

SMF Profile Interview

Name: Alex Ng

Age: 28

Occupation: LRET-MaritimeONE Scholar
(Sponsored Lloyd's Register Educational Trust)

Course: Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture
(Offshore Engineering), Newcastle University, UK

It's been more than a year since he left, but Alex Ng's ex-employer would still call him to make some quick enquiries. This bears testament to his dedication and hard work. The long hours and after-work phone calls never bothered him either. Alex made sure that his responsibilities and duties as an Engineer at Keppel Shipyard (Tuas) were met at all times. Alex has since moved on is now in his first-year at University of Newcastle enrolled in the Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture. We met up with him and probed on how he planned his study and work path.

Meeting Alex was a pleasure. He appeared shy and as if a man of few words - but as he shared extensively on his unforgettable experiences in the maritime industry, I was forced to think otherwise. He has learnt a lot from his 'sea-full' journey.

Alex's first step towards the maritime industry was when he enrolled himself in Marine Engineering at the Singapore Polytechnic. He opted for this course after attending several career fairs and seeking advice from his lecturers on the nature of the maritime industry. He said, "I wanted to be part of a hands-on and practical work environment. The lecturers shared with me that the maritime industry is very hands-on". Alex, who loves the sea was extremely excited when he found out that students would also get the opportunity to sail after the three-year diploma course.

The maritime industry is not only international but is one of the biggest industries in Singapore. It has various sectors that include ship owning ship management, ship brokering and chartering, marine insurance, operations, maritime law and arbitration, ship finance, sales and marketing, offshore and marine engineering and much more. During his polytechnic days, Alex was attached to a shipping company. It was the exposure there that made him realise

that the maritime industry is bigger than it seemed. "This attachment was a real eye-opener. The company was managing over 100 vessels from the Middle East region. The vessels would stop over in Singapore for maintenance; there were lots of logistical management and planning involved, from stock-taking to food transportation. The magnitude of the work made me realise that work is not just restricted to the ship."

After completing his Diploma, he had a choice to sail and opted for it. There was a sudden shift in the energy levels, when I asked Alex about his sailing journey. He replied, "It was really tough, but it was a really enriching experience." Although he was an Engine Room Cadet, he spent his first three months mopping the engine room every single day, to which he quickly justified, "There was a reason for this. My Chief Engineer wanted me to familiarise myself with every aspect of the Engine Room. After three months, I knew better than the others."

Alex is a diligent worker and believes in learning from the basics. After three months, he was tasked to assist the engineers with overhauling duties. He worked in a container vessel, where he described the turnover time was six hours and they had to finish everything within that time frame. He explained, "When we overhaul the field injectors, we change new ones as without them, the ship cannot sail and everything would be delayed. We had to learn to work fast and effectively as a team."

When asked about his relationship with his seniors and colleagues, he said, "Everyone was helpful and we were like a family. The vessel we worked on was like a small united nation. My Chief Engineer and Captain was a Polish, the 2nd Engineer a Ukrainian and a 3rd Engineer a Chinese. It was a rojak of nationalities." Years have passed but Alex is still in contact with some of his ex-crew members.



The seven months of sailing brought Alex to China, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia. After his sailing voyage, Alex had to return to Singapore for National Service.

Alex gained his engineering experience during his working years at Keppel Shipyard (Tuas). He worked there as an Assistant Engineer and Engineer in the Repair and Conversion department respectively. Recalling his hectic days at the shipyard, he said, "Things were very fast-paced and there are new challenges everyday." In the Repair department, Alex acquired new knowledge and skills in ship repair, overhaul and ship survey.

In the next one and a half years, Alex was transferred to the Conversion department where he soon developed a passion for ship design. He enthused, "We worked on a vessel owned by Exxon Mobil that was to be converted into a FPSO for storage purposes. So, my team and I basically modified the vessel. It was a totally different scope and learning experience."

The sense of satisfaction of building a ship and finally watching it set sail is something most Maritime Engineers would cherish. After all, it is no easy task but one that takes years of planning and hard work. This sentiment will be felt by Alex Ng, when the vessel leaves the Singapore waters on 25th October this year.