

Successful Seafarers' Centres



A joint venture of ICMA and the
ITF Seafarers' Trust
2010



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Forward by ICMA Chairman Mr Douglas B Stevenson

ICMA member organizations are known throughout the maritime world for their high quality services and programs for merchant mariners, irrespective of their nationality, race, or beliefs. Their work among seafarers has been characterized by effectively adapting to change. Whether changing from sail to steam, from break-bulk to containerization, from semaphore to email, ICMA members have adapted their work to meet seafarers' changing needs. One of ICMA's great strengths is its enabling member organizations to share their experiences with each other. In this document, successful centers, large and small, share their innovations to help strengthen maritime ministry worldwide. I commend it to you. We are grateful to the ITF Seafarers' Trust for funding the project



Forward by Mr Tom Holmer of the ITF Seafarers' Trust

At this time of financial uncertainty the Trust saw a particular need for this kind of work, and were very grateful that ICMA provided the structure in which to carry it out, and for all those who took part. The Trust is specifically supporting the delivery of services to seafarers concerning their health, communication and transport needs and the provision of assistance in ports where they are strangers. The Trust has provided funds to assist the excellent work which is being done to welcome seafarers by existing centres, as well as supporting new ventures to extend the facilities which seafarers can access. The advice collected here is short and sweet, it should be read by everyone working with seafarers. Starting with the first principles of love and service, it provides specific guidance and fresh ideas. Above all, it confirms the necessity to put the seafarer first.

Introduction

Q.: What do you need for a successful seafarers' centre?

A.: Seafarers

Successful seafarers' centres serve the needs of seafarers, not the needs of the organisations which run them. They aim to meet those needs as they are now, not as they were decades ago. Successful seafarers' centres respond to the specific needs of seafarers. The services that seafarers' centres offer are also determined by the situation in the port and the type of shipping in question. The nature of shipping determines turnaround times and security measures affecting seafarers' access to services. Seafarers' centres offer to seafarers what the port and the local environment does not, for example ship visiting, transport, convenient shopping, pastoral care and counseling, religious fellowship, currency exchange, safety, sports and recreation, communications, etc.. Together the port and the nature of shipping determine the nature and the extent of services that the centres offer.

The workshop: how to be a successful seafarers' centre

This document is the result of joint venture organised by the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Trust. It is the product of a workshop held in Hong Kong in November 2009 in which participants were invited to discuss the question 'What makes a successful seafarers' centre?'

As world shipping and port operations have changed in recent years, so the situation and needs of seafarers have changed. Provision of seafarers' welfare has also, necessarily, changed. It has recently become clear that seafarers' centres are at risk. There is now a tendency to see centres as expensive and difficult to maintain. Funders are increasingly cautious about supporting unsustainable operations.

Do we still need seafarers' centres? Ship visiting and welfare work can, and do, take place in ports without centres. However a seafarers' centre acts as a base. A seafarers' centre offers the seafarer a safe environment to turn to at any time. It means that support for seafarers can always be found. It is a clear sign to visiting seafarers, and to the port community, that seafarers' welfare matters.

Statistics on visitor numbers do not tell the whole story. They do not show how many seafarers were glad to know that the centre was there even if they did not have time to visit. Nor do they show how many members of the port community are relieved to know that there is always a place to which seafarers in distress can be referred.

Our aim: to see seafarers' centres succeed

We believe that seafarers' centres are still important. Closure of centres means a loss for ICMA societies and a loss in seafarers' welfare provision. The ITF also has a vested interest in retaining their services. We are not concerned with the politics of why seafarers' centres were established. We are concerned with sustaining existing centres.

In this document, we do not attempt to design the perfect seafarers' centre. It is not a book of instructions on how to run a seafarers' centre. Just as every port is different, every seafarers' centre is different. Each one has its own history and culture and each one is subject to local circumstances and legislation.

Our aim is to help existing seafarers' centres to survive, improve and be successful. Recognising that there is a wealth of experience concentrated in ports around the world, we invited representatives of 12 seafarers' centres, known to be successful, to the workshop to share their ideas. This document is a collection of those ideas.

Participants: twelve successful seafarers' centres

These 12 successful seafarers' centres are located over five continents. They range in type from large traditional centres with accommodation to compact port-based drop-in centres. Most, but not all, have links to Christian societies. Some enjoy excellent conditions. Others struggle against daily challenges.

Why are these centres considered successful? Certainly they have all achieved a level of financial stability which enables them to offer their services. However the purpose of seafarers' centres is not to be financially stable. It is to serve seafarers. Quite simply, all of these centres are places which seafarers like to visit.

“Successful” means we deal with challenges

Don't make the mistake of thinking that these “successful” seafarers' centres were problem free. The opposite is true: they have huge hurdles to overcome and problems which make life difficult. You will see this when you read the text boxes in which the participants' own words are quoted. But one of the things that makes them successful is that they take the problems in their stride: they deal with them. They find solutions. The workshop shares with you their struggles and how they overcome them. The workshop warns you about the pitfalls: the participants know because they have been there! The report helps you not to be overwhelmed by problems but to be challenged to solve them.

We're all different, but one thing is common to us all: we love seafarers

Throughout the workshop, the differences between the seafarers' centres were very clear. Models of management, local legislation, local culture, patterns of shipping, and relationships with port authorities, all of these are significant factors in making each seafarers' centre unique.

However there is one unifying factor among these 12 successful seafarers' centres: the love for seafarers. Each representative showed a passion for serving all seafarers, without exception, and a commitment to their dignity. The question is 'what makes a successful seafarers' centre?' The answer may be summarised in one word: love.

The team in Hong Kong



Photo: ICMA

Seafarers' centres represented

Flying Angel Club, Fremantle, Australia



Socially engaged, this large seafarers' centre enjoys a high public profile in the region. Involvement with local festivals and other events ensures favourable coverage in the local press. The chaplain and his team have successfully overcome previous financial difficulties and consolidated the centre as a business.

Halifax Seafarers' Centre, Canada



This Mission to Seafarers centre serves numerous scattered ports used by a range of shipping including a Japanese tuna fleet. Services to cruise ship workers are offered in season. This centre is known for its very successful volunteer programme.

Hong Kong Mariners' Club



This ecumenical seafarers' centre, in a city centre location, offers accommodation, a bar, meeting room and swimming pool. Facilities are open to seafarers at discount rates and to the public. A smaller centre in the container terminal offers services to seafarers whose time ashore is limited and serves as a base for ship visiting.

International Seamen's Club Duckdalben, Hamburg, Germany



This large centre enjoys excellent relations with local and port communities. It has become an attraction for tourists who come and learn about seafarers' lives. The centre is run by Deutsche Seemannsmission Hamburg-Harburg and has close-knit team of paid staff, young people on national service placements, and volunteers.

Liverpool Seafarers' Centre, United Kingdom



This seafarers' centre, in its current form, was established in 2007, replacing the former Mersey Mission to Seafarers and Stella Maris Centres in a joint ecumenical venture. This newly designed centre is an example of how different societies can work together in adapting to the changing needs of seafarers.

Mission to Seafarers Drop – in Centre Singapore



This drop-in centre is based inside a port with some of the shortest ship turnaround times in the world. While space is limited, communications services and reading materials are available and a chaplain is on hand to provide spiritual support and counselling.

Odessa Seamen's Club, Ukraine

This seafarers' centre, located inside the port, is used by seafarers from cargo vessels and, increasingly, passenger vessels. Nationally, there is no tradition of religious organisations running welfare services or of volunteering and charitable giving. The centre is largely self-financing and has a lively programme of attractions for seafarers.

Paranagua Seafarers' Support Centre, Brazil

This centre is run by the Paranaense Baptist Convention. Local regulations require that they also offer services to the poor of the local community. Established in 2003 by the faith and determination of its founders, the Paranagua Baptist Convention, Espirito Santo Baptist Convention and the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey, the centre is now a model for ports in Brazil.

Port Newark Seafarers' Center, United States of America



This seafarers' centre, in the largest port on the US East Coast, offers services to seafarers and local shore-based maritime workers. There are two service points in the port to meet seafarers as they come ashore. The centre has recently taken over another seafarers' centre previously in difficulty. The team includes professional fundraisers.

Richards Bay Combined Seafarers Club, South Africa



This seafarers' centre is entirely self-financing as local circumstances make fundraising impossible. Some years ago, it was in danger of closing. Prudent management by the chaplain and the manager, a husband and wife team, and the management committee, has succeeded in turning its fortunes around.

Stella Maris Centre, Barcelona, Spain



This traditional seafarers' centre has accommodation, a bar and a chapel. There is also a centre for seafarers' rights and an office in the cruise ship terminal. The centre aims to be a reference point for the local maritime community. Spirituality is at its heart and the centre has won awards for its work promoting interfaith dialogue.

Stella Maris' Friends, Venice, Italy



This seafarers' centre, run by a not-for-profit organisation, in the passenger port of Venice is self-financing and also funds welfare work in the nearby cargo port. This centre has a worldwide reach, producing the "Filipino Balita" which is distributed electronically, free of charge, to chaplains and ship visitors around the world.

Also represented at the workshop

Mr Nonoy Baldon, seafarer



Perhaps the most important participant at the workshop, Nonoy represents the "end user". A professional seafarer, he spent three years at maritime college in the Philippines followed by a year of onboard training.

Nonoy has also worked as a volunteer at two seafarers' centres: Stella Maris Centre in Cebu, a large centre with accommodation frequently used by seafarers' families; and the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest in London which has accommodation for elderly and retired seafarers.

Mr Roger Harris, International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare (ICSW)



The ICSW has a co-ordinating role in the provision of seafarers' welfare, providing support and working to avoid duplication of services. Roger joined ICSW in 2009 bringing extensive experience of fundraising and building professional relationships.

Ms Kimberly Karlshoej, the TK Foundation



The TK Foundation is a philanthropic organisation which promotes the health, safety and welfare of seafarers. Kimberly is Program Officer at the TK Foundation and also a trustee. With a background in psychology and nursing, she also brings experience of the hospitality industry to the workshop.

Mr Roy Paul, the ITF Seafarers' Trust



Roy has worked at numerous seafarers' centres as both paid employee and volunteer. He was chaplain at the Mersey Mission to Seafarers. In his spare time, he visits seafarers' centres.

Facilitators

Reverend Hennie la Grange, ICMA

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The Mariners' Club
Hong Kong

Chapter 1: Seafarers

The Golden Rules

- All seafarers are equal and have an equal right to be cared for and treated with love and respect
- Respect the diversity of seafarers and their national and religious identities
- Talk to seafarers to discover their needs rather than assuming you know what they need or want
- Successful seafarers' centres are seafarer-centred



Photo: Dirk Obermann

How to find out what seafarers need? Listen to seafarers!

