level position
	Deckhand	30-50	\$2,500 - \$4,000	€2,000 - €3,000	Entry level position
	Deckhand / 2nd engineer combined	30-50	\$3,000 - \$5,000+	No Figures Available	Minimum of one years experience • Must have good knowledge of deck duties and some background in engine work, must be flexible
Deckhand / stew combined	30-75+	\$2,500 - \$4,000	No Figures Available	STCW preferred • Must be flexible	
ENGINE	Chief engineer	55-75+	\$9,000 - \$14,000+	€9,000 - €12,000	10-plus years engineering experience Minimum of an MCA Y1 - Y2 level license
	Chief engineer	35-55	\$6,000 - \$10,000	€8,000 - €10,000	Five-plus years experience • Appropriate certificate required
	2nd engineer	60-90+	\$7,000 - \$9,000+	€5,000 - €6,000	Five-plus years experience • Minimum of an MCA Y2-Y3 level license
	2nd engineer	50-60	\$6,000 - \$8,000+	€4,500 - €6,000	Appropriate certificate required, based on size and requirement of vessel
	Junior engineer	50-90+	\$3,000 - \$4,500+	€3,000 - €5,000	At least one years experience on yachts • Minimum certificate AEC
INTERIOR	Purser	50-75+	\$6,000 - \$9,000	€4,000 - €5,000	Five-plus years experience as a chief steward/ess
	Chief steward/ess	40-60+	\$5,000 - \$9,000	€3,000 - €4,500	Three-plus years experience
	Chief steward/ess	30-40	\$3,000 - \$6,500	€3,000 - €4,000	Two-plus years experience
	2nd steward/ess	All yachts	\$2,500 - \$5,000	€2,500 - €3,500	At least one to three years experience onboard yachts and one year minimum in the hospitality industry
	Steward/ess	All yachts	\$2,500 - \$3,500	€2,000 - €3,000	Entry level position
	Chef	45-75+	\$6,000 - \$12,000 +	€7,000 - €8,500	Typically three to four-plus years experience working on superyachts Professionally trained
	Chef	30-50	\$4,500 - \$7,000+	€6,000 - €7,500	Two-plus years experience working as a chef • Professionally trained
Sous chef	45-75+	\$3,500 - \$6,000 +	€3,000 - €5,500	Ability to cook well, plan menus, assist the chef and cook for crew	