

Staying ahead in the competitive cruise industry

Large cruise lines must up their game as smaller counterparts monopolize the bucket-list generation. Lee Clarke explains how workforce optimization can help

LONDON, UK, November 1, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Industry pundits call it “transformational cruise travel” and it’s a growing phenomenon. According to the 2018 Cruise Travel Report , this type of cruising is set to become a top trend for the coming year as travellers seek new experiences from “cultural immersion and voluntourism to extreme adventures”. It goes on to say that millennials in particular focus on river and small ships because they satisfy their need for ever diverse itineraries and destination experiences that reach far beyond walking and coach tours and offer exciting options for the perfect “Instagram moment”!



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Lee Clarke, General Manager, US/EMEA Dynamia

But it’s not just the young who are seeking adventure on smaller ships. Expedition cruising is enjoying a renaissance fuelled in part by greater consumer interest in experiential vacations offered in far-flung 'bucket list' regions around the world. Long-time operators of expedition cruises agree the niche segment is seeing significant growth today, with more expansion in coming years. Some two dozen expedition ships are currently being built for both established operators and new entrants.

You could argue that the traditional large cruise liners

serve a totally different market of people seeking sun, sea, luxury and round-the-clock on-board facilities and entertainment but they shouldn’t become complacent. It’s up to bigger cruise line to attract and retain the best crew, efficiently schedule their huge workforces and interact more effectively with third-party suppliers.

Ship-shape in three ways

Staying ahead of the competition starts with the basics: knowing what people and resources you have - whether they are employed directly by you or by your many concessionaires, if they have the right skills, and qualifications to provide passengers with a top-class service. The latest Workforce Optimization (WFO) solutions help keep everything ship-shape in three essential ways:

1. Boost crew happiness to keep customers coming back for more - in industries like leisure

cruising where highly skilled staff with specialist expertise are in short supply, keeping hold of your best talent should be a top priority because if you can't keep your staff engaged, someone else will and take away loyal customers at the same time.

Build a single view of crew capabilities to maximise talent and staff satisfaction. Modern WFO systems allow managers to develop an effective skills matrix, encompassing factors such as nationality or language skills and individual qualifications enabling leaders to develop relevant training programs and meaningful career paths that keep staff motivated.

Then, add in self-service capabilities to increase their sense of empowerment – crew simply log onto a secure online portal to access and update personal information, shifts and travel arrangements and request changes. This helps to meet data compliancy requirements - crew can see what information is held on them and identify any required updates. Giving people control of their own data helps boost morale and aid staff retention.

What's more, integration with HR systems makes it easy to align individual goals with those of the overall organisation. Shared visibility and proactive communication of these goals usually introduces a greater sense of inclusivity and involvement to go the extra mile to deliver exceptional customer service.

2.Right crew, right place, first time – managing entire fleets of cruise ships manned by thousands of crew around the world is difficult at the best of times but becomes even more complex as today's larger cruise lines undergo massive transformation through alliances, mergers and acquisitions. How do you align additional people, new teams and the different brand identities of a new expanded organization in an intelligent and unified manner?

The beauty of modern integrated systems is they bring together every piece of data you'll ever need to run a successful cruise ship and in real-time. From the liner they work on, their skills, availability, the equipment they use to cabin and other entitlements as well as important travel documents like passports and visas, WFO solutions capture all the essential details necessary to develop efficient schedules and guarantee the most appropriately skilled and available crew members are in the right place at the right time. This keeps your crew one step ahead of the competition when it comes to delivering a first-class passenger service - even during periods of enormous organizational change.

3.Make concessionaires part of the family – large cruise ships depend on a variety of concessionaires to keep passengers happy and their profits healthy. This could be a high-end retailer sharing valuable selling space in one of your on-board boutiques, freelancers engaged to take passenger vacation photos as holiday mementoes or the beauticians running your luxurious spa. These staff might be employed by third parties but they represent your brand and need to be properly trained to integrate well with the rest of your crew, provide first-class service and bring in additional revenues.

This is where the benefits of a fully automated, centralized solution come into their own. Automation encourages consistent ways of working across all crew including concessionaires while the transparency of information held in the system enhances fairness, encourages co-operation across different teams and increases productivity.

As smaller entrants into the cruise industry offer an attractive value proposition to a new set of travellers, existing players will need to step up their efforts to deliver outstanding service levels and lure passengers back for more. Now more than ever, attracting the best staff and keeping them motivated is critical. The latest WFO technology has the power to facilitate this and more. Using accurate historic data, large cruise ships can carry out 'what if' scenarios to create high-performing crew members, deliver an outstanding guest experience and guarantee competitive edge now and in the future.

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