



Islander March 2010 Technology Update

Operator Training Courses – Self-Improvement or Yacht-Essential?

Well, operator training courses could be a compulsory requirement for every yacht with soccer fanatics on board, when the TV stops working in the middle of a match in June this year!

Most training courses in the maritime industry exist to help mariners officially qualify for their current or anticipated formal role. Over the last couple of years a few different training courses have appeared, run by service providers, to help maritime professionals do their job better.

These vocational courses are becoming more and more popular, and appeal to the students for a variety of reasons:

1. Self-improvement - in the current environment there is more and more competition for every job, thus students are taking courses to keep ahead of the game and make themselves more marketable.
2. To make their job, and their life, easier.
3. To be able to provide a better service for their employer.
4. They may be asked to take the course by their employer.
5. The subjects are relevant and interesting.

Who Pays?

For these vocational courses, one of the perennial questions is “who pays for it?” Some students pay their own way and have to take the time off as part of their annual leave. In these circumstances, the student is taking the course as an investment in their own future. Sometimes, students pay the course fees out of their own pocket initially, but are offered a refund from their employer of, for example, 50% if they are still working on the yacht one year later and the remaining 50% if they are still there two years later. For each employer and employee, there are different circumstances and solutions.

We are running our third VSAT operators training course in April, which has once again become rapidly over-subscribed. The course is specifically designed to help the person responsible for the VSAT on board to understand a lot more than they currently know about a very sophisticated communications technology. Until we started these courses, typical instruction consisted of a handover on completion of an installation, and the rest was either self-taught or not taught at all.



This basic level of instruction is clearly unacceptable when applied to such a complex and expensive piece of kit which is so essential to the smooth running of the modern yacht.

The provision of structured vocational training can be viewed as a way to help ourselves, our clients and their clients. If our clients are better informed, then they are not so dependant on our support as they can solve more of their first line support problems themselves and thus provide a faster service for their owner and guests. It's a win, win, win scenario!

You must get the TV right

It is quite clear that there are a few areas of technology that merit specialist attention for further training. All we have to do is look through our support call logs to identify these. The one that is consistently in the number one position year after year is satellite TV. The demand for TV on yachts is undiminishing and when there is a fault and it's not working there is hell to pay whatever the time of the day or night. Getting the TV right onboard has gone from being an interesting novelty a few years ago to being a vital career choice today. Just ask any captain who has got it wrong!

To address the demand we will be introducing a new operator training course on satellite TV this year to complement our VSAT course. This will cover all the tricks we have learned over the years with the stabilised dishes, distribution, the myriad of decoders and the local knowledge across the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Please let Diane know if you would be interested in attending this course.

It's World Cup Year – don't miss a kick!

We always witness an increase in support calls as large sports events approach. This year we have a proliferation of events, the biggest of course being the FIFA World Cup in June, but also including the Ryder Cup, the Commonwealth Games, the World Series, Wimbledon, the Open and the US Open.

If 2006 was anything to go by there will be a huge demand from the yacht community for news, video and TV from South Africa this June, as well as enormous activity on board sending email, photos and videos of the celebrations and commiserations.

Our team have been preparing for all the questions and have analysed what you can watch, where and when and in what language.

They can now recommend the most suitable service for your cruising area and language requirement, so you don't end up buying a service you cannot see on your vessel.

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So what happens if, in the middle of June, you are going to be in an area with no satellite TV coverage? We even have a trick up our sleeves for that circumstance. The Jetstream technology helps TV reach the places that conventional TV cannot reach!

Jetstream is a technology that enables you to watch your satellite TV services outside the normal footprint of those services by using a quality broadband connection. There are very few places in the world now that do not have either satellite or terrestrial broadband coverage. However, the system required varies in complexity from a cell phone to a full-on C band stabilised antenna inside a large white golf ball dome that you see perched on top of the large cruise liners.

Training is the name of the game not just for the world's sports stars but also for the key people responsible for supporting the complex technology onboard today's advanced yachts.

Roger Horner of E3 Systems

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