

WORK REST & PLAY

The design of crew space is often left to the shipyard to resolve, but according to Ellen Anderson, Executive Vice President of Publishing at Wright Maritime Group llc, an industry leader in yacht services based out of Fort Lauderdale, "Forward-looking designers and project developers must give higher considerations to crew spaces, both for work and relaxation." As she points out in the following article, crew happiness—and ultimately that of owner and guests—depends upon it.



BLISS YACHTING DEVELOPMENTS



COURTESY OF YACHTING DEVELOPMENT
PHOTO BY CHRIS LEWIS

While the answer to how crew areas can be improved is multi-faceted, one way to keep crew happy is to give them the appropriately designed space to work in efficiently, to be able to rest in a quiet and comfortable space, and to unwind or exercise outdoors. As yachts become larger, it would be assumed that individual crew spaces would grow also and that accommodation would become more user-friendly. This is only rarely true.

From a design perspective, the client expects additional space for spas, hair salons and even movie theatres with his or her larger vessel. The extra deck space is destined for bigger dining spaces and pools, and owners love their own private deck areas that often move into the bow area of the vessel, traditionally a place for crew to catch a breath of fresh air. While these all provide added value for the owner and guests, in order to make room for

these extra features, crew designated areas are often compromised.

Crewmembers who have long-term experience working on yachts can provide valuable insight into what makes one vessel more 'crew friendly' than another. Planning with regard to how crew live and work on board is the key. The goal should be to design crew spaces that feel comfortable, function efficiently and look almost like home. Making the most of available space, keeping in mind the concept of many people living and working in that space, and using colour and materials effectively, are essential to improving the onboard living spaces for crew. I would suggest talking to captains and crew during the early stages of design; they may offer ideas that those who have never lived on board would never think of, and those ideas are worth their weight in gold when it comes to creative revisions of the crew space on vessels. There is, however, one golden rule to the design of any crew space: you can NEVER have too much storage. This means considering every space possible for drawers, shelves and cupboards; it means multi-functionality and creating space

where there is none—under beds, in bilges, under stairwells, are just a few examples.

Try to imagine how much time a crewmember spends in his or her cabin. The cabin is the one place on board where the individual can unwind, escape and rest in relative privacy, and good or bad design can make this spot a haven or a hell for crew. For example, the fact that crew perform 24/7 and rest time occurs during all hours of the day and night is often overlooked. Again, think storage, design closets that are large enough to hold multiple uniform items and also personal clothing/belongings. It goes without saying that both cabin and bathroom should be well ventilated, but as crew numbers increase, shower stalls have become smaller. Lighting should be dimmable wherever possible to avoid disturbing off-duty colleagues. Increasingly, crew expect the availability of Internet and WiFi, and the option of both communal and private TV is much appreciated. ▶

VULCAN 46 VICEM



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CAPRI LURSSSEN

COURTESY OF LURSSSEN

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Noise in the crew rest area is a major consideration to take into account. Inner walls between cabins should be finished up to the overhead and designers and builders must consider soundproofing between cabins and the heads as a vital comfort feature. Bunks should be long and wide enough to serve all body sizes. The upper bunk should be easy to climb in and out of, without disturbing the person who occupies the lower bunk. Privacy curtains for each bunk are a great but rarely seen feature, so a crew member can sleep or relax in privacy even if another would like to read or watch a movie. Reading spotlights for each bunk and the option for the use of ear plugs to listen to music or view a movie is also a benefit. Younger crew, who have grown up with these amenities, nearly always expect these mod cons.

Consideration of crew and guest circulation is a must when designing a vessel. Well-planned traffic lanes that allow crew access to guest cabins and exterior decks without walking through popular guest areas, maximise crew efficiency and minimise disruption to guests. It is worth remembering that time lost by crew in achieving the simplest tasks is often due to the inadequate layout of the working spaces and passageways on a yacht. The galley placement comes first to mind. It is logical that the galley should have easy access to the dining areas (both inside and on deck) and service pantries. However, this is not always the case, and when distances are increased the transfer of food from bow to stern becomes a complicated dance between the galley and the service teams. Time is of the essence and lifts, stairs and access to the dining areas must be in the most appropriate places. The size of the dining table and chairs must also be proportionate to the size of the rooms, so that the crew can move easily around the table to provide a proper service.

When it comes to crew mess design, try to make the space look as large and airy and light as possible through careful choice of furniture, fabrics and styling. Remember that the crew mess is a shared space, serving not only as a dining area, but also as a meeting room, party place, working

space, living room and sometimes laundry area. The crew mess should be spacious enough to be convivial and relaxing and large enough for the entire crew to meet together. There also needs to be efficient counter and table space, since meals are usually served either as a buffet or family style. On larger yachts, designers are now extending the concept of the crew mess to include a crew lounge. This is considered a 'quiet space' and should be designed with this in mind. Work stations are often provided in this area and so it becomes a work space for the various department heads. Crew who do not have desks in their cabins may also use the area for working on a laptop.



The importance of being able to be out on deck and relax cannot be overstated. Traditionally, the bow of the vessel was considered 'crew country', but that concept seems to be changing as it becomes an extension of the owner's suite or guest area. When this happens, the crew are relegated to the tender garages and crew entrance areas of the yacht. When the vessel is at anchor, the tender is used by guests and crew members have no outside space of their own, they become trapped inside the yacht. With a little more thought, many of the tender bays are large enough to contain exercise equipment and some benches, so that crew can still unwind out of view of the guests.

The laundry room on board is the busiest space of all, possibly excluding the galley, and the one that suffers most from inadequate space. It usually contains washing and drying machines, rolling machines, hanging rods, folding tables, irons and ironing boards, deep sinks and various hampers. The hanging, folding and storing of owner and guest clothing and bedding must be considered (this often happens in the crew mess) along with storage space for crew uniforms. Having to do the ironing in the corridor due to lack of space is one of the most common design defects.

The material and finishes for the crew quarters should be kept simple for easy maintenance and colours should be soft or neutral. Before choosing fabrics, imagine these patterns and colours moving back and forth or up and down in a sea-sickness inducing kind of way. The upholstery fabrics should be durable, colour-fast and flame-resistant, but not harsh, slick or scratchy. The surfaces (counters and backsplashes) need to be smooth, waterproof, wipe-able and durable. Natural granite, reconstituted stone and Corian all work beautifully.

Lighting is another vital consideration. During the day it is best to have a room filled with natural light, while evening or nighttime illumination should include downlighting under cabinets and overhead lighting with dimmers to vary the ambience of the room. Brightness is needed for meals and low light for movie time. Flooring needs to be hard-wearing and able to withstand lots of traffic and frequent cleaning, but should also be soft underfoot and noise absorbent. Vinyl, linoleum or cork are often used, while laminate flooring that looks like wood is also popular and practical. Carpeting in cabin hallways helps to reduce noise still further.

By focusing on practicality and purpose, form and function with regard to crew space, designers can help find solutions that improve the working efficiency of a yacht and create an environment where both crew and guests can live happily on board. ■