



Training - a good investment?

Read any crew magazine and there are plenty of articles about the dearth of good candidates and the great salaries available to crew. Without doubt, as in any sector, good recruits are always in short supply, so it is key that yachts ensure they get to recruit and retain the best people, and that the crew position themselves as well as they can to get the best roles.

In this article we'll approach things a bit differently, looking from the employer/captain's perspective, with some thoughts about the qualifications and training that you might consider for crew aside from the usual Powerboat Level 2 and Yachtmaster. We'll also think about skill development from the crew's perspective.

In terms of boating qualifications, the typical progression for deck crew tends to be STCW 95 Basic Training followed by the RYA Powerboat Level 2 course. As crew gain experience and sea time, then the aim becomes RYA Yachtmaster Offshore as a means to start to progress ultimately towards the top of the tree. But what of other training, and how could this benefit both the yacht and the development and retention of crew?

In terms of developing the crew's powerboating and skippering skills, what about the RYA Advanced Powerboat Course and Examination? The Advanced Course lasts two days and is aimed at serious amateur and professional users



looking to develop skills in areas such as passage planning and pilotage by day and night, rough water handling, fast-boat navigation techniques and even subjects such as helicopter rescue and search patterns. The course assumes entrants have very good theory knowledge (charts, tides, buoyage, lights etc) and are very competent boat handlers already. A key focus of the course is developing attendees' understanding and appreciation of their role as a skipper, which is highly relevant given their role. The benefits of investing in such a course for crew include: 1) A key criticism of some of those attending the Yachtmaster exam is that they have all the miles and passages but little real experience as a skipper; this starts to help them develop in this area. 2) The course is aimed typically at craft up to 33ft, so is highly relevant given the craft they will usually helm. 3) As the course includes night work it gives them real experience of managing their own craft at night, which is relevant to helming the yacht's tenders at night and also, yet again, serves as a stepping stone to Yachtmaster; the Advanced Examination is optional and is the means by which to get a Commercial Endorsement for craft up to 24m, operating up to 20 miles from a safe haven.

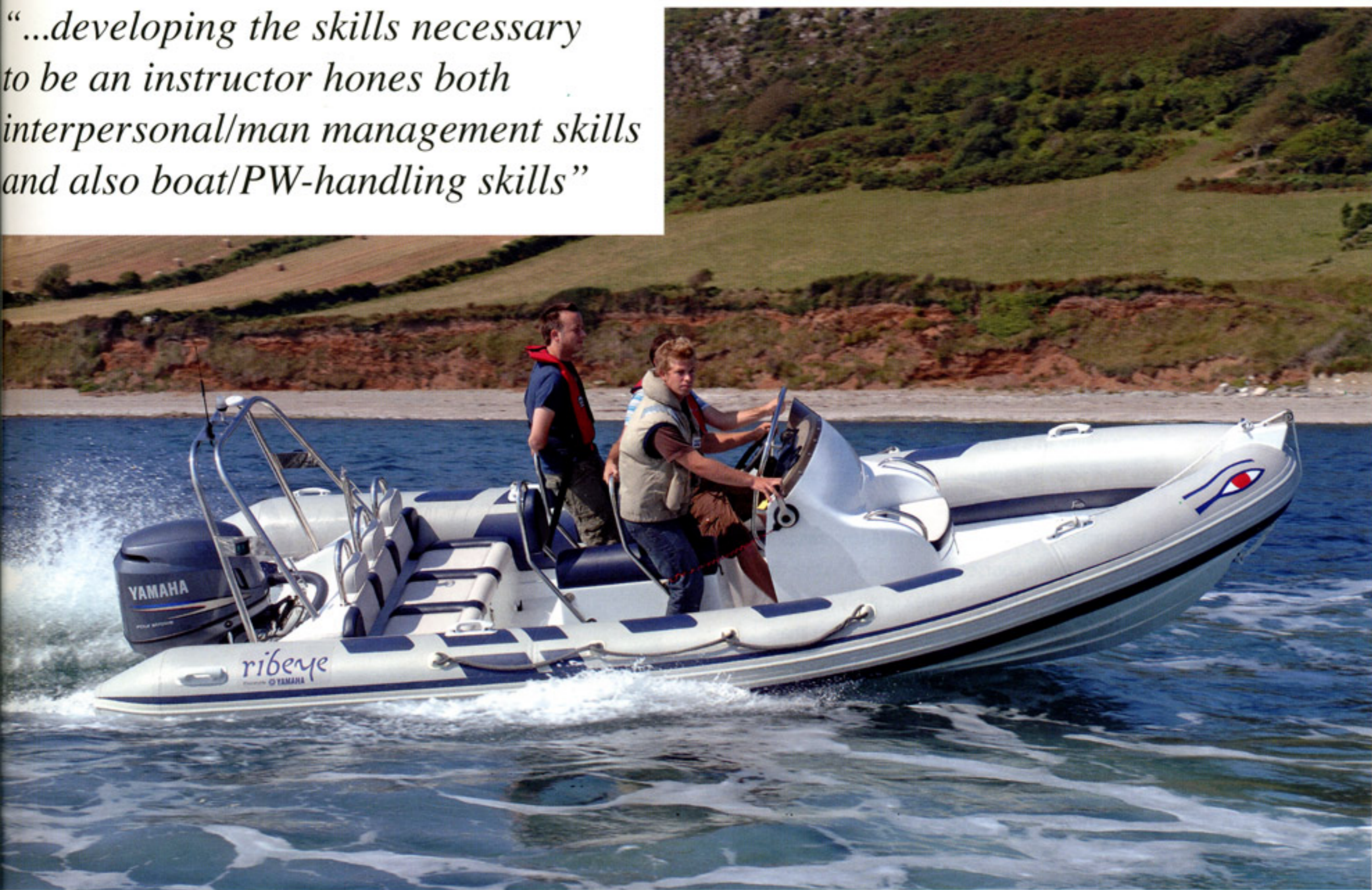
A number of yachts have now achieved recognition as RYA Training Centres in respect of training and licensing guests in the use of Personal Watercraft. Crew delivering the training need to be RYA Personal Watercraft Instructors which means attending a three-day instructors' course. There is an option, though, to