We only learn what seafarers need when we listen to them. In order to listen, we reach out, make contact, build trust and show that we are ready to respond to what they tell us. By being present in seafarers' centres, and by ship visiting, we show that we are ready to listen.

Balance seafarers' needs and the centre's interests

We must differentiate between the needs of seafarers and the needs of the organisations which run the centres. Centres which are self-financing need to make a profit. Centres which depend on donations may be under pressure to show results, solving problems or producing statistics.

Speaking from experience

- *What we seafarers want is a home away from home, a welcome, a smile and communications.*
- *In some countries, 'welfare' can have negative connotations. We prefer 'well-being'. We are not just meeting seafarers' practical needs but working to make their lives better.*
- *Do you know what seafarers call the women who run the centres? They call us 'mammy'. We listen to them. Where would they find that downtown?*

Do seafarers need seafarers' centres?

Is it patronising to assume that seafarers need seafarers' centres? Or is it really our self-interest that makes us believe we are important? By encouraging seafarers to use our facilities, do we risk depriving them of a cultural experience? Doesn't the beer taste the same downtown? Think about it!

Help seafarers to feel safe

Historically, churches established seafarers' centres because they recognised that seafarers were vulnerable to exploitation and criminals. Sadly, many ports are unsafe today. Seafarers' centres still offer a safe environment without making moral judgements about seafarers' behaviour.

Help seafarers to access services

Contemporary seafarers often have very little free time. It is convenient if seafarers' centres can offer essential services in, or close to, the port. And if not, then they need transport to get to these services.

Treat seafarers fairly

Successful seafarers' centres offer reliable services and fair prices.

Befriend seafarers

More importantly, successful seafarers' centres offer friendship and a personal touch.

Speaking from experience

- *We never tell seafarers not to go downtown but we do have a responsibility to warn them of the dangers. Seafarers have been robbed. We know of incidents where taxis have taken them to nightclubs instead of back to their ship.*
- *Taxi drivers behave differently when there is a seafarers' centre, especially when there is an agreement in place. They know that someone is looking out for the seafarers.*
- *A bit of competition from other attractions is good. It keeps us alert and focused on providing what seafarers need.*

Do seafarers' centres need seafarers? Of course!

Obviously seafarers' centres need seafarers. Seafarers are their reason for existing. All seafarers' centres would fail without seafarers but self-financing centres, which need to make a profit, would fail more quickly.

Respect seafarers' choice

But we recognise that seafarers are free to choose what they want to do, whether they would like to come to the seafarers' centre or go elsewhere. Sometimes seafarers prefer to go downtown. Good seafarers' centres provide useful information about local attractions. Some also provide transport.

Simply be there for seafarers

The centre is safe place to which seafarers can return if necessary. It is a point of reference for them.

Speaking from experience

- *No one is obliged to come to a centre. It's something that we offer to seafarers. We don't hide the fact that we have a commercial interest too.*
- *I tell seafarers that they don't have to buy telephone cards from us. But if they don't use our services, we'll have to close and then we won't be here to do anything for them. We explain: help us to help you.*
- *We provide transport from the docks to the seafarers' centre. If seafarers prefer to go downtown, we take them. We give them information about how to get back to the port but we make it clear that it's their responsibility.*

Do invite seafarers to come

If you have a good seafarers' centre, you must tell the seafarers.

Distribute information on your centre

Successful centres have a presence in the port whatever their actual location. Some use banners on gates or posters on notice boards to advertise their services. Some ensure that their publicity material is included in port information packs or distributed by port workers.

Ensure your information is convincing and reliable

Leaflets and posters are not enough. Seafarers sometimes do not believe that certain services are offered to them for free. And in other ports they may have been disappointed to find the information they were given was inaccurate: the centre was closed during advertised opening hours; the services were not what was announced on the leaflet etc.. Stick to what you have advertised!

Meet them to invite them personally

Seafarers need a human invitation with time spent explaining who we are and what we want to do for them. It is a role for a properly prepared ship visitor. All successful seafarers' centres agree: it is vital to make contact with the seafarers onboard their ships. Ship visiting is the key. Ship visitors must have the necessary information about centre opening hours, facilities and the availability of transport.

Speaking from experience

- *We have a simple flyer with international symbols on it. It is cheap to produce and can be left anywhere. Seafarers can keep them in their pockets or wallets.*
- *We produced some booklets in a joint enterprise with the port authority. Some local restaurants paid to have their logos included.*
- *Companies spend millions on passenger ports but passengers just walk through. When we approached the port authority, they were happy to give us space for our publicity.*

Celebrate seafarers' lives

Love for seafarers, support for their dignity, a listening ear, these are vital as are good quality and reliable practical services.

But sometimes seafarers, like anyone else, want to relax and have fun. Seafarers want to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, national days and religious festivals. And seafarers commemorate the death of loved ones and events that are significant to them personally and to their families and communities.

Entertain seafarers

Some seafarers' centres have developed innovative ideas for entertaining seafarers.

Ideas for celebrations

Local culture

Food tasting
Local musicians
Folk music and dances
Costumes

International culture

Seafarers' national holidays, e.g. Filipino Heroes' Day
Religious festivals, e.g. Christmas, Divali
International events, e.g. World Maritime Day

Games and competitions

Bingo
Board games
General knowledge quizzes
Team sports like football and basketball

Social events

Film showings
Sing-alongs
Dancing
Parties for sporting events, e.g. Football World Cup

Respect a seafarers' choice not to come to the centre

Sometimes seafarers are too busy to come to the seafarers' centre, even if they had previously requested transport. Sometimes they prefer to go elsewhere. That is their choice.

Keep in mind why they don't come

There are times when we need to ask questions about why seafarers don't come to the centre. Perhaps we should alert the authorities or the ITF Inspector if we find something is amiss. Ship visitors should pay attention to seafarers. If they have no energy or seem too apathetic to come off ship, they may be suffering mental health problems. If they are unable to obtain shore passes, it is possible that they are being denied their right to shore leave. The seafarers' centre should have procedures for responding.

Do something about it!

But maybe it is due to a problem at your centres that they prefer to go elsewhere. Do not be afraid to ask! And if you get an honest answer, do something about it!



Photo: Rolf Schulten

Chapter 2: Ship visiting

The Golden Rules

- **Ship visiting is the most important tool, the first point of contact**
- **Ship visiting is taking the centre's services to the ships**
- **We can only get to know and understand the needs of the seafarers if we visit them onboard**

Ship visiting alerts seafarers to onshore facilities and care being offered them by chaplains and seafarers' centres. Within the scope of this report, we consider how ship visiting contributes to making seafarers' centres successful. The consensus is that ship visiting is the key element.

The question "what makes a successful ship visitor?" deserves a workshop and report to itself.



Photo: Friends of Stella Maris, Venice

Meet seafarers face to face

ICMA chaplains and seafarers' centres staff uniquely visit ships and meet seafarers face to face in their own living space and workplace. This makes all the difference to seafarers.

Organise ship visiting

Ship visiting should be a regular activity, daily in busy ports. Ship visiting is not a casual pastime that may be just as soon neglected. It is a carefully planned and coordinated activity.

Do not be easily put off ship visiting by authorities

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 defines the rights of seafarers to receive ship visits.

Train ship visitors to go on board

Ship visitors must be aware of local security restrictions, health and safety regulations, have regulated access to port facilities and permission to board ships. Ship visitors must adhere on onboard protocols and must restrict their own operations to their agreed areas of service provision. Ship visitors may be trained by using the ICMA-supported Ship Welfare Visitors Course, an introduction to these and other issues pertaining to ship visiting.

Train ship visitors to care for seafarers and to deliver welfare services

The care for the wellbeing of seafarers and the delivery of welfare services and products is vital to successful ship visiting. You can train ship visitors by using the ICMA Ship Visitors Handbook, a manual designed to help ship visitors make the best of their time on board.

Prioritise crew that cannot visit the centre

Consider prioritising visits for crews which may not have time to come to the centre. Paradoxically this will seem to have no immediate benefit to seafarers' centres. But it will accentuate your centre's commitment to selfless care for seafarers. It will attract seafarers in the long run.

Make sure that you visit all the ships' crews

Ideally you should visit all ships without fail. But you may want to prioritise those ships' crews which may not know about your centre, being in your port for the first time.

Visit them repeatedly to build relationships

Do not make the mistake of neglecting crews that may know of your centre from previous visits to the port. Do not exclude them from the regular ship visiting programme. By repeatedly visiting the same ships, during one of the ship's visits or on subsequent visits to your port, you establish relationships with the crew.

Mix with all the seafarers onboard

Ship visitors must understand the importance of mixing with all seafarers on board, both ratings and officers and seafarers of all nationalities onboard.

Be sensitive to rank and to multi-national environments

How to communicate with the officers and ratings, and how to behave with multi-national crews should be part of a ship visitor's training.

Distribute information

Make available to seafarers as much information as possible about the seafarers' centre and transport. But good ship visitors use leaflets and brochures wisely: these are invitations to come to centre and should not be scattered carelessly.

Realise that you are a guest in a seafarers' home

Ship visitors know that a ship is where a seafarer lives and that visitors are guests in the seafarers' home. We should behave appropriately and show respect for privacy and customs.

Listen!

As in seafarers' centres, willingness to listen to seafarers is perhaps the most important part of ship visiting. Visitors do not have to be psychotherapists but they should be alert to personal needs and possible problems onboard.

Speaking from experience

- *I ship visit in the morning and I'm in the seafarers' centre in the afternoon. Seafarers come and they recognise me there.*
- *Even when the seafarers' centre is right in the middle of the port, seafarers ask for ship visiting.*
- *A toll-free telephone number is fine but, in reality, seafarers only express how they really feel when talking face to face.*

Visit cruise ships

Ministry to cruise ship workers is another topic which deserves a separate report. In many ports, seafarers' centres find it impossible to send ship visitors onboard cruise ships due to excessive restrictions. Sometimes the ship's staff are not helpful.

Be innovative, find alternatives to ship visiting

Sometimes you will need to find other ways of reaching out to cruise ship workers.

Set up temporary seafarers' centres for the cruise season

Some centres establish temporary posts in the terminals during the cruise season. Others have special facilities for cruise ship crews. These might be small booths or offices or just a table, some chairs and a banner. Some offer practical services such as money transfer. Do negotiate with the terminal authorities for telephone facilities for seafarers. And if possible, have the centre's bus available to take seafarers to the nearest banking or shopping facilities. As ever, having someone there to listen to seafarers is the most important service.

