

Serious Skills Shortage Set to Affect Maritime Industry

Industrial growth is warmly welcomed worldwide. Downside of this is a serious skills shortage that hits the market. According to Hugh Williams, Chief Executive of the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA), many companies are experiencing significant challenges in recruiting sufficient trained and skilled personnel for their projects all over the world and face significant pressure on their desired growth and ability to deliver services.

To overcome the shortage of staff, IMCA will pay more attention to the projected numbers of trained personnel required by the expanding marine contracting industry over the next 2-3 years. These estimations are based on the potential growth of the businesses, like orders for new construction vessels and ROVs. From these estimates, IMCA can extrapolate some of the marine contracting industry's recruitment needs over the next 2-3 years. The sorts of figures thrown up by the industry reveal:

- The industry will commission at least 50 new offshore construction vessels in the next 2-3 years covering IMCA members' activities including lifting, pipelay, diving, survey and ROV operations. About 10 of these will be dive support vessels (DSVs)
- The drilling industry will commission about 40 more floating drilling rigs (semi-submersible of ship shape) in the next three years
- Around a hundred new ROVs will be built, most of them Work Class
- About 10 new portable or modular saturation diving systems will come onto the market

The new vessels and drill rigs will require some 2000 additional watch-keepers across the bridge, deck and engine room. The increases in saturation diving will require some 800 additional personnel in saturation diving and related positions. They will require around 1000 additional survey and inspection discipline personnel and the ROV spreads will require some 1200 additional personnel to operate them.

These numbers do not include the large numbers of additional air diving personnel and the many other deck, catering and ancillary crew, or onshore and engineering support personnel required to operate the vessels.

IMCA encourages raising the profile of the offshore industry in the employment market, including a focus on cross-training personnel from other industries who may already have many of the skills necessary for offshore work. The Association believes that it is important to establish relationships with schools, colleges and universities to promote science and engineering as interesting courses leading to challenging and worthwhile careers.

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