

# International Sail Training and Tall Ships Conference 2018

I was fortunate to receive a bursary to attend the 2018 International Sail Training and Tall Ships conference on behalf of the Enterprize Tall Ship Trust. This report is a summary of the key learnings I identified from the sessions I attended with a specific emphasis on how the insights could possibly benefit the ongoing operation of Enterprize, Melbourne's Tall Ship.

I chose sessions I felt were most relevant to Enterprize - many sessions related to the Northern Hemisphere Tall Ship races and the associated festivals run in participating ports which are not directly relevant to our little ship based in Melbourne which usually does not go further afield than Hobart.

## Protecting Trainees - a discussion session

This session asked where are sail training organisations most vulnerable to trainees or volunteers being subject to bullying or inappropriate and unwanted attention and what procedures should we have in place to prevent and deal with these incidents?

There were some great introductory points on what most sail training organisations aim to do - provide unique experiences at sea that are

- Engaging
- Life changing
- Character building
- Educational
- Community related
- Inclusive
- Life expanding

And we are obliged to ensure it is

- Safe
- Respectful
- Inclusive
- Relevant
- Well governed
- Secure

(As an aside the first set of points would make great copy for pitches for sponsorship and grants).

We need to protect our trainees and volunteers from harassment, abuse, bullying and other negative activity that may be sexual, physical, mental, emotional, discrimination or abuse of authority.

A volunteer from a Scandinavian vessel described her own experience as a young female volunteer and having to deal with comments or propositions from men onboard. As she explained she and other female volunteers are there to learn and help sail our ships and should be able to undertake their assigned tasks in a safe environment without having to deal with unwanted attention or inappropriate comments.

In the discussion it was generally agreed that some interactions are clearly inappropriate, such as between adults and trainees who are under legal age but there was also some discussion of the grey area of consensual romantic interactions between trainees signed on for a single voyage or between a trainee and voyage crew. Some ships have a written statement forbidding physical romantic interactions for the duration of the voyage to minimise the risk of inappropriate activity.

A mutually consensual romance between ongoing volunteers is something to be celebrated but we need to be alert to unwanted attention that can make our volunteers feel uncomfortable. There was some discussion as to where some senior volunteers should be tasked with keeping an eye out for inappropriate behaviour so a quiet word could be had with the person behaving inappropriately to hopefully avoid the behaviour leading to either a formal complaint or the affected person leaving the organisation. I think this is a good idea and could be part of the training for senior crew members to report such behaviour if they feel one of the volunteers is being made to feel uncomfortable.

On some of the UK ships staff do child protection training every three years and there are protocols in place outlining what to do and who is responsible for taking action should an incident occur.

Key learnings is that the Enterprize Trust should have protocols in place that may include:

- A crew and trainee code of conduct
- Crew background checking process (we already have a working with children check)
- A safe reporting mechanism for those who experience and incident - who can volunteers contact if they feel uncomfortable? For example:
  - Issue with a volunteer while at sea - talk to the master
  - Issue with the master while at sea - contact the general manager
  - Issue with the general manager - contact the board etc
- Defined roles and responsibilities - What needs to happen and who does what should an incident occur. This includes collecting required information and providing

support to both the affected person and the one who is alleged to have behaved inappropriately. Counselling support could be made available by qualified psychologists. Having the procedures clearly set out allows the response to be orderly and avoids a sense of crisis or, worse, a no response because of people not knowing what to do.

- A legal representation pathway if required
- A regular review of procedures
- Incident recording process similar to that for safety incidents
- Training of crew for supervisory roles should include how to report ongoing inappropriate behaviour if they witness any of our volunteers being made to feel uncomfortable. This will allow management to take subtle action and hopefully avoid an uncomfortable situation turning into a formal complaint or a lost volunteer.

In the case of *Enterprize* there was a long standing policy that volunteers crewing on voyages with school children as passengers had to have the Australian 'Working with children' check. This requirement was extended to all crew when several younger volunteers who had been crewing with their parents turned 16 and were then able to be rostered on by themselves. The working with children checks alone are probably insufficient and we should ensure we have a comprehensive set of protocols.

## Identity and engagement of youth in the social media age

This session presented insights from research about how young people interact with social media and how they interact with the social media presented by organisations seeking to attract their custom. Key points are that we need to adapt our marketing strategies and presentation methods online in order to effectively engage with 'digital natives' - people who have grown up never knowing a world that was not online.

