

# Making up the numbers

The oil and gas industry is booming. But it also faces a skills shortage that could jeopardise its development. **Hugh Williams**, chief executive of the International Marine Contractors Association, describes his association's efforts to ensure the good times continue.

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ONE ISSUE UNITES THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE: THE desperate need for new engineers and technicians to join its global workforce. The unprecedented boom in the industry is predicted to continue for some years yet, and this is one reason why new people are needed. Couple this with the fact that a great many of those in the existing workforce will retire in the next five to ten years, and we can all see that a recruitment programme is needed just to enable the industry to stand still, let alone feed the boom.

The objectives are startlingly simple. The industry needs to replace experienced personnel due to retire, bring in new entrants, locate 'returners' and those looking for a career change; and train new entrants to ensure safe and efficient project delivery. The challenge is huge. The global offshore industry must pull together to publicise the attractions of working in the offshore industry.

## Reducing the deficit

International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) figures indicate that:

- The industry will commission at least 50 new offshore construction vessels in the next two to three years.
- The drilling industry will commission about 40 more floating drilling rigs in the next three years.
- Around 100 new ROVs will be built.
- About ten new portable or modular saturation diving systems will come onto the market.
- New vessels and drill rigs will require some 2,000 additional watch-keepers.
- Increases in saturation diving will require some 800 additional personnel.
- Approximately 1,000 additional survey and inspection personnel will be required.
- The ROV spreads will require some 1,200 additional personnel.

These figures do not include the large numbers of additional air diving personnel, the many other deck, catering and ancillary crew or the onshore and engineering support personnel required to operate vessels. Neither do they include crewing and support for hundreds of new supply vessels, or take into account the number of people retiring from the industry. IMCA is now conducting a global

campaign to attract returners and newcomers to the industry. It is not alone in doing this. Individual companies, trade associations and professional bodies alike are engaged on the same task. With young people in mind, IMCA has just published *Open Your Horizons: Global Careers in Marine Contracting*, a colourful career brochure with an international outlook. Its message is that the industry can offer a career that combines travel, technology, good pay, safe working conditions, responsibility and opportunity.

## Career advice

For many years IMCA has provided careers information, and helped schools and colleges develop syllabi that deliver people ready to enter the industry. It has also developed an important competence framework for those in the industry to develop and progress, promoted training and certification schemes, and encouraged training establishments and personnel agencies to work together with vessel operating contractor members for mutual benefit. In addition, IMCA will be taking an active part in the Education Day at Offshore Europe in September. And it has a recruitment page on its website linking to members' recruitment pages. Most importantly, it has shared its concerns and is pooling its efforts with others in the industry to try to improve recruitment. Rising to the challenge of skills shortages globally is key to the ongoing success of this vital industry. ●

## ORGANISATION PROFILE

The International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) – [www.imca-int.com](http://www.imca-int.com) – represents some 390 offshore, marine and underwater engineering companies in 47 countries.

IMCA promotes improvements in quality, health, safety, and environmental and technical standards, through the publication of guidance and information notes and codes of practice. IMCA's career information can be found at [www.imca-int.com/careers](http://www.imca-int.com/careers).

## INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

For offshore recruitment advice and jobs, visit our new Industry Appointments website: [www.industryappointments.com/wex](http://www.industryappointments.com/wex)