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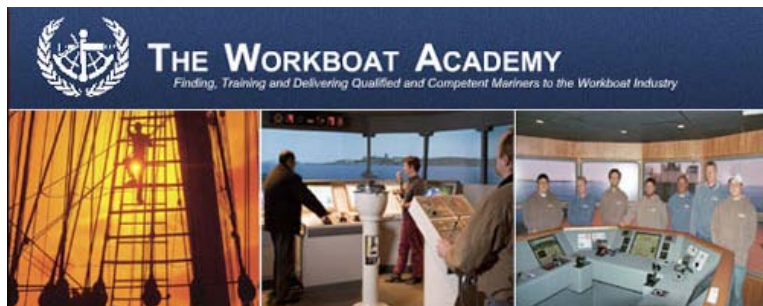
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### Workboat Academy Graduates New Mates

January 31st, 2009 - Comments - by John -

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Yesterday we were honored to join ProMariner, Workboat Magazine and the distinguished guest gathered in Seattle to wish fair winds to the first official graduating class of The Workboat Academy!

This amazing program reopens The Hawsepipe (the traditional way for non-academy grads to become licensed mates and captains) to those seeking a career in the merchant marine. The keynote speaker Sean Connaughton, spoke to us about the state of the industry these mariners are about to enter as it relates to his first steps after graduating from King's Point in 1983. Paraphrasing; he noted at that time many dots could be seen on plans for a federal highway system. Today it is completed and capacity is not planned to grow. While these roads were being built a significant amounts of our nation's railways were abandoned or destroyed creating an ever growing burden on crowded roads and bridges. Today dots still exist in federal plans but not on land rather as part of a new highway initiative; America's Marine Highway. While opportunity exists for growth in domestic mariner jobs by solving our nation's problems it also comes with new opportunities in arctic trade routes and changes in energy consumption/distribution.

Along with Sean's speech came that of John Kessler, Department Head Of

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Navigation at the academy, who encouraged the graduates to accept a few new challenges. First, continue to seek opportunity to mentor your fellow mariners. Second, ask yourself what are you going to do to move your career, your company and the industry to a new level? Sound advice indeed!

Last were thoughts from graduate Mark Kirkland who shared the challenges and rewards of the program as well as optimism for his new career path. I personally did not have the opportunity to speak at the ceremony but if had then Dave's optimism would have been shared along with a new thought; it's time to throw resources at what has proven to work!

Let me explain.

On the bridge of a ship a poor situation, whether it be collision avoidance, a fire emergency or simple disorientation, a poor situation can rapidly deteriorate. The most effective way I found to improve such a situation is by employing all available assets to clear doubt and make positive steps forward.

The basic idea is not new to any professional mariner as it has been written in the standing orders of every captain; when in doubt call. Broken down this simple action brings a valuable resource, the captain's knowledge and experience, to the problem. Taking this first step further I became good at coordinating help. For example I might take a seaman working on a nearby bridge wing and ask him to be an extra lookout or ask the second mate to suspend chart corrections and man the radar. In a fire scenario I would employ unused hands to bring drinking water to tired firefighters or have extra supplies (scba bottles, radio batteries, schematics) brought to the scene.

These resources would then be used towards solving the solution in a manner we have (through training, experience, drills, etc) prepared for and have been proven to work.

I bring this topic up because the comments from the graduates, industry leaders and maritime professionals in attendance all confirmed *the Workboat Academy system works*. The industry is struggling during this mariner crisis... all we need is for the broader industry to commit resources to the solution. This can come in the way of opening billets for Workboat Academy cadets aboard their vessels or encouraging other training providers to provide this program to currently unserved areas of the industry but action is needed.

But this is just one example. There are many areas of the industry that have proven models of success agreed upon by all just waiting for commitment of resources. A good start... let us find a spokesman for new ideas, a supporter of the industry who is widely praised by all he has worked with and let us find resources to create this position.

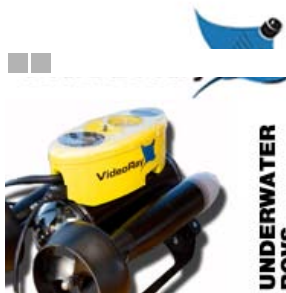
With such a job created by the cooperation of our industry who know what problems we may solve? And who knows, Sean Connaughton might even be available for the job!

#### About The Author



Captain John Konrad is co-founder of Unofficial Networks and Editor In Chief of this blog. He is a USCG licensed Master Mariner of Unlimited Tonnage and, since graduating from SUNY Maritime College, has sailed a variety of ships from ports around the world. John currently lives in Morro Bay, California with his wife and two children. John can be reached at john@gCaptain.com

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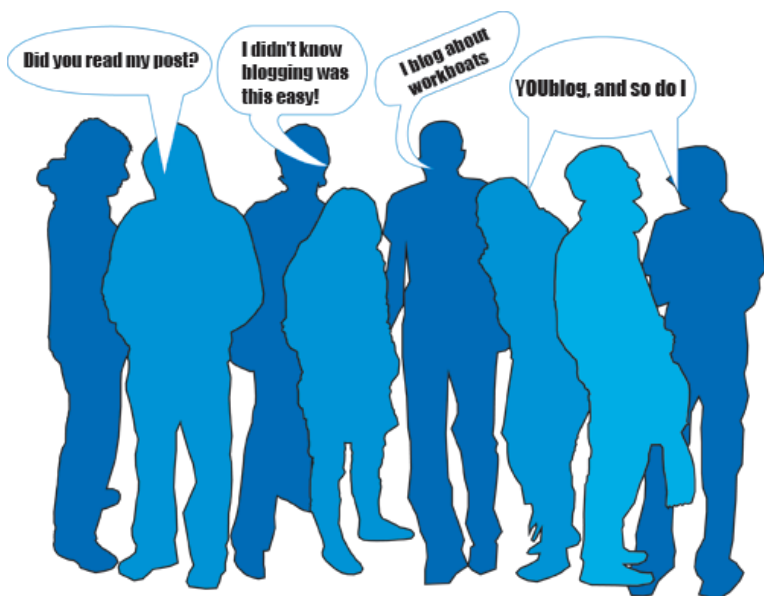
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