- Just making the occasional facebook post is not going to work as they generally favour other social media platforms.
- They expect to be able to interact easily with web sites on their phones
- They have short attention spans and will scroll past media that does not rapidly engage their interest. Look at leveraging free marketing that may be available from young trainees who have enjoyed their experience and produced video productions of their experiences to share with friends that could also be shared as marketing material
- The role of social media 'influencers' in driving traffic to sites was discussed; some advertising campaigns now use sporting celebrities in non-traditional ways such as involving them in discussion forums to bring customers to the web site. While A list celebrities are out of our price range even getting featured in a travel or adventure blog with a few hundred or a few thousand followers could help drive enquires

## Tools and techniques to facilitate facilitation methods onboard

This session was about how teams form, storm, norm, perform and adjourn (eventually break up). I have come across this theory of team performance as part of mainstream management theory several times in my career. The sail training angle was that that on sail training ships teams or watches of crew and trainees are newly formed with each voyage. Even on a smaller vessel like *Enterprize* we are constantly recruiting new volunteers and on each day of operations the crew will be a mix of experienced and new crew that need to organise themselves in to a performing team to be able manage the sail setting, evolutions and docking manoeuvres safely.

There was also discussion about setting SMART goals for trainees and strategies that could be used to identify and assist trainees who may be suffering from anxiety, stress, depression and isolation on a voyage.

In my experience our crew has a generally supportive culture and is welcoming and encouraging of new volunteers - in short the culture and teaching processes are already pretty good. We could leverage these learnings in two ways:

1. Incorporating the relevant training skills into the training programme for the our Leading Hands, the most experienced crew who teach and sign off skills. These skills are transferable to other work roles as well.
2. Develop training for leading hands and crew specifically for our three to four day voyages for secondary school students and especially for underprivileged youth. We know from feedback that we have already delivered life changing experiences for some participants but there is an opportunity here to work this sail training product offering up into a polished and more marketable (in terms of getting commercial sponsorship for it) educational offering.

## Managing volunteers - Jon Simpson and Matilda Dagberg

Jon Simpson - Tall Ships Australia and New Zealand. Former GM of the Sydney Heritage Fleet - 500 volunteers, 11 paid staff. The James Craig took - 28 years and nearly 30 million dollars to restore to active service. Key points:

- Volunteers do not necessarily tell the truth about why the volunteer
- Up until the 16th C the word volunteer only used in connection with the military
- Reasons given by Sydney Heritage Fleet volunteers why they do it:
  1. To put something back into the community 81%
  2. Personal satisfaction 57%
  3. Worthwhile 54%

4. Family friends do it 45%
5. Social contact 35%
6. To be active 33%

1,4,5 are essentially altruistic. Reasons why people really volunteer may be useful in developing communication strategies to recruit, motivate and retain volunteers.

The take away is that while many volunteers may state they have altruistic motives they are actually in it for new experiences, social contact and feeling like they are making a difference. Strategies like finding a best fit for how the volunteer wants to contribute, indulging their need to feel like they are making a difference, offering other opportunities for different experiences and public recognition of the contribution of volunteers may be more successful at recruiting and retaining volunteers than the kid glove approach that may be applied to truly altruistic volunteers.

The second part of the session had two themes - strategies used by a Swedish ship to keep volunteers engaged during the winter months when sailing opportunities are limited and getting the crews of several tall ships to pool their resources to staff a stand at a boat show to showcase the tall ship experience and recruit new volunteers. The winter activities included organised indoor maintenance sessions that include a social aspect at the end like music.

*Enterprize* has an active sea shanty musical group which is social activity highly valued by those who go but volunteers not so interested in music tend not to go. We have tried running sessions to teach sailing skills on alternate Thursday evenings with some success but they were only sporadic and we have not had one for a while. Experience has shown that volunteers do respond to maintenance days on weekends and there is usually a social gathering at the end of the day. I think the take away point here is to keep looking at the mix of maintenance activities and trying different options to find the best mix of events that crew enjoy and are motivated to turn up to while contributing to the ongoing maintenance effort.

## Incident Analysis - identifying root causes and lessons learnt

This session featured a presentation from the US Coast Guard ship *Eagle* on the investigation into a crew member falling from the rigging. I won't go through the whole story here but there was a worked example of the US Navy Human Factor Analysis Classification System (HFACS)

HFACS aims to remove points of failure, specifically

- Organisational influences
- Supervisory influences
- Preconditions - e.g. crew member was fatigued
- Acts - e.g. wrong course of action selected

Example application of HFACS

## Timeline

- Members of board identified (4-6 people including technical expert)
- Mishap occurs
- Identify acts and classify - e.g. inadequate risk assessment, incorrect operation of equipment,
- Identify pre-conditions - e.g. crew member was fatigued, did not retain knowledge from technical briefing - was climbing shrouds in incorrect way, failed to clip in when fatigued. Lack of current appropriate experience of the crew member to do the required task. Turned out crew member was a cook who had not previously participated in sail stations training sessions due to his shift schedule.
- Collect data (logs, plan of day, bloodwork etc)
- Organisational influences - Flawed assumption / doctrine - that all crew members on board who have done up and over training are both capable and sufficiently fit to do the task. Temporary crew member was a part time volunteer from the coast guard where no physical fitness test was required.

