

The Idea of IFOSMA

Troubles, trials, and agonies characterize global economy over the past several years and practitioners and academics are eager to find new solutions to ensure viability in these changing times. Moreover, this turbulent climate doubts the traditional role of the shipping industry and challenges the sustainability of conventional shipping strategies in an era where these practices intertwined with social, economic, regulatory, legal, ethical and ecological and consumer concerns on a global scale. However, while the word “sustainable” is part of today’s vocabulary, the way to be applied to the shipping, from mercantile and passenger ships to ports and logistic industries, is not at all easy.

It requires a multi-disciplinary approach to pursue greater efficiency and increased awareness of the market environment in which each and every shipping company operates. This environment, is getting larger and larger as the global market place is continuously expanding due to changing economic climate, deregulation and advancing technologies. At the same time it contains myriad of conditions and demands posed mainly by customers or markets. It is thus paramount for the “traditional” ship owner, port authority or transportation specialist to observe the irrelevance of the traditional walls that divide shipping practices from other industries’ methods, recognize their customer’ needs and serve them at the best possible way.

The above provide the motive behind the formation of the International Forum on Shipping Marketing and Management (IFOSMA) series. These IFOSMA series represent a cutting edge for professionals, practitioners and scholars from various disciplines and countries who wish to have a full appreciation for the key issues that affect the strategic and tactical activities of their firms and provide them with the ability for sharing ideas, theories and practices prevalent in dynamic shipping environments. It focuses on the examination and application of marketing theories and practices to bolster individual shipping companies’ value and societal welfare. IFOSMA supports that success and excellence belong to leaders and companies that confront the threats, rethink and create innovative offerings, redesign business processes, find new market niches and enhance the opportunities of the radical and unpredictable shipping environment.

1st IFOSMA: “Can marketing theories and practices relieve shipping agonies: a new dialogue”

2nd IFOSMA: “Navigating through turbulent times: Is it better being Heretical or Orthodox?”

3rd IFOSMA: “Do we need, can we keep “talents” in Shipping?”

The 2019 4th IFOSMA theme

The business world is under continuous change as it is characterized by interconnection and interdependence between markets, economies, technologies and corporations. External factors, such as economic, political, legal, technological and social, affect the way shipping companies operate in multiple ways. It is the special characteristics of companies' organizations' culture which provides them the tools to overcome changes.

Organizational culture is considered as the core of businesses and as such it is the main driver of business excellence and organizational performance as well as a very critical tool to define processes, behavior and interactions of corporations.

To achieve business excellence in the shipping industry the human factor cannot be ignored as seafarers coming from different countries are employed onboard vessels. This multinational crew characterized by different cultures, lifestyles and languages, creates the need for shipping companies to manage them effectively. In this regard organizational cultural intelligence, conceptualized as an organization's capability to function effectively in culturally diverse environments, has become a central issue for shipping companies, which employ seafarers with different cultural backgrounds.

However with regard to crew management, many shipping companies tend to outsource these activities (crew management activities) to external partners, i.e. manning agencies. These agencies provide a wide range of services such as crew management, training, onboard assessment etc. Manning agencies maintain global manning offices to recruit and develop skilled seafarers and they try to effectively respond to the crew needs of shipping companies.

Since shipping companies tend to collaborate with the manning agencies closely, they value different criteria in their crew agency selection process. As a result, shipping companies try to develop strong and mutual beneficial relationships with the manning agencies with the aim of creating value

for both parties. It proves out that people, actions, and cooperation are the basic elements which are necessary for company's goal fulfillment.

IFOSMA 2019 aims at providing innovative and personalized ways of selecting and composing crew for shipping companies to create the greatest value for them based on their cultural intelligence and organizational culture.

The 4th IFOSMA aims to provide the stance where shipping professionals and academics from different areas will exchange views and share experiences relating to the development and application of crew management as well as to the potential benefits derived from selection of seafarers in shipping companies. Panelists and practitioners are expected to present their views as well as to actively participate in shaping the crew management agenda for the shipping industry. Attending audience will also be allowed to share concerns and raise relevant issues.

The Forum is organized in the following sections: the first one aims to examine how shipping companies adapt and operate in a global cultural environment; to investigate how shipping companies relate, collaborate with and choose external partners, especially those related to manning agencies; and to assess how the organizational identity of shipping companies creates a distinct competitive advantage with regard to its human capital. The last section focuses on presenting brief results from a sample of 246 shipping companies in Greece that participated in a relevant survey conducted by the Department of Maritime Studies of University of Piraeus.

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