

An ASM publication

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30 Cecil Street, #19-08 Prudential Tower
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Design: Mixa Liu

Printers: Allion Printing, Hong Kong

Subscriptions: A \$120 subscription is charged
for 2020's four issues of Maritime CEO magazine.
Email sales@asiashippingmedia.com for
subscription enquiries.

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Seafarers deserve a better package

We all talk about how the world might emerge from Covid-19 as a nicer place, how those who have worked so hard to ensure our lives can carry on ought to be rewarded. In shipping, of course, this would mean reviewing how we treat seafarers, the men and women who have worked tirelessly all year to deliver goods, working well beyond their contracts stipulate, often at great expense to their own mental wellbeing.

I was genuinely heartened then to hear recently that top management at Columbia Shipmanagement (CSM) has come good on a promise to lead shipping to review how it handles benefits for its employees at sea, an overlooked part of the industry for decades.

Claiming an industry first this November, CSM debuted ColumbiaCrewCare, a benefits package which offers seafarers life insurance and an investment plan for medical costs, disability provision, pension planning, or house/car purchase – all from a starting cost of €1 per day.

“When it comes to caring about our seafarers, we wanted to demonstrate real commitment and walking the walk as opposed to just talking about care,” commented Norman

Schmiedl, group director of crewing at CSM.

“Crew need to no longer feel invisible. Their welfare is very much in our sights and our number one focus,” said Mark O’Neil, president and CEO of CSM, who has also just been elected of president of InterManager.

Speaking with Splash TV in May O’Neil highlighted how important it was that shipping reviewed its benefits packages – or the lack thereof – for seafarers.

“It’s time for the employers within the shipping industry to look at the benefits which they afford their crews. The crews have been at the forefront of this Covid-19 battle. It is now time to look again at the whole question of crew benefits. Is a crewmember, an able bodied seaman entitled to the most basic health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, pension provisions?” O’Neil mused in a shipmanagement special episode of the TV series.

“Crew need to no longer feel invisible”

It’s a great, worthy initiative from O’Neil and CSM. Who will be bold enough to follow? ●

Crew abandonment 1800s

