

UNION MODERNISATION FUND

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**NAUTILUS – DEVELOPING A TRULY
INTERNATIONAL UNION**

Nautilus – developing a truly international union

Introduction

Nautilus UK represents maritime professionals in the British maritime industry. The union can be traced back 150 years, through various incarnations, latterly as NUMAST (formed in 1985).

The industry is increasingly going global, with many employers based abroad, employing multi-national crews. The union's strategic analysis concluded that members' interests needed greater coordination with like-minded unions internationally. The union's aim was to transform *'from a small professional specialist union within the UK into a union of maritime professionals that transcends national boundaries and in doing so reflects the industry within which we operate.'*

Why this project?

In 2009, in response to the changing times, it was proposed to merge Nautilus UK with its Dutch trade union equivalent to form Nautilus International, as Paul Moloney, Senior National Secretary, explains:

'We needed to develop a truly international trade union to represent officers in the maritime sector. This was partly because of the shrinking demographic (we had fewer and fewer members), partly because we needed to respond to global employers, and partly because the merger would bring strength when decisions are taken. Bearing in mind the global labour market in shipping, increasing cross-border cooperation makes good sense – and we would still be able to remain specialised and autonomous within our umbrella organisation.'

UMF funding was to be used in support of this modernisation strategy, to develop *'a training programme that would equip officials and lay reps with the skills they need to represent members in the global marketplace and to play a full part in the development of our international fora.'*

Methodology and outcomes

A one-week training programme was devised by Ruskin College in consultation with Nautilus, to ensure that participants would emerge with:

- an understanding of the global shipping industry
- an analysis of the implications for their union
- an explanation of why international mergers with other similar organisations are the best way to protect their interests
- an understanding of the partnership approach to industrial relations and how this can be a key foundation of a future merged union
- the skills necessary to be able to fully participate in the democratic structures of the new union
- the opportunity to progress to degree courses run by Ruskin College

Developing and running the programme

Paul Moloney and Mike Jess, Nautilus UK HR Manager, met with Denis Gregory, Academic Co-ordinator of the International Labour and Trade Union Studies Programme at Ruskin College to design the training programme. The approach they chose was very much interactive, encouraging students to explore and discuss a range of themes. Discussion was stimulated by a series of prompts – asking what can be done about globalisation, for example, by each stakeholder. Says Paul Moloney:

'For the most part, small group working with feedback from the individual groups into a plenary session was used as a way of consolidating and elaborating the experience of the students involved.'

The five-day programme was run on three occasions between June 2008 and February 2009 and students explored:

- **Nautilus International**
Participants looked at how the need for and the decision to form Nautilus International differs from Nautilus UK/NUMAST. In order to appreciate the changes that the formation of Nautilus International would make to the democratic governance of the new union and the organisational management structure of both the UK and Dutch arms of the union, a session on the protocol that was signed in 2007 formed a key part of the course.
- **The role and responsibilities of lay representatives**
Students were asked to consider the implications of the new arrangements for their roles as frontline reps within the new union and to consider the training and development needs that might arise in the short and medium term.
- **Globalisation**
Students explored the effects and

challenges of globalisation for the industry and labour relations and how key players might be important in terms of curbing any negative impact. The final session on globalisation looked at how the expansion of global trade has impacted on the maritime sector over the past 30 years.

- **The shipping industry**
The session on the shipping industry illustrated the effect the recession in the '80s had on the global demand for world shipping and the considerable growth since then. The classroom discussion centred around the extent to which the current recession would lead to a decline in demand similar to the one 20-odd years ago. Competing models of shipping were discussed and a SWAT analysis identified the strengths and weaknesses of Nautilus in the current climate.
- **Skills development**
A significant part of the course was devoted to improving the presentational skills of students – crucial in this competitive world:
'For Nautilus's modernisation strategy to be effective, considerable onus will fall upon lay reps as well as full-time officers to communicate the rationale and detail of the strategy. The adoption of a social dialogue approach to the management of change in labour relations by NUMAST had already highlighted the need to boost the basic competence of lay reps. They need to be able to make detailed representations both to members and management as well as to the broader trade union movement through the medium of annual and biannual conferences. In the context of implementing a new and largely untested model of international trade unionism, Nautilus was plainly going to face even greater communications challenges in the crucial early years of the new union.'