Encourage visits to your main centre

If there is plenty of publicity for your seafarers' centre, cruise ship staff may decide to visit if they have time. This is especially good if you have access to more services at your centre than at the makeshift centre.

Refer problems to the experts

If you suspect that there are problems onboard a cruise ship, consider contacting the ITF which has two dedicated cruise ship officers who operate from London, or local ITF inspectors in your port or consult with the Center for Seafarers' Rights in New York.

Speaking from experience

- *The port gave us space just inside the terminal. In season, we set up a booth and our summer students work there.*
- *We had a desk and a few seats within the terminal. Gradually we built up a relationship with the cruise ship crews. That led to invitations from them to go onboard.*
- *We've tried everything. We've negotiated with the agents. We see our names on the list of approved visitors but somehow there is always a reason not to let us go onboard.*

Chapter 3: Management

The Golden Rules

- **Follow a vision and strategic plan, be well-organised and keep your services under constant review**
- **Good managers combine vision and action, being responsible and accountable and setting a good example**
- **Recognise the need for expertise in areas such as finance and local legislation**

This chapter is about the practicalities of ensuring that seafarers' centres meet the needs of seafarers. We use the term 'manager' to mean the person(s) making decisions and taking responsibility for financial stability and for day-to-day running of the seafarers' centre.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Compare your centres' management with others

The traditional model of management was a committee headed by a chaplain with close links to local churches. These days, centres might be run by a professional administrator with little or no involvement by a chaplain. Some centres are run almost entirely by volunteers. Many centres have inherited their management structures. Just as with buildings, there may be no option to change.

Adapt to the present needs of seafarers

Do your best to adapt your management style to the serving the needs of today's seafarers. Think about your centre as being a welcoming place related to similar clubs and institutions in the hospitality industry to see if you could improve your management systems.

Be clear on who makes the decisions

Whatever the model of management, it is vital to be clear about who has the power to make decisions and who takes ultimate responsibility.

Speaking from experience

- *I think the chaplain should always have the final word on policy. It's the chaplain who forms the centre's relationship with seafarers through ship-visiting and other chaplaincy work.*
- *Having a centre manager takes pressure off the chaplain, freeing him or her to do the real work of listening to the seafarers. It can cost money though.*
- *Chaplains don't always have experience of areas like retail. You should never be afraid to ask an expert for help, especially in the case of financial management.*

Manage the money

The manager is responsible for the overall financial security of the seafarers' centre and also for control of any buying and selling that takes place in the centre. Most centres take money for something even if it is only the sale of phone cards. Some depend on profits from retail.

Follow the requirements for financial management

It is vital to be aware of local financial regulations. Whatever the jurisdiction, you must have a system for recording all transactions. This might be specially developed software which works with cash registers. Equally, it might be a pencil and notebook.

Funders may require financial records. And accounting for all money and stock protects staff from suspicion of impropriety.

Monitor supply and demand

Keeping comprehensive records enables you to monitor supply and demand of goods and services. This helps you to ensure that you are meeting the needs of seafarers, but also ensures sales.

Could you afford to offer some services free of charge?

Some centres are able to offer refreshments, clothing and Internet access free of charge. But some express concern that giving things away might be seen as charity and patronising to seafarers. Some find that free services are undervalued. A small charge promotes responsible use.

Speaking from experience

- *We don't charge for refreshments. Seafarers are our visitors and I wouldn't charge a visitor to my house for a cup of coffee.*
- *We used to offer free Internet access but the system was abused. We introduced a small charge and the situation improved immediately.*
- *We cannot charge for Internet access because local regulations would require us to become an Internet café. It's just easier to make it free.*

Consider whether sales are worth the effort and expense

Many centres include a shop and cafeteria or bar. For some these are important sources of revenue. Others find that they spend more money than they make. Consider carefully how necessary they are as services for seafarers. Offering transport to a local shopping centre is sometimes more practical.

Find out what seafarers like to buy

Conduct regular stock taking. Review which items are most popular and which remain unsold and adjust your ordering of stock appropriately. This is vital even if your seafarers' centre does not depend on sales for financial survival. It helps you to ensure that you are meeting customers' needs.

Charge reasonable prices

Naturally, seafarers' centres should never take advantage of seafarers and sell items at inflated prices. Some centres offer fair trade items, which are more expensive, to reflect their commitment to ethical business practices.

Accept foreign currency

Seafarers usually pay with US dollars. Consider whether you can sell items in US dollars or whether it's best to exchange the dollars into local currency. Remember to follow local regulations on managing foreign currency.

Be aware of tax regulations

In some countries, it is possible to avoid tax when selling items exclusively to non-residents. As ever, it is vital to understand local regulations.

Make a profit

Making a profit from sales is reasonable. Exploiting seafarers is not. Some centres have two sets of prices: one for seafarers and one for other visitors.

Speaking from experience

- *Our centre relies on trading. Retail is most definitely necessary for us. We review our stock very carefully. We cannot afford to have it sitting on the shelves.*
- *We're debating whether to stop doing retail and ask local businesses to donate items such as chocolate. It might be more economic just to give it away.*
- *Seafarers don't usually need charity. Fair trade shops stimulate discussion about consumerism. It's important that the staff of the centre are engaged in the debate.*

Assist seafarers to make international money transfers

For many seafarers, money transfer is one of the most important services they need when ashore. It can be complicated for seafarers' centres to provide it. However some centres have successfully negotiated arrangements which enable them to offer good rates and a reliable service.

Speaking from experience

- *On payday, we have an armoured car service to come to our station in the cruise ship port and take the money to the bank.*
- *We have a simple contract with Western Union on a fixed rate. We earn some money on the commission applied by the company.*
- *We have an agreement with the bank. We can offer seafarers a good rate if they want to exchange dollars.*

Provide services

Services should meet the needs of seafarers. The manager is responsible for ensuring that the centre meets the needs of seafarers.

Make sure you provide the best service

How do you know you are providing the best service? Ask seafarers and take their responses seriously. There must be a direct line of communication between those who make decisions about the centre and those who listen to seafarers at the centre and during ship visiting. Ideally, they are the same people.

Be seafarers-centred

Good service provision is 90% attitude and 10% action. Your services should be seafarers-centred. Seafarers are your customers. Serve them. Please them.

Be reliable

Reliability is the key to good customer service. Do what you have promised seafarers you would have? This could be as simple as having the centre open at the times advertised and having all of the advertised services readily available.

Be welcoming

This means that staff should not start turning off computers and closing cash tills before the advertised closing time.

Be considerate

It is reasonable to ask seafarers to respect the rules of the seafarers' centre and be prepared to leave at closing time. Staff have the right to have their working hours respected. But sometimes seafarers arrive just before closing time, desperate to make a phone call or send an email. Staff may not realise just how important that call might be to the seafarer.

Be flexible

Managers and centre staff must be prepared to be flexible. They must have the authority to take decisions such as whether to keep the centre open for late-comers. Equally they must consider whether granting a request would set an unfortunate precedent, or inconvenience others, and be prepared to say no.

Speaking from experience

- *If a seafarer wasted time by coming to the centre and finding it closed, no one from that ship would ever come again.*
- *I'm willing to stay behind after closing time if a seafarer has important phone calls to make. But we don't allow any bargaining over the prices in our shop!*
- *You should always offer what's appropriate according to need and to resources. But generally, the more services you have, the more you can develop.*

Ensure that you're insured

Insurance is necessary for buildings and facilities, including vehicles, and also for staff. From the underwriters' point of view, ship visitors particularly are a significant risk. Activities such as driving in port and going up gangways are considered dangerous. Good training and safety policies will help mitigate risk.

Lead from the front

Managers must lead by example. They should not be hidden in offices. They must be visible to seafarers. They must demonstrate that they are approachable and ready to listen. Managers must constantly ask the question: "are we meeting the needs of seafarers?"

Further management responsibilities are discussed in the chapter on integrity. See also chapters on staff and volunteers, customer service and fundraising.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Chapter 4: Staff

The Golden Rules

- **Passion**
- **Training**
- **Communication, both ways**

The attitude of the manager sets the atmosphere of the seafarers' centre. If the manager does not lead by example, staff will not be able to provide the best service for seafarers. Equally, every manager needs the right staff: staff who understand that their role is to serve seafarers.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Get passionate people

There is complete consensus that the fundamental requirement of all seafarers' centre staff is passion. They must have a passion to help others, a strong interest in other cultures, empathy and a willingness to listen. Many skills can be taught but passion must be innate.

Hire staff for resilience

Work in a seafarers' centre can be demanding. Staff may hear distressing stories. There may be frustration at the injustices suffered by seafarers and disappointment if seafarers are unable to come to the centre. Without passion, staff will not cope with these difficulties.

Teach all your staff to do the basics: to serve seafarers

However, passion alone is not quite enough. Training is also necessary. Many centres require staff with specific professional skills such as retail, accountancy and IT. All staff should be able to provide basic services such as helping seafarers to use communications facilities. All staff must understand that they are there to listen to seafarers.

Speaking from experience

- *You can train someone to be a retail assistant or bartender but passion must be innate. Malcontents cannot do it.*
- *Ideally you want a mix of staff trained in ministry and welfare and staff trained in hospitality. You want chaplains focused on chaplaincy, not fundraising.*
- *We cannot provide a psychologist in every centre but we can ensure we have enough people who show kindness.*

Make use of volunteers

Some centres rely almost entirely on volunteers. Others have few or none at all. Cultural factors are important. In some countries, there is no tradition of voluntary work. In others, it is considered an important part of a person's CV and may be compulsory for students or young people. Volunteers do not receive payment although it is usual practice to cover their expenses

Recruit the right volunteers

When seeking volunteers, develop campaigns to target the right people. Existing volunteers are often the best people to recruit new ones. However seafarers' centres exist to meet the needs of seafarers and not to offer volunteering opportunities. Managers should not be obliged to accept everyone who applies. Volunteers are not a cheap alternative to paid staff. The wrong volunteer could be very costly to the centre in terms of time, money and good relations.

Be creative with volunteers

Successful centres find creative ways of using the talent and good will available. Be flexible. Some volunteers make an ongoing commitment: others come for a defined period, e.g. the duration of the school holidays. Some cannot easily come to the centre but can work from home helping with publicity or fundraising. For many people, volunteering is an enriching experience. It enables them to develop skills which might benefit them in their employment.

