

SAFETY TALK



ROLL-OUT OF NINA MEANS OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



01 END OF THE NINA SESSION ON THE TRANSSHelf Senior SHE-Q engineer Svetlana Pritula surrounded by the crew of the Dockwise vessel, the Transshelf.

'NINA was developed by Boskalis in the Netherlands and it is based on Dutch culture. Since NINA was introduced, we have found out that talking to each other about conduct in other cultures is not always straightforward,' says Wilko Bardelmeijer, NINA program leader. 'As a result we decided, before the current roll-out of NINA at SMIT Salvage (Singapore) and on the Dockwise vessels, to take another close look at how the courses are designed and implemented. Representatives from the SHE-Q department conducted interviews with office and fleet colleagues in places including Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Riga so as to get a good picture of the dilemmas colleagues face during the course of their work. We called in a graduate student to draw up a review of the main cultural differences on the basis of interviews with the crews and scientific literature in this area.'

SHARED JOURNEY

Raymond Kershaw, lead SHE-Q engineer at the Offshore Energy division, was involved from the outset with the introduction of NINA on the Dockwise vessels. 'We invested a lot of time and energy in working with the different nationalities on board and in

translating the program into Russian because not all members of the crew speak English. Most of the crew come from Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, while others are from Lithuania and Estonia, but the majority speak Russian,' he says. 'To improve the effectiveness of the courses, that is now the language we use. We introduced three Russian trainers to all the ins and outs of the NINA program, and one of our Russian SHE-Q engineers was closely involved in training on the vessels.' Raymond points out that the level of safety awareness on the Dockwise fleet is very high. 'People are used to talking to one another about technical issues but feedback in both directions in hierarchical cultures is something that requires a lot of attention. During the sessions with the fleet staff, we talked to the captains about the important role they have to play in this process. If the highest-ranking person on board makes a particular decision, everybody else will tend to follow. To prevent conflicts, we decided to take an extensive look at the topic of feedback in small groups and to help the captains to determine their own positions in this respect. Obviously, a single kick-off session isn't enough to break down every ingrained habit,' he says. 'That is why we organize

The introduction of NINA is in full swing at the Offshore Energy division and at Salvage. At the Offshore Energy Division, the office staff, almost all of the fleet staff and half of the mostly foreign crews of the Dockwise vessels have already been introduced to NINA. The main challenges relate to overcoming language barriers and cultural differences.

regular refresher sessions. Changing culture and behavior takes time. The essential point is that this is a shared journey on the road to the desired destination.'

FORM AND CONTENT

Senior SHE-Q engineer Svetlana Pritula has been working for Boskalis since 2008, initially on projects in St. Petersburg and Sochi, and later on projects in Indonesia and Singapore. She is now involved as a trainer in the roll-out of NINA on the Dockwise vessels. 'Clients in the offshore industry focus on safety regulations and procedures,' says Svetlana. 'The risk is that employees might just obey the rules without thinking. NINA strives to ensure that our colleagues are aware of the thinking behind the rules. Once they understand that, they will be more likely to work safely and sensibly.' In addition to the language barrier, Svetlana thinks the cultural differences are the main challenge. 'Balts and Russians knock on a manager's door and wait politely to be called in,' is one example she mentions. 'The Dutch are not used to mincing words. They communicate directly. In other cultures, that can feel blunt or rude. So when a Dutch person raises an issue, he may not understand why a colleague from another culture doesn't respond as expected. It's not impossible that the colleague will be unhappy with how the point has been brought up, and he may not focus on the actual issue as a result. People may not listen if they think they are being treated rudely.'

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES

'In our sessions, we try to bridge cultural differences of this kind,' continues Svetlana. 'We explain as clearly as possible why Boskalis thinks feedback, sharing experience and exchanging ideas are important. Our professional trainers use games, storytelling and role-play to help the crews see things from the perspective of others. Not only does

that produce new insights, it also helps to create an open atmosphere and the team spirit needed to stand up for each other and work safely as a result,' she says. 'It is important for the crew to know that the officers really are supportive. We have now got to that point and so I'm confident in saying that we are making genuine progress. It is nice to see how the NINA philosophy is welcomed by the fleet.'

MIXED COMPANY

NINA start-up meetings are now being organized on all the projects involving the Dockwise vessels. In early June, there will be the load-out and transport from South Korea of a topside module for the Hebron project in Canada. Allard Leertouwer, SHE-Q coordinator at the Offshore Energy division, organized start-up sessions in Ulsan for all the parties concerned. 'In cultural terms, this is a very mixed company,' says Allard. 'The end customer is ExxonMobil and another American company, WorleyParsons, will be responsible for operational management. We will also be working with the South Korean company Hyundai, who built the platform, an Italian load-out operator, and with our colleagues from the Offshore Energy division and the crews of the Dockwise vessels. Our main aim during these start-up sessions is to optimize communications between everybody concerned. That is needed to prevent possible misunderstandings and unsafe situations.'

GETTING CONNECTED

'Of course, we describe the background to NINA and discuss how NINA can be introduced on the project. An important objective is to make agreements about dealing with unforeseen circumstances. That means that everybody involved has to be able to work together quickly during the operations,' continues Allard. 'So getting connected is central. We give all the participants an

'IT IS NICE TO SEE HOW THE NINA PHILOSOPHY IS WELCOMED BY THE FLEET.'

SVETLANA PRITULA, SENIOR SHE-Q ENGINEER

opportunity to get to know each other, for example by asking everyone to show on a map of the world where they come from, and to tell each other something about themselves. That breaks the ice.' Allard points out that differences in language and culture also played a major role during the sessions in South Korea. Given the limited English of the Korean participants, interpreters and translators were called in. The NINA Values & Rules had already been translated into Korean for the Songdo project. 'We focused very much on feedback because that is something that not many Koreans are used to,' explains Allard. 'Managers and older people receive almost automatic respect in the Korean culture and that can be an obstacle in terms of generating feedback. During the sessions, we emphasize that NINA is precisely about expressing your own opinion. We managed to achieve successes in that area by giving practical tips and by encouraging informal contacts.'

➤ For more information: send an e-mail to wilko.bardelmeijer@boskalis.com, raymond.kershaw@boskalis.com, svetlana.pritula@boskalis.com or allard.leertouwer@boskalis.com