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train instead as an RYA Powerboat Instructor for three days and then convert this qualification in one day to become a PW Instructor too. So why do either qualification? An increasing number of charter contracts stipulate the need for yachts to be able to license their guests for use of the PWs; equally many captains and owners want such accreditation for the yacht, not least for the structured process and potentially increased safety it brings to PW usage.

Having a Powerboat Instructor on board can be beneficial as, whilst certificates cannot be issued, the instructor can train and develop the capabilities of crew, ensuring those already possessing qualifications are doing it just right or, in the case of those just starting out, are developing skills, even if getting to a training centre to do a full course is not practical for a while. Inevitably, too, developing the skills necessary to be an instructor hones both interpersonal/man management skills and also boat/PW-handling skills.

Larger yachts will invariably have a range of water sports equipment including kayaks, windsurfers, kites and sailing dinghies, ranging from basic Pico-type craft to the more technical whizzy craft. Deck crew are, without doubt, pretty resourceful people, but have you trained them in the rescue and use of this kit? Are they well positioned to actually train and help the guests in the use of the equipment? If a guest is entrapped under a whizzy dinghy or a catamaran, do they know how to effect a rescue, how to right the craft etc? Guests will have more fun and do so in a safer way if crew are trained adequately. If, amongst



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your crew, you have very competent dinghy sailors, why not look at supporting them to become a dinghy or kitesurfing instructor? For other crew, consider the Safety Boat Course which looks at the rescue and recovery of these craft. In addition to the obvious safety benefits, they would also be more likely to rescue the kit in a way that reduces damage and thus cost.

In any environment, investing in the training and development of employees has a variety of pretty obvious benefits. Looking at the suggestions above, though, the yacht and guests potentially benefit as much as the crewmember does, and all of the suggestions, without doubt, help lead the crewmember towards the ultimate goals of Yachtmaster and Master qualifications. Yachts deciding to pursue such a broad policy of skill development would, in all honesty, be pretty unusual but would create an environment that is very appealing to crew for a fairly minimal cost.

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For crew the question is often what you can do to increase your marketability, both in the market generally but also on your existing yacht. The courses and qualifications already referred to might be worth investing in yourself. Certainly crew possessing the Personal Watercraft Instructor qualification are very valuable at present but, equally, if you attain any of the other qualifications you will be developing your overall competence and capability and thus your marketability. In a competitive world for the best jobs, anything you can do to show that you are serious about your career is worth doing.

In summary, there is no suggestion that crew should attend courses for the sake of doing so. That said, if there are courses that manage to tick the right boxes in the cost-vs-benefit analysis then they are certainly worth doing. Without doubt, hiring the best staff and then retaining them longer than you otherwise might will save you longer term in the costs associated with recruitment and disruption.

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