Treat all your staff equally: with respect

When you accept a volunteer, he or she becomes an integral part of your staff team. There should be no difference between volunteers and paid staff except in respect of formalities required by local legislation. Otherwise they all have the same right to be treated with respect. Volunteers have the same responsibility to seafarers as paid staff. For the rest of this chapter, unless otherwise specified, we do not differentiate between paid staff and volunteers. All have the same duty to serve seafarers and the same right to respect.

Speaking from experience

- *When someone contacts us about volunteering, we first invite them to look around the centre and make their own suggestions about what they might be able to do.*
- *In my country no one ever works for free. People would use any spare time to earn something extra for their family. But we do what we can. We have an agreement with the local university. Language students come to practice talking with seafarers.*
- *It is not possible to treat everyone equally. There are differences of age and responsibility. But you can treat everyone with equal respect.*

Volunteer recruitment campaigns

Students

- maritime students
- language students
- legal students
- theological students
- overseas students

Community groups

- local sports teams
- churches
- social clubs
- expatriate communities

Maritime personnel

- retired seafarers and port workers
- seafarers' families
- port workers' families

Specialist

- specialist volunteer recruitment agencies
- volunteer bureaux and exchange clubs
- government training and social work departments

Local media campaigns

- participating in radio or tv programs
- writing articles for newspapers



Volunteering at a seafarers' centre can bring valuable experience for:

- counselling and support
- administration
- management
- team work
- fundraising
- organising events
- working in the maritime sector

Use an employment contract

Obviously local regulations apply. But in all cases, a contract is essential. This is not just a piece of paper to fulfil legal requirements. It is a clearly stated agreement between two parties giving the expectations, rights and responsibilities of each.

Keep it simple

If local regulations require complicated documents, prepare alternative simple versions for internal use. All staff must know exactly what is expected of them and have agreed to it before they start work. Absolute clarity from the outset avoids future conflicts or misunderstanding. Keep paperwork minimal and meaningful, avoiding needless bureaucracy. For ship visitors, and all staff at centres located within ports, security clearance and other paperwork may be required. Make sure all staff understand and accept these requirements.

Assess the cost of staff appointments

Processing paperwork can be time-consuming. In some cases, there is a charge for port security passes. Some ports are far removed from city centres which may make travel to work costly. Further costs include staff training, equipment, refreshments, salaries and volunteer expenses. When appointing staff, managers must take all of this into consideration. Managers must decide if the benefit to seafarers justifies the use of time and money. A potential staff member with limited relevant professional skills, or volunteer who can only come to the centre occasionally, may cost more than they are able to contribute. You must consider these factors before accepting someone on your staff team.

Speaking from experience

- *The main task of all staff is to listen and help. They have to be service-oriented.*
- *Treat all staff and volunteers professionally. That way, they'll behave professionally.*
- *Your staff are the face of the mission. They need to understand that.*

Teach your staff the responsibilities and the limits of their roles

Contracts, in whatever form you choose to issue them, will clarify staff responsibilities. It is equally important that staff understand their limitations. They must know when to refer matters to someone more senior. Staff should never attempt to resolve problems beyond their capacity.

Be clear about who has authority

In the same way, they should never be in a position of not knowing what to do or whom to ask. All staff must know who has the authority to make decisions, for example, when seafarers ask to stay after closing time. It must be clear who takes this role when the manager is not available.

Get professional advice when you discipline staff

It is never ever acceptable for staff to be rude to seafarers or to cause problems through unreliable behaviour. They must behave professionally even if they are not being paid. Sometimes it is necessary to ask staff to leave. To discipline your staff or to terminate their services can be complicated, especially with paid staff. If necessary, seek professional advice.

Speaking from experience

- I used to wonder 'how far can I push a volunteer?' I now know that the answer is 'all the way'. Volunteers can do anything that paid staff do. They often do it better.
- A seafarer came to the centre with a toothache. A kind volunteer spent hours trying to find a local dentist. If only she had told her manager. He knew that the ship's agents had an emergency dental service. The seafarer suffered needlessly because the volunteer did not follow procedure.
- Some barriers are impossible to overcome. We discovered that one of our ship visitors was only interested in seafarers of certain nationalities. We had to ask her to leave.

To achieve excellence, train everyone

Passion is essential but, without training, it can be misdirected. Everyone joining the centre will need some sort of induction. But even the most experienced staff will benefit from regular ongoing training. Volunteers should certainly not be excluded.

Devise an induction programme for new staff

New staff should be taken on a tour of the centre and introduced to their colleagues. They need to know the rules of the centre, for example policies on smoking or accepting tips. Port authorities may insist on specific training for drivers and other staff entering the port. Train all staff to focus on seafarers and to serve their needs.

Consider specialist training

Some roles require specialist training, most obviously ship visiting. Do make use of ICMA's Ship visiting Handbook available on ICMA's website, and the ICMA-endorsed Ship Welfare Visitors Course which may be presented by someone in your region upon invitation. Consult with the ICMA Secretariat for more information.

Consider general training for all

But consider also general training applicable to all staff.

- Empathy may be innate but listening is a skill. Various organisations offer training in listening skills with techniques including open questions, leaving silences and refraining from giving advice.
- The hospitality industry trains staff to communicate in a customer-service environment. They use techniques such as making eye-contact, not turning your back, and using the customer's name in conversation. Find out if you can access this sort of training for staff.
- All staff, whatever their role, should be trained to recognise if seafarers need conversation.
- They should be shown how to do the basic, most commonly requested tasks, for example money transfer. That way, seafarers are not passed from one person to the next.
- All new staff should be trained to be sensitive to multi-cultural environments.
- Most importantly, all staff, including the manager, should be reminded constantly that they are there to serve seafarers and make a difference to their lives. Regular training is one way of achieving this.

Training events can be combined with social events which are all part of caring for staff.

Speaking from experience

- *Every year we invite new staff to a seminar. This gives them an understanding of the basis of supporting the dignity of seafarers. Topics include the shipping industry, different cultures and listening techniques. The latter is always the most popular.*
- *If at all possible, give everyone the chance to ship visit at least once.*
- *We take all staff and volunteers on tour of the port. We call it a 'tour of seafarers' lives'.*

Care for your staff

Give your staff proper training. Ensure that they know where to turn if they have a problem and what to do in case of a crisis. These are fundamental aspects of staff care. If you do not care for your staff, they will not be able to care for seafarers.

Keep your staff fully equipped and safe

Ports can be dangerous places. Caring for your staff's own safety is vital. Staff must have appropriate safety equipment and safety clothing. Staff must be aware of safety procedures within the port and in your centre. All staff, even those who stay inside the centre, need protection from danger. Your staff should also understand that seafarers rely on them to ensure their safety when visiting the centre. Fire drills should be practised to teach staff how to evacuate seafarers from the centre in case of emergency.

Maintain the dignity of your staff

Sadly, the nature of seafarers' centres is sometimes misunderstood. There have been cases of staff being mistaken for prostitutes. Staff have been abused by irate customers. Staff have been bullied by colleagues. To ensure the dignity of all your staff, you have to create a secure and non-discriminatory workplace.

Protect your staff by proper supervision

Clear procedures for handling money and items for sale, good accounting and regular stock taking are efficient business practices. But they also protect staff from false accusations and unjustified suspicion. Proper supervision of staff is supportive and helps to prevent them from making mistakes.

Make sure your staff are well rested

Seafarers' centres need staff who are full of passion, generous and eager to serve. Managers need to take very good care of these people. Staff who are always willing to put the needs of seafarers before their own can easily become over-worked. You need enough staff, a fair distribution of responsibilities, a balanced shift schedule and adequate supervision of your staff to ensure that they perform at their peak. In short, you need to have good human resource management systems in place.

In some centres, chaplains or centre managers live on site. This should not mean that they are available 24 hours a day. All staff must have time to rest and recuperate. Staff who are tired or stressed cannot give 100% of their attention to seafarers when they are on duty.

Speaking from experience

- *Each person should be doing what he or she really likes doing and be confident about their responsibilities. If you play to their strengths, keep them motivated, you'll get the best from them.*
- *It can take confidence to leave the centre on time. But working hours exist for a reason. Everyone has to rest some time.*
- *We have an 'honour-board' for outstanding staff. A local shipping agency presents awards to volunteers which they choose in consultation with us. It's a nice incentive.*

Treat your staff like family

For seafarers, your centre should feel like a home away from home. To achieve that, your centre staff should feel like family. Nurture this 'family'. Organise events to bring the family together. Ensure that staff who work different shifts have a chance to meet. With some imagination, you can combine training with team building and social activities. A workshop in the afternoon can be followed by a shared evening meal. A tour of the port or visit to a maritime museum stimulates discussion. A visit to another seafarers' centre in another port provides a refreshing break and some new ideas. Also include the staff's families in some events and encourage them to visit the centre. Invite the staff to bring their families to celebrations at the centre, such as Christmas parties.

Speaking from experience

- *It's good for permanent staff to take a mentoring role when temporary volunteers come to the seafarers' centre.*
- *We have photos of all our staff in CD cases at the entrance. We give their first names and they all share the same surname, the name of the centre.*
- *Be aware of your staff's family circumstances. We visit people when they are in hospital and we also attend family funerals of our staff.*

Set up good communication with your staff

You need systems for passing on information to your staff. Staff coming on shift need to know if there are any immediate issues. A staff notice board or agreed handover procedure is useful. Longer term developments such as new policies or news from the port can be communicated through newsletters, email updates and regular staff meetings. Face to face communication is always best.

Invite staff to participate in the decision-making process

It is always good to get the opinion of staff before making management decisions which affect them. Staff should have a chance to attend meetings at which decisions about the centre are made, or should at least be represented at such meetings. If your centre has a managing committee for instance, representatives of staff, including representatives of volunteers, could be invited to the meetings. Equally, committee members should visit the centre, get to know staff and attend their meetings.

Take note of what your staff feels

Communication is not only about passing on information. And simply having staff attend meetings is not enough. Communication is about listening, about giving staff the time and space to talk. Meetings should allow for the exchange of ideas where everyone's voice is heard and everyone's opinion is valued.

Have individual conversations with your staff

Not only meetings, but one to one communication is also vital. Every staff member should have regular meetings with their supervisor whose role should be, above all, supportive. As always, lead by example. Listen to staff as you want them to listen to seafarers.