HFACS checklist booklet is available to purchase online for \$5 US

It would be interesting to compare HFACS requirements to official incident reporting requirements in Australia and the protocols we currently have in place.

## Sail Training Programme Showcase

The most directly relevant part of this session was Captain Sarah Parry's detailed description of how the sail training programme on Windward Bound was developed and the philosophy underpinning it. I was genuinely impressed by the multi-layered sail training offering offered by Windward Bound with packages ranging from an afternoon for primary school children right up to multi-day voyages for youth and also corporate training packages.

In comparison our main operation on Enterprize is offering short (1 to 1.5 hour) sail experience trips to the general public augmented with some limited opportunities for overnight voyages when positioning the ship and even rarer ocean going voyages. We run a few week long voyages for private schools and have experimented with a few three night voyages for underprivileged youth. We do not characterise ourselves as a sail training vessel in the public image we project though in reality all of our volunteers are in fact sail trainees in a real sense and several of our volunteers have obtained marine qualifications on their own initiative. I think there is a great opportunity here to fully flesh out and describe our different sail training offerings especially for presentation to potential corporate and government sponsors as well as the target market for the voyages.

The vision of sail training outlined by Sarah Parry is compelling and aligns closely with the experience of our volunteers and many of our passengers - I think there is a case to be

made that this is what we are really selling rather than being merely a one hour tourist attraction ride.

‘Young people today are starved of positive reality... they are so used to operating in a totally virtual world... There is no greater reality in life than being a core part of a ship at sea - everyone onboard is a vital member of the team with their own vital role to play.’

*Captain Sarah Parry*

We should be looking to craft our own *Enterprize* specific version of this sail training vision. This is important for two reasons:

**Obtaining Sponsorship** - We have had great difficulty in attracting government or corporate sponsorship for *Enterprize* even though it is one of the most accurate historical replicas in the world. The problem may be that corporate sponsors and community fund raising groups like Apex are not interested in sponsoring refits or engines but they could be interested in sponsoring sail training experiences.

**Producing our own masters and officers.** We have a deckhand training system but no formal programme to develop keen crew to obtain engineering and vessel command qualifications. We are also currently suffering from a dearth of Masters able to sail *Enterprize*. A formal sail training programme aimed at producing qualified engineers, coxswains and masters could be a key plank in making the operation of *Enterprize* sustainable in the longer term as well as producing people capable of undertaking engineering and command positions on other Australian tall ships.

I was also interested to hear about the administration side of *Windward Bound* that was until several years ago entirely run by volunteers with the inevitable inefficiencies caused by people's availability and having to hand tasks over to other people. A key turning point was the successful application for a grant to fund a full time office administration person. This person was in turn very successful at crafting grant applications and was able to obtain more funding for the organisation including for a full time mate to relieve the workload on the captain. This is directly relevant to *Enterprize* as we currently have minimal sponsorship and I feel we do not have enough critical mass of staff in the office to have enough time to undertake high value and organisation changing tasks craft and pursue grant applications over and above the background workload of basic administration. With more effective resources we could do a lot more but the moment but at the moment we sometimes struggle with the basics.

## Sail Training International Ships Council - Small Ships Forum

An initial discussion on whether there was interest in establishing an exchange programme for trainees to visit and have guided tours of other small ships. This already happens in an informal way at the Australian Wooden Boat Festival - our festivals are quite small

compared to the European experience and we do not have any potential language barriers between crews of ships.

The second main focus on the session was on how to get better facilities and logistical preparations in place for small ships in festival ports and on possible revenue earning opportunities as foreign vessels could not easily charge inspection fees.

## Conclusion

I would like to thank Tall Ships Australia and the Enterprize Trust for supporting my application to attend the 2018 Sail Training and Tall Ships Conference. There were a lot of interesting and thought provoking sessions. I hope this report provides some insight into the material covered and how the ongoing operations of *Enterprize* could benefit from implementing some of the ideas. The presentation slides are available on line should you wish to look at the topics in more detail.