

## Highland Maritime: Shipmanagement with a smile

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Thailand is often referred to as the Land of Smiles. For Thais, this sign of happiness has more meaning than anywhere else – there are actually 13 different identified types of smile in the Southeast Asian kingdom. The facial characteristic has also been adopted by one local shipmanager for its tagline: We Manage ... You Smile!

At Highland Maritime, there is a great emphasis placed on the advantages Thais have when it comes to the art of shipmanagement.

Andrew Airey, managing director of the 10-year-old company, worked at Thai shipping line Thoresen for 12 years before founding Highland in Bangkok in 2009, the name a nod to his own Scottish background.

“Having lived in Thailand and worked with Thai maritime staff for over 20 years, throughout all the extreme worldwide shipping cycles, I came to trust their hard work, dedication, loyalty, knowledge, experience, innovation and always a smile no matter the challenge,” Airey tells Maritime CEO.

Maritime colleges and campuses have developed tremendously in recent years in Thailand, backed by strong government focus on developing locals for international seafaring careers.

“As Thai crew’s English language capabilities continue to improve, combined with their great attitude, ability and loyalty, they are now in my experience, the best value maritime staff anywhere in the world today,” Airey argues.

The “Highland/Thailand” advantages, as described by Airey, are down to the fact his staff are single nationality, young and energetic. There is also the advantage of working in a low overhead location compared to many other big names in shipmanagement around the world.

Highland currently has 27 vessels on its books, nine under full crew and technical management and 18 with crew-only contracts. The medium-term business goal sets a target of 50 ships.

Airey was brought up very much in a shipping household. His father, four brothers and a nephew all took shipping careers.

Airey was educated at Leith Nautical College and Strathclyde University before working his way from cadet to master during a 21-year stint with Ben Line.

“My focus, instilled in me by my father, has always been to carry cargo across the oceans of the world in the best possible way,” Airey says with a smile.

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