Speaking from experience

- *We keep a notebook at the counter so that we can write down anything important. Staff check it when they come on shift to find out what has happened.*
- *We could do an email newsletter but some of our older staff say they prefer a paper one. So that's what we give them.*
- *Regular one-to-one meetings are important but you have to be prepared to listen to staff even if you don't always like what they say.*

Chapter 5: Customer service

The Golden Rules

- **Be welcoming and responsive, give seafarers your full attention**
- **Treat visitors to the centre like visitors to your home**
- **Try to find out what seafarers expect from the centre**

Seafarers' centres exist to serve seafarers. Seafarers are the customers so clearly a customer-service ethos is essential. But these 'customers' need more than practical services. They need listening and conversation. Occasionally they need help. Aim to offer whatever is appropriate according to the seafarers' needs.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Put your customers first

Staff should be trained to give their full attention to individual seafarers. When carrying out practical tasks such as serving drinks or operating the cash till, they should ensure that they make eye-contact with customers. This means taking time and having a relaxed manner. Staff should not chat among themselves even if seafarers seem to be occupied at computers or watching television. Holding private conversations makes staff unavailable to seafarers who may feel excluded or reluctant to interrupt. Instead, staff should be always ready to talk to seafarers.

Live up to the unique demands of seafarers

Sometimes seafarers have special needs. These “customers” – seafarers – are unique to seafarers' centres. Abandonment, injustice, criminalisation and crises are all part of the lives of seafarers. Responses to these situations will feature in the operations of seafarers' centres. Prepare for these events.

Just be there for seafarers

However, there are times when seafarers do not want conversation. Generally they have very little time ashore. Sometimes they really do just want to change money, send an email and leave. Staff should be sensitive and not waste seafarers' time trying to force them to talk about their feelings. Sometimes just being there is enough.

Get seafarers' opinions

Look for ways to get seafarers involved in running the centre. Ask for their comments. Many centres have a suggestions book or box. However, these are only valuable if the manager regularly reads and considers the suggestions. If appropriate, ask seafarers for their help.

Speaking from experience

- *Sometimes it seems like 'takeaway welfare'. Seafarers come in, get what they want and go. But there's always the possibility of pastoral support. The point is, they know we are here for them.*
- *People rarely thank seafarers. We make sure we say thank you and wish them a good journey as they leave.*
- *We asked some seafarers to translate the instructions for SIM cards into their own languages so that we can give them out when we sell the cards. They were so pleased to be able to help.*

Seafarers come first

Should seafarers' centres be exclusively for seafarers? Should they also offer services to port workers? Should tourists be allowed to visit? The answers largely depend on the location of individual centres and their own traditions. But whoever else uses the seafarers' centre, seafarers come first.

Be of service to the port community

Allowing the port community to use the facilities can help to build relationships. Having facilities such as meeting rooms and sports equipment available for hire can be profitable. However it becomes a problem if seafarers feel excluded or if the facilities are no longer available to them.

Use every opportunity to educate the public on seafarers

Some seafarers' centres see welcoming the public as part of their educational role. Church groups, community groups, maritime students and cadets, even tourists are invited to centres to learn about the lives of seafarers. This can work very well as long as there are clear rules and the needs of seafarers always come first.

Speaking from experience

- *Seafarers are at the heart of our mission but port workers are also part of the life of the port.*
- *In the past we had a 'Friends' scheme for retired people. Unfortunately, locals started using the centre as 'their' club. Some seafarers felt intimidated so we had to stop it.*
- *Staff of our local port post office are welcome to come and use our pool table. But the agreement is that they will always give way to seafarers.*



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Chapter 6: Infrastructure

The Golden Rules

- **The building should be the appropriate size, and in the appropriate place, for seafarers visiting the port**
- **The building must feel welcoming, keep it clean, tidy and bright**
- **Make sure you can afford to keep facilities well-maintained**

This chapter looks at the physical seafarers' centre: size, location, use of space and the necessary facilities.



Photo: Rolf Schulten

Set up a centre in the port

Having the centre within the port has several advantages. It may be easier to build relationships with the port authority and other port-based workers. A centre within port can become a point of reference for all seafarers' needs. It can be part of the life of the port.

If seafarers do not need to leave the port, they may be spared immigration and security procedures which can be time-consuming and sometimes costly. Proximity to the docks is convenient for seafarers who have limited time ashore. However in larger ports, seafarers' centres still need to provide transport and drivers.

Be prepared for the problems with port locations

On the other hand, a centre within port may be inaccessible to other visitors. Time and money spent on security passes and other paperwork may affect decisions about accepting staff and volunteers. The dangers of the port environment may mean extra expense in insurance and safety equipment.

For self-financing centres within ports, a fall in the number of ship calls can be disastrous. Poor management by the port authorities, changes in local shipping practices or global catastrophes such as swine flu can threaten the stability of the centre.

Build good relations with the port

Successful seafarers' centres need good relationships with port authorities. However, being too dependent on the port authority brings a feeling of vulnerability. Basic services such as electricity can be expensive for a port-based seafarers' centre which is effectively a captive market.

Make the best of what you've got

In many cases, there is no choice about building or location. Some centres operate in large buildings inherited from a time when shore leave lasted several days. Others use whatever limited, temporary space port authorities can give them. With creative thinking, they adapt their resources to meet seafarers' needs.

Speaking from experience

- *Just beyond the port fence is the ideal location. In an ideal world, a little bit of cultivated garden provides a welcome contrast to a dirty bulk terminal.*
- *A centre is both a place of welcome and a base for ship visiting and outreach work. A physically modest centre can have a great soul.*
- *It's not about space but about facilities. Make sure seafarers know what's available. Then they can ask for what they want.*

Pay attention to the décor

It is people who really make a welcome but the surroundings are still important. Décor with a maritime theme could identify the centre as a place for seafarers. A pattern of waves painted on the wall seems to be particularly popular among seafarers. But avoid making the centre look like the inside of a ship. Seafarers spend enough time onboard.

Be sensitive in your choice of maritime symbols.

A life-belt displayed on a wall might seem an inappropriate reminder of the dangers of life at sea. However, if that life-belt was a gift from seafarers who have personalised it with their signatures, then it becomes a sign of friendship.

Use positive images to reflect seafarers' lives

Positive images of seafarers create a good impression. A "picture wall" with photographs of visiting crews and their ships is a popular feature. Seafarers love recognising friends and colleagues. Framed photographs of seafarers' sporting activities also make an attractive display.

Another popular feature is the display of currency notes from around the world. Some centre staff are uncomfortable about 'glorifying' money. But these notes are also national symbols which seafarers enjoy seeing. To prevent the displays from growing too large, have one reasonably sized notice board and change the notes occasionally.

Choose appropriate furniture

Furniture should be attractive but practical. Seafarers may come into the club in oily overalls and feel embarrassed to sit on elegant fabric chairs. On the other hand, offering only utilitarian plastic chairs is hardly welcoming. Try to find comfortable furniture which is easy to clean.

Look at your centre as though it's your home

When decorating and furnishing your centre, think of it as your home. Try to create a homely atmosphere. Sofas, cosy corners, soft lighting, rugs, cushions and an eye-level television set all contribute to the atmosphere.

Keep the centre fresh

Whatever your décor, it must be clean and well-maintained. Keeping the centre tidy and surfaces free of dust will contribute to a sense of care and dignity. Remove any information from walls and notice boards as soon as it is out of date. Make occasional changes to décor. Keep it fresh and alive.

Speaking from experience

- *We recently transformed an inherited space simply by painting it. The furniture is new but not ostentatious and we have a colour frame on the windows to make the light warmer. It means a change of ambiance as people come in from outside.*
- *We try to have something from every country on display to show that no one is a stranger.*
- *It is so important to pay attention to detail. One seafarers' centre had beautiful gardens but no one realised because there were blinds at the window.*

Care for the spiritual needs of seafarers

Not all seafarers' centres have chapels and chaplains. All centres however have an obligation to welcome seafarers of all faiths and none. Centres should try to serve the spiritual needs of seafarers. All human beings have spiritual needs although they express them in very different ways.

Provide spiritual care

Centres that do have chapels, should use them for religious worship. Centres with chapels should, technically, have a 'chaplain'. Chaplains should provide as best they can for all the spiritual requirements of seafarers who visit their centres. When it is not possible for the centre's chaplains to provide the services that the seafarers need, or when seafarers themselves request it, chaplains should help seafarers to get to places of worship in the surrounding communities that may be better able to serve them.

Make the best use of the chapel

In some older centres, the chapel might be the largest space in the building but used only at Christmas and Easter. This may be off-putting to many seafarers whatever their beliefs. Converting it into a basketball court might be unpopular with some supporters. But use of space should always be related to seafarers' needs.

Take seafarers to places of worship

If seafarers have time, they might prefer to attend local places of worship, especially during religious festivals. It is not unusual for congregations to give a round of applause when the presence of seafarers is announced. Seafarers' centres should try to have information about places of worship and provide transport if possible.

Create a sense of reverence and peace

When time is limited, seafarers' centres should try to provide some space for quiet contemplation. In many centres, this is called a 'chapel' although some use terms such as 'prayer-room', 'place of worship' or 'faith space'. Separate physical space is not always available but staff can still create a sense of reverence and peace.

Speaking from experience

- *Having a Christian chapel, which includes maritime symbols, is part of our identity. But it can easily be converted into a prayer-room to show that all are welcome to use it.*
- *Of course we retain our Christian identity but seafarers come from many faiths. We have a special place. We don't call it a 'chapel' or a 'prayer-room'. It is a 'place of silence' and we welcome you to it just as you are. Silence is so difficult to find onboard.*
- *Our faith comes with us whether we are in the seafarers' centre or ship visiting. Some centres do not have the space for a chapel. But the chaplain's office can easily become a place of worship or a place for counselling if necessary.*

Supply communication facilities

For many years, communications facilities were considered a key service for seafarers' centres.

- Chaplains and ship visitors always had phone cards available. This may change soon.
- As more seafarers own mobile phones, providing SIM cards may be a more important service.
- Personal laptops may also become more common onboard. More and more seafarers are bringing their laptops to centres looking to use Wi-Fi connections.
- For now, there is still a need for telephones and fixed broadband internet access in seafarers' centres.
- VOIP telephones and Skype are becoming more popular.

Provide immediate technical support

Make sure you have access to immediate technical support for phones, Wi-Fi and internet facilities. An 'out of order' notice on the computer is a depressing sight for a seafarer desperate to send an email, and failure to connect to Wi-Fi when the service had been advertised is very frustrating.

Supervise access to equipment

It is not advisable to allow unsupervised access to computer equipment. Seafarers are astute in changing settings to their liking, but then may unwittingly restrict access for others.

