

CPD: Making a plan

Getting started is often the most daunting part of a process

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A quick search reveals that *Seaways* has carried five articles on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) since the launch of the CPD Online scheme in June 2013, as well as devoting two issues of *The Navigator* to CPD issues.

I didn't want to repeat what has already been said, especially as members can access past articles easily through The Nautical Institute website and *Seaways* app – and they are worth a re-read if you are considering starting the formal process of planning, recording and reflecting upon the CPD that you are doing – but it is worth looking at the planning process in detail, as it is crucial to the success of your CPD.

And you are doing CPD, particularly if you are at sea maintaining a valid CoC. In fact, many seafarers feel that they don't need to take part in a formal process because they are always on some course or another. However, most of the courses that you are attending are to meet STCW requirements – and STCW is a set of *minimum* requirements. In order to develop the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that will enable you to be a good leader and competent professional, as well as a desirable employee in a competitive market, you will need to go beyond the minimum requirements. And that is why a formal process of CPD is so important, at all stages of your career.

CPD Online provides a formal process that is extremely flexible. The process asks you to make a plan, record how you enact the plan and then reflect on its effectiveness before beginning another phase of planning. It sets no requirements on how much time you should spend or what you should do. This is both very helpful and very daunting at the same time. STCW requirements are specific and need not be thought about – they are clearly set out and you must meet them. But how exactly do you make your own plan? Where do you look for information and ideas? How do you determine what you need and/or want to do?

The following sources might be consulted:

- STCW Tables (eg Table A-II/1 Mandatory minimum requirements for certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnage or more): use the tables to do a gap analysis of your current skills against your current ticket or the one you are aspiring to obtain.
- MGN69(M) Training and Certification Guidance – Part II Conduct of UK MCA Oral Examinations: has the syllabi for the oral examinations for all tickets issued by the MCA and can also be used to analyse gaps in your knowledge in your current position or for the position that you wish to progress to. Check your own flag website for a similar document.
- Your company SMS will have job descriptions for the various positions on your ship that can help you identify gaps in your own experience and knowledge.
- Your company Competence Management System (CMS) will have competency matrices that can help identify these gaps.
- The Nautical Institute website: refer to the Weblink Research Directory located in the CPD Online section for information about careers in the maritime industry and to the CPD Guidance documents for help with planning, recording and reflecting upon

your CPD activities, as well as *Seaways* and *The Navigator*.

- Feedback: formal feedback received in annual appraisals and informal received through debriefings after drills or incidents, etc.
- Industry publications: keep up-to-date with latest technological developments and training and certification requirements and use this information to help develop your CPD plan.
- Unions and professional bodies often supply publications to their members with information about training and career development.
- A mentor: a more experienced and qualified person can often assist you with advice and guidance.
- Self-evaluation and self-awareness: ask yourself where you want to be in 3/5/10 years' time? What are your strengths and weaknesses? How much time do you have available and how motivated are you?

Once you have done your research and know what it is you want to achieve, what are the steps that will allow you to do so? Will you need to take a structured course? Structured CPD has defined goals and objectives and you are assessed in some way to confirm that you have met them. Or will you be able to learn what you need to through a more unstructured process, for example through reading and self-study? Feedback from the President's Questionnaire revealed that the most popular CPD activity funded/facilitated by companies was education or training courses (52%) while the most popular self-funded CPD activity was technical reading, digital and print (42%). It was interesting to see that the second most popular (29%) form of self-funded CPD activity was education or training courses. This reflects the 67% of respondents who were intrinsically motivated to carry out CPD to develop as a professional person or to improve performance in their current role.

When you have decided the steps you need to take to achieve your goal, consider putting dates into your plan, both for reviewing progress toward your goal and for completing of that goal. For less structured CPD, consider how you will know if you have reached your goal. What criteria will need to be met for you to have succeeded?

I hope this has been helpful and that there will be many more of you willing to sit down and make your own CPD plans for the coming year. All seafarers know that any passage is safer, more efficient and undertaken with greater peace of mind, when you have a plan.

Next time we'll look at recording and reflecting upon CPD. In the meantime, please write to me at CPD@nautinst.org with any questions you have about CPD as well as examples of CPD that you have undertaken – a great course you took, an excellent book or article you read, an innovative drill you carried out, an example of mentoring or reverse mentoring, etc. 📧

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The Navigator

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Seaways

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- January 2015 CPD from the very start
- September 2014 Pursuing a dream through CPD
- July 2014 CPD – The professional imperative
- June 2013 CPD Online: The launch!