

# Maritime's the Future

How would you like travelling around the world? What about being in an industry that is so vast, you actually have options on your fingertips? We decide to show you the 'other' aspects of having a career in the maritime industry. Crossroads spoke to two scholars of the Singapore Maritime Foundation and found out what it's like being part of one of the world's biggest and integral industries. By: Harpreet Kaur

As vast and deep the seas, equally huge are the career options you will find in the maritime industry. This rich industry has more than plenty to offer as it's not just the employer to over 108 000 people but also provides the platform for those keen on continuing their studies and enhancing their skills in the maritime industry. One such organization that is part of this platform is the Singapore Maritime Foundation that aims to bridge the link between public and private sectors of the industry. The Singapore Maritime Foundation, in collaboration with Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), Association of Singapore Marine Industries (ASMI) and Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) formed the MaritimeONE initiative in April 2007 which aims to help draw more people to the maritime industry and pave routes for youths through networking sessions, scholarship and internship opportunities.

Pan Ju Gek and Jeremy Kee are both part of the scholarship programme that sent them to Erasmus University Rotterdam in Netherlands to complete their Masters of Science in Maritime Economics and Logistics (MEL). It has been one and half years since their graduation and they are happily working in their respective jobs.

Jeremy Kee is a Projects Broker at ACM Shipping Asia Pte Ltd. This young intellectual chap completed his Bachelors of Science in Economics and Statistics at the National University of Singapore. After his graduation, he took note of an opening of a management trainee position in one of the shipping companies. Jeremy thought that this opportunity could build a base for him and today he is proud of his decision as it also helped in stirring deep passion for the maritime industry. He said, "As a management trainee, I got to learn a lot of things from all the different aspects of the industry. Each aspect requires different sets of skills." Jeremy affirmed that the management trainee position helped him diversify his exposure of the industry.

Pan Ju Gek, who works as an Analyst in the Transport and Logistics Department in a local bank, threaded a similar path to Jeremy. After completing her degree, she decided that she would like to carve a niche in this 'not so common' industry and applied for a Masters of Science scholarship co-offered by SMF and Centre for Maritime Economics and Logistics (MEL) of Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Ju Gek brought back lovely and unforgettable memories of her stay in Netherlands. She recalled, "It was an international and cosmopolitan experience, an eye-opener that exposed me to 21 different nationalities. I met people not just from different countries but also from different stages of life. The course gave us plenty of chances to meet key maritime industry players and thus view the maritime industry from a different perspective."

Jeremy shared the same sentiments. He added, "Our programme was intensive but enjoyable. We had distinguished guest lecturers who gave us talks about the maritime industry worldwide. It was a great opportunity and I created a network with the international students."

Studying abroad indeed opens many doors. We learn to widen our perspectives and be more adaptable so it can benefit us in our future endeavours. So, how are these two benefitting from their overseas experiences today? What do their jobs require them to do? Is the maritime industry still bearing the cliché of being a boring and male-dominated industry?

Jeremy objects firmly, "There are women in my office. And it's really lively, almost like a trading house." As a projects broker, he gets to meet a lot of people, mainly existing and new clients. His job consists of marketing and networking as much as it includes the daily sending and replying of emails and making calls to ensure his clients are content. He explained, "If I have a client who



wants to buy a vessel in China, then I will create the necessary links. Sometimes, I will have to travel and carry out inspections of the vessel with my client. As part of a value-added service, I ensure to update my clients with the latest news of the industry." Jeremy, who has travelled half of Asia till date, takes his initiative to train and update himself on the industry happenings. He reads The Business Times and online news daily to be informed of the market movements so as to help him plan his business strategies well. Viewing his position more like a business, he said, "It's like a financial planner, who works independently but yet has the support and backing of his company. My job is similar but I have a supportive system, which is my company."

Ju Gek loves her job equally. She works in a local bank but services clients that are mainly from the shipping industry, who seek finances for their investments. Ju Gek described, "When we get clients looking for financing, we put forward the credit papers. There is a process that involves several meetings and preparation of documentation, ultimately resulting in the approval of the papers." Ju Gek enjoys and looks forward to these meetings with her clients. She appreciates gaining business knowledge from them and also meeting these major players from the industry. Ju Gek affirms that there isn't a 'typical day' as there is something new to learn each day. Ju Gek maintains being updated regularly about the industry as well as worldly happenings. "It's important to be informed about everything as certain events have significant effects in the shipping world and my clients."

Our work environment and relationship with our colleagues play an important part in how we progress and produce our work quality. At Ju Gek's office, the environment is pleasant and fun. She has learnt some crucial interpersonal skills. "We work as a team here. But more importantly, we are also learning how to deal with different people and reacting to different situations." Jeremy too believes that interpersonal and communication skills are the key skills in any industry. He explained, "In this business, we are dealing with people of high status. They are involved in major sales and purchases of vessels. It is very important to know and understand how to manage these CEOs and directors."

Both Jeremy and Ju Gek highlighted that the maritime industry is one not to be ignored. They stressed on the dynamism of the growth as it speaks of an international career. Jeremy said, "Once you start building your experience, you will be worth a lot." Ju Gek also advised students to identify one or two key areas of interest and focus on meeting people and generating chances. She said, "The maritime industry is one of the key industries of our economy. There are lots of opportunities in this industry. From marine law, marine insurance, financing to onshore positions, you will be amazed as to what the maritime industry has to offer!"

Ninety percent of the world's trade is carried out through ships and shipping logistics. Indeed then, the shipping industry is tremendously broad and the chances of moving within the industry from one position to another, is higher. Thus, you won't be worrying about being stuck in a stagnant career.

These two great minds who coincidentally think alike, quoted, "Shipping will never die!"

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