Monitor access to the internet

Special software can prevent the downloading of offensive or harmful material. Filters can be used to block access to pornography and websites which might be illegal in some countries. However they are not foolproof. Sometimes the software also blocks access to acceptable websites such as newspapers. The best way to do this is to position screens so that staff can discreetly monitor computer use without being intrusive. Besides, having staff available around the computers means that seafarers can call them if they need help, and makes it easier for staff to interact with seafarers if they want to share their experience with someone.

Organise the space with seafarers in mind

You may want to designate space for fixed line telephone use. Cordless phones save space and allow seafarers to walk around or relax on the sofa as they make their calls, but at the expense of privacy. If space is available, individual booths offer privacy for calls of a personal nature. There should always be somewhere for seafarers to make private calls, even if it has to be the chaplain's office.

Respect the privacy of seafarers

Always, whether they are using the computers or telephones, respect the privacy and dignity of seafarers.

Be attentive to seafarers' responses after contacting home

The phones and computers could become tools for sharing and celebrating seafarers' lives. Seafarers often call staff to admire photographs of their children which their families email to them. You may notice that seafarers come away from phone conversations or having read e-mails from home, elated or visibly upset. Be sure to engage with them to share their reactions in celebration or counsel.

Encourage sports and recreation

If you have space for a sports court, have it designed so that it can be used for different sports. While team sports are great, there are often not enough players available for a game. Therefore, do consider also sports such as squash which require fewer players. Again, make the best use of the space you have available. Some seafarers' centres do not have the space or the money to set up and maintain sports facilities. But they have contacts with local schools and sports clubs so that seafarers can play team games such as football or basketball there. The centre then supplies the transport. Some centres take crews bowling or to play mini golf.

Games such as table tennis, table football and pool are especially popular with seafarers and suitable for smaller centres. Providing gymnasium equipment is not always advisable unless you have a trained fitness instructor on site. Seafarers could easily injure themselves especially if they do not use such equipment regularly.

Set up a shop, or take them shopping

Many seafarers' centres, especially self-financing centres, have a shop. Regular stock-taking will show you what your customers want. Popular items include chocolate, biscuits, savoury snacks, noodles, flip-flops, toiletries, tee-shirts and souvenirs. Some centres have a library of books and magazines which can be bought, borrowed or exchanged. Sometimes it's easier to take them to a local mall.

Keep a supply of clothing for emergencies, or as a gift

Some seafarers' centres keep a supply of clothing for emergencies, for example if a seafarers' luggage has been lost. Clothing should be stored carefully so that it does not become creased or dirty. If possible, clothing should be displayed attractively so that seafarers can choose what they want. In some countries, supporters enthusiastically knit woollen hats for seafarers. But, as discussed, seafarers are not objects of charity. A nicely knitted hat is a charming gift to offer to your guests. However, if you notice that seafarers lack appropriate clothing for harsh weather conditions, it might be time to call the ITF inspector.

Make smokers feel welcome too

Smoking may be subject to local regulation. In some ports, particularly oil and gas terminals, there may be a total ban. While some may wish to educate seafarers on the dangers of smoking, avoid being judgemental. If smoking is permitted, provide a separate area for smokers. Make it comfortable and empty the ashtrays regularly.

Speaking from experience

- *Some privacy is necessary for telephone calls. I once saw a seafarer sitting on the floor with his coat over his head trying to make a personal call.*
- *You must have a pool table. It's a symbol of terra firma. After all, you can't play pool on a ship. The seafarers love it.*
- *We don't have space for a shop. We keep our stock in a cupboard and have a poster on display telling seafarers what is available.*

If you sell food, make it good

Older seafarers' centres often had restaurants. These days, providing meals may be considered unnecessary as seafarers have little time ashore and can eat onboard. However seafarers sometimes appreciate a change from the type of food served onboard. Some seafarers' centres offer local specialities or foods from seafarers' home countries.

Decide what's best: restaurant, take-out, vending machines, simple over-the-counter-snacks or a humble fridge

- Seafarers' centres which have restaurants or cafeterias are subject to local regulation which can be complicated. However for self-financing centres, it can still be profitable, especially if facilities are also open to the public. Some centres outsource the restaurant facilities.
- Some centres make no food on site, but have contacts with local take-out establishments which would be happy to deliver to the centre. This could include typically hamburgers, Chinese or Indian take-aways, pizza, etc. The centre displays menus and is happy to make the call.
- Vending machines, for hot and cold drinks and snacks, offer a simpler means of selling refreshments. But then, like with all the other technological marvels in your centre, ensure that it's well-stocked and that it works.
- Other centres have simple snacks on offer at the bar.

Do supply some refreshments

Seafarers' centres should always try to offer some sort of refreshment to visitors. If space is limited, a fridge for cold drinks and a supply of biscuits may be enough. At the very least, drinking water should be available.

You could consider having a bar...

Some people feel that a bar is an essential feature of a seafarers' centre. Others may feel that they do not want to sell alcohol or have alcoholic beverages consumed on the premises. These local attitudes to alcohol, and the traditions of the organisations which manage the centres, are significant factors in the decision to have a bar. In addition, the licensing and other legal requirements may be complicated. A centre with a bar could be a social place where seafarers can relax and enjoy an alcoholic drink in a safe environment.

Take care not to cause problems for ships and seafarers

Some ships have a complete ban on alcohol consumption. On others, watch-keeping regulations, and the timing of watches, effectively make alcohol consumption impossible. In some case, crew are subject to medical testing for alcohol. A good seafarers' centre takes care to always act responsibly towards seafarers and the maritime industry.

Speaking from experience

- *We keep packs of instant noodles. They are easy to store and prepare and provide emergency hot meals if necessary.*
- *We have a mini-market selling ethnic foods. There is such a mix of nationalities among crews but the food is often culturally anonymous.*
- *Vending machines don't do mission. Make sure there is some human interaction when seafarers receive their refreshments.*

Position the television set wisely

At best, watching television is about social interaction. A sporting event, or news from home countries, stimulate conversation. If a disaster occurs in a home country, seafarers may come to the centre for news and support. Seafarers should always be able to choose the programmes and to turn off the television if they prefer.

At worst, a television set kills conversation and distracts the attention of staff who should be listening to seafarers. A television set fixed high on a wall, left playing whether or not anyone is watching, perhaps with the sound turned down, is the worst use of all. A television set is necessary for the karaoke equipment.

Karaoke...

Is karaoke compulsory?

Speaking from experience

- *Karaoke is 100% the most important service. Filipino seafarers love it.*
- *The most popular song is 'Please release me'. The title says it all!*
- *If you must have karaoke, put it in a separate room. Not everyone likes it.*

Chapter 7: Transport

The Golden Rules

- **Be prompt and punctual, transport should be available at first request**
- **Vehicles should be clean, reliable and safe**
- **Drivers should engage with seafarers, they are the face of the mission**

A reliable, clean and friendly transport service is vital to a centre's successful operations. It ranks high on seafarers' list of basic needs when visiting ports. It's always a good investment of time and money to ensure a good service.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Be reliable

Transport services work differently in different ports. But there is one rule which applies to all: be reliable. If transport is advertised, if a ship visitor has said it will come, if a seafarer has telephoned to request it, then a clean, safe, comfortable vehicle driven by a friendly and responsible driver must appear at the expected time.

Do not offer services that you cannot deliver

Transport is a key service but potentially costly. Consider carefully the circumstances of the port and apply the principle of 'as much as necessary, as little as possible'. It may only be possible to offer transport between the docks and the seafarers' centre, going into town only in emergencies. Do not offer services that you cannot deliver.

Mark your vehicles so that seafarers can identify them

Vehicles should be clearly marked. Seafarers must be able to recognise that this transport is for them and that it is safe to use. It is also important to be identifiable for port security. Sometimes sponsors ask for their logo to appear on vehicles. Make sure that this does not confuse seafarers who might think it is a commercial vehicle. If your regular vehicle is out of service do remember that your temporary replacement vehicle would also need to have clear identification.

Maintain your vehicles

It is important to have a procedure for ensuring that vehicles are kept clean and always have a sufficient supply of fuel. You should also have a procedure for repairs, such as an agreement with a mechanics' service which includes replacement vehicles while yours are in the workshop.

Use only trained and correctly licensed drivers

Drivers are subject to local regulations. Obviously, they should be responsible people who drive safely and considerately. In some cases they may require specialized training and be tested before they can get public transport licenses. Often they need to renew their licenses. Do keep a register of when their licenses are due to expire.

Keep your liability insurance up to date

For transporting seafarers you may need more than mere accident insurance to repair damage to vehicles after an accident. You may also need public liability insurance.

Teach the drivers hospitality

But drivers are not only people who drive. Like all seafarers' centre staff, their role is to listen to seafarers. Often they are the seafarers' first contact with the centre, and first impressions count. They must make seafarers feel welcome.

Speaking from experience

- *If only one person requests transport, make it available, the next time you may have 20.*
- *We have a standard agreement with a local repair company. We do not allow our vehicles to be driven with dents in them. They have to look good.*
- *We prefer to lease our vehicles. Then they are quickly replaced if there is any problem.*