Two sessions of the course focused respectively on the structure and functions of the union's Biannual General Meeting and the art of framing motions to that body, and a session on presentational skills. Students were then asked to identify a theme that they would individually work up into a five minute presentation along the lines of a motion to the Biannual General Meeting. Those debated at the end of the first course held in June 2008 ranged from establishing an EU flag, to setting up an EU-wide pay structure and terms and conditions, the possibility of a single Maritime Union for the EU, a return to NUMAST, and reinstating alcohol on board ship.

Other crucial skills were also built, as Paul Moloney explains:

'The organisation and development of Nautilus also calls for skills other than debating of course, notable here being the basics of interpreting and using annual reports for collective bargaining purposes. Students' attention was drawn to the Information and Consultation regulations and stress was laid on the importance of making use of these provisions to enhance the flow of corporate information and hence boost the effectiveness of partnership arrangements at company level.'

Checklists of questions helped to reinforce the information. For example, students were encouraged to consider how good the current information and consultation provisions were at their own company, and whether there were any 'blockages' in the flow of information between companies and unions. An agreement between Nautilus and P&O Ferries was tabled as an example of how a recent partnership agreement had developed an information agreement taking guidance from the I&C Regulations.

Negotiation case studies drawing upon recent negotiating experience from both the maritime sector and elsewhere were used to illustrate the basic model to devise a pay

claim. Students were divided into two teams, given certain financial information, and asked to role-play the drawing up and presentation of a basic claim for improved terms and conditions of employment.

Lessons learned

All the objectives for the UMF project were met. The programme was considered successful and helpful in building participants' knowledge and defining next stages for progress.

Paul Moloney adds:

'The two main lessons we have learned are that our members require the training we have provided through this project and also that the trainer/provider partner that we worked with was the right one. To enable unions to remain responsive to changes in their environment it is necessary to have a high level of participation from members. It is important that members who exercise this participation do so responsively and to facilitate this, training is key. We also concluded that a union such as ours needs to work closely with a training provider. Although we have expertise in house, it has proved extremely valuable to buy in additional expertise to equip members with skills in areas such as globalisation, negotiations and public speaking. Working with a well established and well respected training provider adds enormous value to our own work in this area.'

The common strengths and weaknesses emerging from the student evaluation carried out at the end of each of the three courses were as follows:

Strengths

- The participative approach to teaching and learning was effective and engaging.
- There were high levels of practical experience available from the various tutors delivering the course.

- Detailed, relevant and up-to-date materials were used throughout the programme.
- Negotiations role-play and the presentation exercise were highlighted as invaluable.
- The venue – Stoke House – had good classrooms and general learning facilities.
- Helpful support staff.
- Accommodation, ambience and gardens were good.

Weaknesses

- There was not enough time to develop negotiating skills.
- Social dialogue skills for partnership arrangements were not given sufficient prominence.
- There were some minor glitches in relation to admin and practicalities.
'None of these are significant in any way but the experience gained will enable us to iron out these issues in the future.'

Looking ahead

In the final session of the course, the conclusions from previous sessions were discussed to help devise a training programme for the new union. The following next steps were subsequently defined:

- Identify the training needs associated with the new governance arrangements – for example, how to create appropriate agendas which integrate the union's work and consolidate the strength of the union.
- Develop and implement a specific bargaining skills course.
- Further develop the partnership training to provide more advanced skills and competence in terms of more complex strategic planning and decision making.

Discussions are now ongoing with Ruskin College to identify those who may wish to progress to degree courses run by the college.

Conclusion

Paul Moloney sums up:

'We expect the impact of the project to be long lasting. Participants came to the course with different backgrounds and experience but it was clear that an in-depth understanding of the nature of the shipping industry was obtained by all of them. This was evidenced not only in their course feedback but also from observing the discussion elements of the course and witnessing the debates at our Biennial General Meeting in May 2009. This was considered to be the most successful General Meeting ever held by the union, with the level of discussion, debate and participation by members far exceeding anything from previous events. Our decision to create Nautilus International is unique in the global trade union world and participation on this course has ensured that members fully understand why this approach has been taken. What's more, the course has meant that they now have the skills to participate fully in the work of Nautilus International. We have just held the new union's first Executive Meeting. Of the 24 positions on the Executive from the UK, almost all have been filled. It is pleasing to see that young members, women and members in ranks not traditionally represented on the Executive are now fully represented.'

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