

TANKERS CHALLENGES IN TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT

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From all shipping sectors, the tanker sector has seen most probably the biggest changes in the last three decades, these changes bordering the watershed characterization.

This is mainly due to the fact that however serious accidents in other shipping sectors may be, it is the tanker accidents that have a huge impact on the environment and consequently draw such media and international organization attention, that no involved party can afford.



legal instruments were used to mask and protect a tanker owner or manager from scrutiny. Nowadays every responsible tanker manager is required to own up to any mistake and/or accident be accounted for.

This requirement has started taking hold of all responsible tanker managers' philosophy. Everybody realizes today that constantly striving for quality and safety makes not only good sense but also good business. And there is no other way.

The trio of most serious accidents involving tankers in the previous three decades, that is the EXXON VALDEZ, the ERIKA and the PRESTIGE have generated a flurry of new legislation and regulations that have all but changed the way tanker management is carried out. That said, there is such a trend for shipping in general. It would be safe to say that there is in all quarters a zero tolerance for accidents.

This drive has been spearheaded by the users of tankers, that is the oil companies, major and lesser as well as littoral states who are exposed, as has been the case, to serious public opinion outrage in the aftermath of such serious accidents. No oil company executive, national and supranational politician or state functionary with relevant responsibility is immune to the severest criticism.

As a result no other industry sector has seen a forced renewal both in the hardware i.e. vessels but also how it is operating.

We are nearing the dates of the phase-out of single-hull ships. The vessels condition is constantly being monitored by stricter Class inspection and requirements, P&I audits, Port State Control inspections, Flag State inspections, and finally oil majors vetting inspections. All the above are taking place at a more frequent pace and are increasingly interconnected and cross-evaluated in the general trend of transparency and accountability.

Gone are the days where intricate corporate veils and other

The biggest challenge in this quest is to change the culture of the people both ashore and on board who grew up and matured in much less demanding times, vis-à-vis safety and environmental concern.

It is these people that are the backbone of the tanker industry that need to be put in the drivers seat, because they bear the brunt of the very demanding, tedious, stressful set of responsibilities, which require them to be superbly trained, highly motivated, exceptionally competent, extremely hard working, ready to show initiative, and all the above with very little resting time.

It is not by accident that very little mention is given to other contributing personal, as I believe that all others are a supporting cast to the people that carry out most of the work.

It should not be considered unimportant to support these people, who are becoming harder to recruit and train.

The tendency of states to criminalize crews for nearly everything and the poor treatment that they are accorded even in the most of normal circumstances is lamentable.

All that said that the tanker industry has demonstrated its ability to advance and absorb vast changes in both technology and operational mode and more vast amounts of oil, gas and oil products from production to end use in a sage manner making it in a way one of the lifelines of international trade.