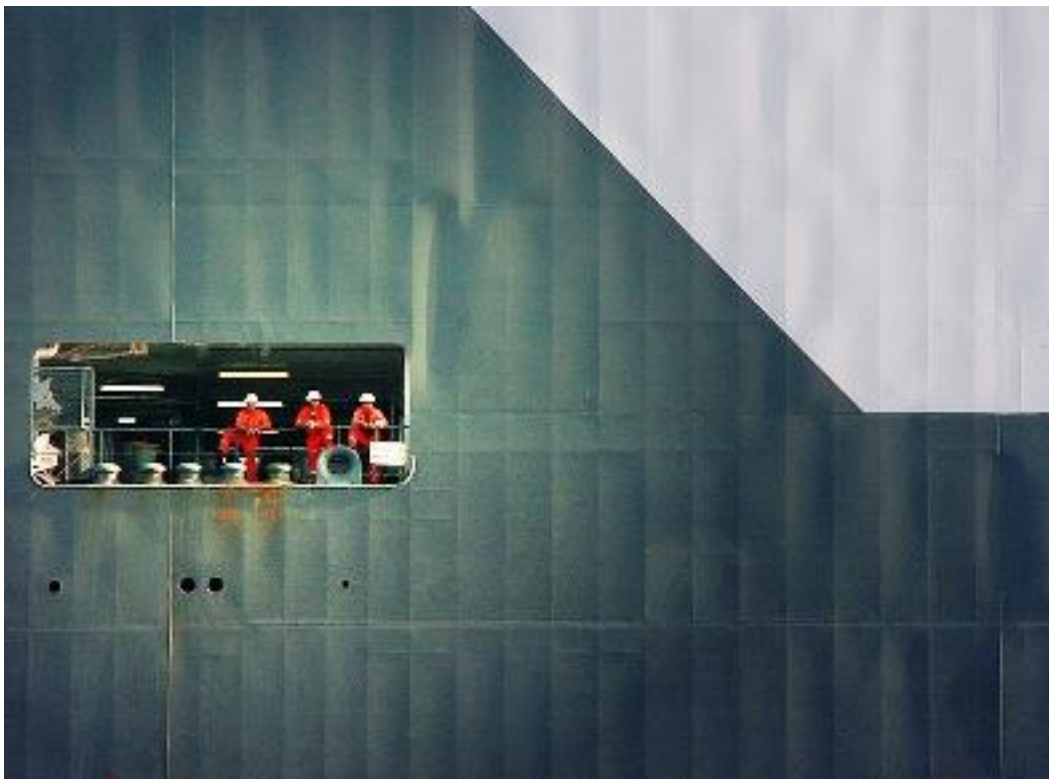


Photo: Wiki Commons

Chapter 8: Relationships

The Golden Rules

- **Relationships are important, invest time and resources working on them**
- **Use all existing structures: the port community, local institutions, churches, the media. Consider how they can contribute to seafarers' welfare.**
- **Seafarers' welfare is a worldwide concern, stay in touch with other centres**

The most important relationship for a seafarers' centre is the relationship with seafarers. Other relationships are also vital, in the port and in the wider community. Ideally, the seafarers' centre should be the focus of the port community. But this is not always possible. Support from other sources is also necessary.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Keep in contact personally with the port authority

This is the key relationship whether or not the seafarers' centre is in the port. Good relationships often begin on a personal level. Seafarers' centre managers, and possibly other staff, must invest time and effort getting to know port authority personnel, both those in positions of authority and those 'on the ground'.

Work towards getting institutional recognition

However, if relationships remain on a personal level, changes of personnel can mean that they are lost. Therefore, try to ensure support for the seafarers' centre at institutional level. Ideally, there should be a port welfare committee (PWC) at which the seafarers' centre has permanent representation.

Show them how your service to foreign seafarers helps the port

Port authorities may feel it is their role to ensure that the port functions efficiently. They may not necessarily feel responsible for visiting foreign seafarers who are in distress or need help. Let them know that the seafarers' centre is there for seafarers. Show the port authorities that, in serving seafarers, you are helping the port.

Use every opportunity to build good relations with the port authority

Invite representatives to visit the seafarers' centre regularly. Keep them informed of your activities. Accept all invitations to port authority events such as meetings and official functions. Include them in your social events and celebrations.

Show your commitment, ask for theirs

Show that you are willing to help seafarers in any way. At the same time, do not be afraid to ask for help. Ask the authority to include your leaflets in the 'port information pack' and to display your publicity in port. Many seafarers' centres have successfully asked for space in the port for a drop-in centre or information kiosk.

Speaking from experience

- *We have quarterly meetings with the port authorities. We bring the human face of the port to the table.*
- *We have a permanent seat on our Board of Trustees for a representative of the port authority. It is important for transparency and it means we get their support.*
- *By agreement with the port authority, we use our vehicles to provide an escort service for anyone visiting the port. It's a good way to pick up gossip.*
- *Seafarers centres appreciate the support and recognition given by port authorities.*

Engage with the port community

In addition to the port authority, there are other members of the port community and maritime industry with whom it is important or beneficial to establish good relations. They can pass on information about the centre to seafarers. In addition, they can contact the seafarers' centre directly for help.

Help the harbour master to assume his own responsibility for welfare

Harbour masters are responsible for port state control. They ensure that ships fulfil their obligations according to international agreements, including obligations relating to seafarers' welfare. However seafarers may feel reluctant to complain about poor conditions onboard for fear of adverse consequences such as being 'blacklisted'.

Keep the centre neutral; do not allow staff to be compromised

Seafarers' centre staff, especially ship visitors, should notice if there are problems onboard. Where good relations exist, information can be passed to the harbour master who can decide how to respond so that the neutrality of seafarers' centre staff is not compromised or their ability to go back onboard put under threat.

Work closely with ITF inspectors, but without bias

If there is a problem onboard a ship with an ITF agreement, the ITF inspector can intervene. Again, seafarers' centre staff can discreetly pass on information if necessary. ITF inspectors can sometimes board ships which will not permit ship visits.

Seek the support of tug companies and pilots

In some countries, tug crews and pilots are usually ex-seafarers. If they have had a good experience of seafarers' centres, they are more likely to be willing to help. Pilots are usually the first people to have contact with seafarers when ships come into port.

Forge close ties with immigration, health and customs officials

The immigration and customs officials know what is happening in the port. They know if a seafarer is in difficulty, for example detained by police or taken to hospital. Make sure they know that seafarers' centre staff are available to visit seafarers in custody or in hospital.

Work with the local police and port security and they will keep you in mind

The local police are especially important. In some countries, they issue security passes for ports. Security guards who patrol the port can be a useful source of information for seafarers. They usually carry radios or other communications equipment so they can contact seafarers' centres immediately if seafarers need help.

Speaking from experience

- *If there's any problem, the port police come straight to us.*
- *The marine police in our port are usually ex-seafarers. We sent an invitation to their training school to visit the seafarers' centre. Now they pass information to us.*
- *The marine police have occasionally delivered food to the ships for us.*

Encourage ships' agents to care for seafarers

Relationships between ships' agents and crews have changed. In the past, agents were often ex-seafarers. This is now less common. Furthermore, not all seafarers are employees of shipping companies. Many now are engaged by manning agents. Sometimes then, ships' agents seem to feel more responsible for the ships than for the seafarers. Agents act on behalf of the owner or the charterer.

Demonstrate how you can help ships' agents provide welfare

Seafarers' centres should demonstrate how their work can benefit ships' agents. Try to establish good relations with agency bosses and with the representatives who go onboard. Invite them to contact the seafarers' centre for help with welfare-related problems. Show them that the centre staff care about seafarers' welfare.

Speaking from experience

- *We see educating ships' agents in the need for welfare as part of our mission.*
- *When the shipping company decided not to pay the voluntary levy, the agent intervened and convinced them how important it was. It was because they understood the importance of our work.*
- *We heard about seafarers left sitting in the airport because agents claimed that ship owners did not want to pay for repatriation. It helps to let agents know that seafarers' centre staff are well-informed about their obligations and that we are monitoring the situation.*

Find support wherever it is offered, and carry on regardless

Many seafarers' centres around the world enjoy excellent relations with port authorities. Unfortunately, some do not. However hard managers and staff work, port authorities do not support them. It is still possible for a seafarers' centre to be successful in these circumstances. It is also necessary to build relationships outside of the ports.

Speaking from experience

- *The port authority gives us accommodation rent-free.*
- *In a cruise ship port, it can be difficult to get port authorities to understand that seafarers are not tourists.*
- *We get no support at all from the port authority.*

Co-operate with other seafarers' welfare organisations

The ICMA code of conduct states that all members must:

Co-operate with persons, organisations and institutions, Christian or otherwise, which work for the welfare of seafarers.

The ICMA Code of Conduct is available to download from the ICMA website. ICMA can also advise on ecumenical relations and on relations more generally within the maritime welfare sector.

Don't compete, put seafarers first

Not all successful seafarers' centres are run by members of ICMA. Indeed, ICMA acknowledges the excellent work of various other welfare organisations. But the principle remains true. No seafarers' centre can be considered successful if it is engaged in rivalry with other organisations. It is failing to put seafarers' first.

Cooperate, don't confuse

Seafarers can become confused if different organisations are ship visiting and offering transport within the same port without any co-ordination.

Don't duplicate services

Funders are unlikely to support organisations which duplicate work already being done or which refuse to co-operate with others. Besides, with the limited resources that we have, duplication makes little sense.

Get the local Christian churches involved

Many centres, especially those run by Christian societies, have strong links with local churches. Churches can be supportive communities. In some countries, they are good sources of volunteers. Some have resources which they may be willing to lend, for example musical instruments for parties or even minibuses for excursions. Local churches often commit to the care of seafarers as a focus of their ministries.

Speaking from experience

- *The majority of our income is from the local Church. But they are also very supportive if we have problems. Care-givers need care too.*
- *When we were refurbishing our centre, the local church gave some temporary space.*
- *Remember to include the local church hierarchy. One centre took the local bishop ship visiting. It was a great media opportunity.*

Make contact with other faith communities

As discussed, all seafarers have spiritual needs. Some centres have built relationships with other faith communities although this is not always easy. Some Christian-run seafarers' centres have Muslim volunteers. Try, at least, to have contact details of local faith communities in case of emergency such as a death at sea. Sometimes a seafarer might ask to be directed to a local mosque or temple.

Speaking from experience

- *In reality most seafarers do not require religious assistance. The needs of Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or indeed Christian seafarers are much the same as those of any other seafarer.*
- *After many years of trying, I made contact with the regional Islamic Council. They are interested in our work and gave us their leaflets.*
- *It can help to have an opening question, for example: 'Ramadan is approaching. What should we do for Muslim seafarers?' This can be the opening of a dialogue.*

Know the local clinics and health services for seafarers

Staff at the seafarers' centre should know whom to contact if seafarers need medical attention, usually the ship's agent or port physician. It is also useful for seafarers' centres to establish relationships with local services in case of emergencies. Centres should have up to date information available about local health services.

Be discreet with confidential information on health matters

Occasionally seafarers may need to visit a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases. Sometimes, they prefer not to mention this to colleagues but instead talk to ship visitors or seafarers' centre staff. If possible, establish a working relationship with a local clinic so that you can make appointments and accompany seafarers to them.

Make use of the local expatriate community

Local expatriate communities often centre on churches or places of worship. In many cases, they have strong community ties. Some centres find that they are generous with fundraising activities. Expatriates from seafarers' home nations are often able to help with translation and hospital visits.

Build relationships with the local communications media

Positive publicity will help you to build good relationships generally. It will help you in fundraising. More importantly, it will help you to educate the public about the lives of seafarers. Try to build relationships with the local newspapers, radio and television. Make sure they know why the seafarers' centre is there.

