

Maritime Industry Leadership in Ocean Stewardship: Shining a Spotlight on Success

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In the April 2009, the readers of Seaways were introduced to the World Ocean Council and its efforts to bring together an international 'ocean business community' to develop leadership and collaboration for ocean sustainability and stewardship. The private sector, as the primary ocean user, is well placed to deliver solutions in response to society's increasing demands that marine ecosystem use is sustainable and industry impacts on the marine environment are minimized.

For shipping, marine environmental concerns increasingly dominate the agenda for many policy, practical and public reputation aspects of the industry. This makes ocean sustainability issues important to the maritime professionals that are the backbone of the global shipping industry. Shipping and other ocean industries have the most to gain by developing and delivering solutions to sustainability - and the most to lose by continuing to be perceived only as the cause of ocean problems. Business access to ocean resources, services and space is at risk from the loss of the "social license" to operate in the seas and from the ocean governance regimes and policies that are emerging from processes in which industry is not well engaged.

Many companies are responding to the challenge by identifying their environmental impacts and developing innovative solutions large and small. Maritime professionals are usually keenly aware of these efforts to address environmental problems, as they usually require considerable commitment of shipping company time and resources. However, these efforts and solutions are rarely known or recognized by the public, media and the ocean advocacy organizations.

To address this lack of information and attention regarding the important industry actions on the environment, the World Ocean Council is working to raise the awareness of the positive efforts by shipping companies to address environmental issues through increased outreach to the media and public to provide factual and science-based information about real results. WOC press releases, web content and other materials are being developed to ensure the "good news" from responsible ocean companies about industry programs and progress are gaining positive attention among the media, public, governments, inter-governmental bodies and NGOs.

To jump start this effort, the World Ocean Council and the Nautical Institute are partnering to shine a spotlight on the environmental success stories of the shipping industries, as told by you - the maritime professional.

We are launching an informal competition for the best case studies of environmental responsibility in the shipping industry. What has your company done to make you proud of its environmental record? Tell us about the innovation, leadership and responsibility in tackling the environmental issues that you have experienced first hand as mariner. These are the stories that the world outside shipping needs to hear. Help us shine a spotlight on them.

The top several case studies will be the subject of articles in future issues of Seaways - and will be invited to make presentations at the "Sustainable Ocean Summit" (Belfast, 16-17 June 2009). The Sustainable Ocean Summit is the first international, cross-sectoral ocean sustainability conference for the private sector and is designed will catalyze the growing interest among ocean businesses for more effective leadership and collaboration in addressing ocean environmental challenges.

If your company isn't a leader in taking on these issues, that could be cause for concern. Maritime professionals should let their companies know that they want to be a part of an industry that respects the ocean, is responsible for its impacts, takes the lead on developing business-oriented solutions, and collaborates with other ocean industries and stakeholders on ensuring the health and continued economic use of the seas.

There is a need and opportunity for responsible companies to develop leadership and collaboration in ocean stewardship. Those who want to address marine environmental issues, differentiate themselves from poor performers, collaborate with like-minded companies within and across sectors, and engage stakeholders and policy processes will be the long term ocean industry survivors.

The World Ocean Council is facilitating proactive, collaborative efforts towards "Corporate Ocean Responsibility" by the shipping industry and other sectors. Cross-sectoral leadership and collaboration will result in significant business value for those committing to the vision of a healthy and productive ocean that supports sustainable use and stewardship by the responsible ocean business community.

Nautical Institute member are invited to contact the WOC for more information on becoming a part of this ocean business community.

See www.oceancouncil.org for more information, or contact paul.holthus@oceancouncil.org