Find out which journalists are interested in maritime or transportation issues. Invite them to visit the seafarers' centre. Consider taking them ship visiting. Keep them informed of your activities and invite them to your events. Try to have a presence at public events in the port. Make the seafarers' centre a point of reference for local media.

Speaking from experience

- *In that post-Christmas period when it seems nothing is happening, the local newspaper is always pleased to print photos of our Christmas party.*
- *Establishing personal contact with individuals is more effective than simply sending press releases by email.*
- *Our port authority celebrated World Maritime Day with an exhibition. A local politician gave the opening address. Of course the press was there. So we printed some brochures and handed out balloons. You have to take every opportunity to 'be there'.*

Work with funders

Fundraising is discussed in detail in the next chapter. In brief, fundraising is about building relationships. It is not just about asking for money.

Use the wider network of successful centres

Successful seafarers' centres help each other. The ICMA website is an invaluable tool for publicising the work of successful seafarers' centre. The ICMA Directory online enables staff of different seafarers' centres to contact each other. The ICSW twinning programme enables managers and staff to exchange skills.

Chapter 9: Fundraising

The Golden Rules

- **Fundraising is an ongoing process: explore new initiatives and new sources, consider ongoing projects to generate funds.**
- **Be accountable, explain what the money is for, show how you use it wisely, excellence sells and good management inspires confidence.**
- **Look for new donors everywhere, keep them informed and involved.**

This chapter is about asking for money as distinct from making a profit by selling goods and services. Some seafarers' centres depend on profits. Some benefit from a welfare tax levied on ships in port. Some are supported by parent organisations or large funding organisations such as the ITF Seafarers' Trust.

However most seafarers' centres ask supporters for money to cover, at least part of, their operational costs. As ever, it is vital to take into account local circumstances, to be sensitive to local culture and to understand local regulations.

Above all, remember that the purpose of a seafarers' centre is to serve seafarers. The biggest threat to any kind of charitable organisation is that the pressure to raise money will cause the organisation to forget, or even abandon, its principles and purpose.

Find donors

Donors are the individuals or organisations which give you money. Be strategic. Look for individuals and organisations which are likely to be interested in the work of the seafarers' centre.

Work together to use all the contacts you can get

As discussed in the chapter on relationships, local churches, expatriate communities and other community groups can be excellent sources of support. Use all contacts available. If you have a Board of Trustees, ensure that they are all engaged in building relationships with donors, both existing and potential.

Keep a database of contact details of your supporters

It is useful to keep records of your donors including their contact details.

Keep a record of donations received

Local regulations usually govern how records of donations are kept.

Your donors are your friends: treat them that way

Donors are your friends. Invest time in maintaining your friendships and in adding to them. Keep them informed about your work. Make sure someone is available to respond to their questions. Always say thank you. Donors who feel unappreciated will find another cause to support.

Donors are investors in people and causes: show them a return on their investment

Donors need to be assured that the money they invest will make a real difference in the right places. Be specific about the need and about the expected outcome of their support. Produce good accounting and quality assessments. Be transparent. Publicly acknowledge their support, if appropriate.

Be careful not to alienate some supporters

The multiplicity of charitable causes available can lead to fierce competition for donors' attention. Some charities manipulate pity with tragic stories and pathetic images of suffering. They offer donors the chance to pay to help to solve a problem. If seafarers' centres used such tactics, the dignity of seafarers' would be compromised and the relationship with shipping companies and the rest of the maritime industry may be severely compromised.

Speaking from experience

- *Fundraising is about building relationships. It requires long-term effort. You may have to wait some time before you see any money.*
- *Use all your contacts and all the good will available. If the port authority is organising its annual dinner, ask if you can hold a raffle.*
- *We collected a cheque from a local pub which raised the money with a quiz night. It was originally intended for another charity but they never bothered sending anyone to collect it.*

Organise events at the centre

Fundraising events might include dinners, concerts, and carol services at Christmas, sports competitions or a tour of the seafarers' centre, all depending on what is legally possible and culturally appropriate. In addition to raising money, such events are an opportunity to educate the public about the lives of seafarers.

Many seafarers' centres hold events to coincide with national or international festivals. Several Christian seafarers' welfare organisations celebrate Sea Sunday in July. Some countries have national maritime-related festivals. These offer opportunities for seafarers' centres to build relationships with port and maritime authorities

Speaking from experience

- *In my country, registered charities are not allowed to engage professional fundraisers. But we can send collection envelopes to our local churches on Sea Sunday.*
- *Our development staff divide fundraising into three areas: big gifts, one-off donations, and special events.*
- *Events are very labour intensive. They do create an energy but you have to look carefully at whether they are cost-effective. It can take ten years for a branded event to become established.*

International celebrations

Sea Sunday, first Sunday of July
World Maritime Day, final week of September
World Fishing Day, 21 November

National celebrations

Philippines, National Maritime Week, September
Spain, Virgen del Carmen, Patron of Seafarers, 16 July
USA, National Maritime Day, 22 May

Chapter 10: Integrity

The Golden Rules

- **Activities should always have one objective: serving seafarers**
- **Tell seafarers the truth, be open and honest**
- **Without integrity, the centre will fail**

The participants at the workshop stated clearly that integrity is an essential aspect of successful seafarers' centres. In this final chapter, we summarise the ideas exchanged in the light of the need for integrity.



Photo: Dirk Obermann

Seafarers

Without seafarers, seafarers' centres have no reason to exist. This does not justify trying to 'lure' seafarers to a centre in order to ensure its survival. Seafarers are free to decide how to spend their time ashore. Centre staff must respect their decisions and offer whatever help they can.

However seafarers' centres have the same responsibility to serve seafarers whether or not they choose to come to the centre. If seafarers know that the centre is there, that it is a place where they can get help if they need it, that they will always be treated respectfully, then we can say that the seafarers' centre is successful.

Ship visiting

A seafarers' centre which has no ship visiting activity is not a successful centre. But ship visiting is not about sending staff onboard ship. Statistics on the number of ships visited, phone cards sold or pamphlets distributed are meaningless. The true indications of a successful ship visit are very hard to quantify.

How do we count the seafarers who felt loved and valued because a ship visitor had time for them? How do we demonstrate that a seafarer in distress was comforted because a ship visitor listened? It seems unremarkable that a tired seafarer smiled and relaxed while chatting to a ship visitor. Yet we must value these above statistics.

Management

Successful seafarers' centres are run by chaplains and staff who believe that efficient business practice is at least as important as theology and faith. Successful managers take professional advice. Seafarers' centres cannot be run on purely business principles and as mere commercial enterprises without commitment to 'love' and 'passion'.

Managers should never compromise on their professional attitude. They must be honest with themselves and recognise their own weaknesses. Whatever the financial pressures, the virtues of honesty and kindness are indispensable. The principle at the heart of everything must be the desire to serve seafarers.

Staff

All staff, whatever their role and status, must demonstrate integrity. No one should be permitted to work in a seafarers' centre unless they have a passion to serve seafarers. Staff may earn a salary, or gain valuable volunteering experience, but they must understand that, most importantly, they are there to serve seafarers.

Leadership is the vital element. Chaplains and managers should lead by example and motivate and inspire staff. There should be respectful but candid communication between managers and staff. Managers must demonstrate that they know how to listen. A seafarers' centre is a family home away from home for seafarers. It cannot be successful if the 'family' is divided.

Customer Service

We must be cautious about talking of seafarers as 'customers'. They are not a commercial opportunity. It is not the role of the seafarers' centre to grab their attention with clever marketing and encourage them to spend money on services which they do not need.

But successful seafarers' centres can learn from techniques used in the retail and hospitality sectors. Staff should always speak politely and smile when greeting 'customers'. The difference is that, in a successful seafarers' centre, that courtesy and that smile must be sincere, a sign of a genuine passion for serving seafarers.

Infrastructure and transport

This is one of the most challenging areas of running a successful seafarers' centre. Staff are responsible for maintaining the building and facilities including vehicles and communications equipment. In this area particularly, passion alone is not enough. Common sense, practicality and training are also required.

A successful seafarers' centre serves the specific needs of seafarers in that particular port. As shipping changes, seafarers' needs change. Sometimes it is necessary to take an honest, if painful, decision that the existing infrastructure is no longer suitable. We have to be willing to break with the past if that is what seafarers need.

Relationships

Commitment to seafarers brings a wider sense of responsibility for the port. Good relationships with the port community help to establish the seafarers' centre as an active presence in the port. Successful seafarers' centres have to show that they are willing to assist on any matter relating to seafarers' welfare at any time.

We have also established that successful seafarers' centres need to build relationships beyond the port community. Trust is vital in any relationship. Honesty, accountability and transparency are indispensable. This should not be difficult. A successful seafarers' centre has nothing to hide.

Fundraising

It may be necessary to produce regular reports for the governing committee or for funders and donors. Producing reports requires financial transparency and clear auditing. Being accountable to funders is an opportunity to reflect on the aims of the seafarers' centre and to show how it meets those aims as efficiently as possible.

When a charity sees fundraising as its most important activity, it has failed. Some successful seafarers' centres are obliged to devote considerable resources to fundraising. But they are successful because they never lose sight of their principles. Successful seafarers' centres exist to serve seafarers.

Integrity

Finally, on the subject of integrity itself. We have seen that successful seafarers' centres must be managed professionally and efficiently. Integrity is the responsible use of personal, social, financial and spiritual resources. We must have a practical attitude and be willing to learn from other sectors. But without integrity, a seafarers' centre would be just another business.

If we remain true to the principle that we are here to serve seafarers, we will never compromise our professionalism. We will always endeavour to offer the very best services by being reliable, flexible and honest. If we are sincerely motivated by love and a passion to serve, we will find a way to make our seafarers' centres successful.

Some final words from the delegates

Speaking from experience

- *We need to justify the role of the seafarers' centre. We are not just there to help seafarers make phone calls. We are also there in crisis. We are there when seafarers need us.*
- *We must consider environmental issues. We have to show that we care about the world.*
- *Devotion is one of the most important features.*
- *Lead by example, do not preach water and drink wine.*
- *Your seafarers' centre is the outreach of the Church to the world. Remember also your relationship with God.*



Photo: Rolf Schulten

The organisers of the workshop wish to thank the following delegates whose passion and commitment to seafarers made the workshop possible.

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Rev Martina Platte

Rev David M Rider

Deacon Ricardo Rodríguez-Martos

Mr David See

Mrs Glenys Steel

Mrs Tatiana Tarasyk

Mrs Maggie Whittingham-Lamont

This report was written by Rev Hendrik La Grange and Michelle Homden of the ICMA Secretariat.