

A PARTNERSHIP THAT PAYS OFF

Sea-Land Service, Inc., and the United States Merchant Marine Academy

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Organizations are changing the way they do business—evolving from past practices toward new processes, organizations, and relationships. Necessitated by rapid growth in global competition, radically changing information technology, and furious competition, these transformations can be seen in both the public and private sectors.

One successful example of the new relationships is that between the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) and Sea-Land Service, Inc. This symbiotic relationship goes beyond the traditional supplier-consumer model to form a nontraditional partnership that provides benefits for both organizations, leveraging the competencies of each to mutual advantage.

Sea-Land is an international ocean container shipping company based in Charlotte, North Carolina, that employs more than 9,000 associates worldwide. A pioneer in ocean container shipping during the 1950s and 1960s, Sea-Land today serves 120 ports in 80 countries with a fleet of more than 100 vessels. The company manages some 216,000 containers that move approximately 1.8 million revenue loads annually. As a wholly owned subsidiary of CSX Corporation, Sea-Land has joined with other business units operated by the parent company to develop a fully integrated global distribution system that provides high-quality end-to-end service for its customers.

USMMA, located in Kings Point, New York, has been engaged in the education and training of merchant marine officers since 1942. During that time the Academy has established a global reputation for the quality and rigor of its programs. The federal government's purpose in operating the institution is to produce officers and leaders who are "dedicated to serving the economic and defense interests of the United States... and who will contribute to an intermodal transportation system that effectively ties America together." Maintained by the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Maritime Administration, the Academy produces graduates

who receive a bachelor of science degree, a U.S. Coast Guard license as third mate or third assistant engineer, and a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Many USMMA graduates go on to become prominent decision makers in the nation's commercial and military transportation organizations.

During the course of their respective histories, a strong collaboration has developed between Sea-Land and USMMA that has been of immeasurable benefit to both. Today, modernization of the Academy's academic curriculum and related programs is providing new opportunities for the expansion of this partnership.

Curriculum Development

Dramatic changes in the nature of maritime transportation have driven the recent creation at USMMA of a formal program and academic major in logistics and intermodal transportation. Although this focus has been a component of education at the Academy for some years, the school's constituents in industry, government, and the military have indicated the need for an expanded emphasis on systems thinking and an understanding of the larger logistics and transportation context in which maritime and port operations take place.

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Sea-Land is the largest U.S.-based ocean carrier and a leader in the global shipping industry.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduates are the product of a demanding education and a rigorous system of regimental training.



Sea-Land Service, Inc., as a leader in the industry, has not only worked to articulate the employer's perspective for the Academy, but also provided direct contributions to the structure and content of the program. Furthermore, the firm has participated in a needs assessment undertaken by the Academy, intended to identify the requirements of industry with respect to the knowledge and competencies expected of USMMA graduates entering the field. In addition, Sea-Land executives who are graduates of the Academy have been active in the Vision 2000 Committee established by the USMMA Alumni Association to provide advice and support to the Academy in several areas, one of which is academic programs and curriculum development.

Case Study Development Project

A key theme that emerged during the Transportation Research Board's 1997 National Conference on Intermodal Transportation Education and Training was the need for more collaborative educational efforts among industry, government, and academe. Immediately after the conference, Sea-Land and USMMA began to explore new ideas for joint efforts. These discussions led to a proposal that the two organizations engage in the joint development of business case studies that would be useful both

in the logistics and transportation education offered at USMMA and in the management education provided at Sea-Land. Case-based educational activities have long been used as an integral tool for management training. Providing real-world cases serves as a stimulus for meaningful discussions while encouraging innovation and creative problem solving. It was determined that coauthored narrative case studies based on current managerial/operational issues within Sea-Land could be leveraged widely in both organizations, and work began on implementing the concept.

Support for the case study development concept proved to be strong within both organizations. A joint team was subsequently formed, whose members include several Sea-Land managers with specific expertise in such areas as information management, global intermodal systems, and refrigerated cargo management. Early discussions within the team focused on identifying viable topics for case study development, establishing the structure and parameters of the proposed case studies, and determining the most effective approaches to management of the project.

A variety of potential topics were explored, including imbalances in refrigerated cargo flows, data sharing, vessel capacity planning, industry dynamics in the context of carrier rates, and equipment management. The subject of equipment management ultimately served as the basis for the team's prototype case study.

Analysis of the initial case study, "Chassis Management," is now part of the curriculum for midshipmen enrolled in an elective course on Advanced Intermodal and Port Operations at USMMA. For purposes of this analysis, midshipmen are organized into groups of four to five members each, replicating the prevailing practice within industry whereby teams are formed to deal with managerial problems and challenges of the sort posed by this case. A Sea-Land manager recently attended and critiqued midshipman presentations of the "Chassis Management" case.

Seminars and Guest Lectures

Sea-Land personnel regularly visit USMMA to participate in seminars, deliver guest lectures to midshipmen, and serve as instructors for the Academy's continuing education courses. For example, Sea-Land executives helped plan and stage a 1995 seminar on intermodal transportation. At this seminar, the majority of the Regiment of Midshipmen had the opportunity to hear senior Sea-Land personnel and other industry representatives discuss the state of the intermodal industry and prospects for careers in this field.

Sea-Land managers and executives have also figured prominently in the delivery of professional education at USMMA through the school's continuing education program. Offerings such as a 2-week course in Strategic Intermodal Transportation regularly utilize Sea-Land personnel as instructors.

Workshops in Communication and Interviewing Skills

One of the enablers of this successful partnership has been each partner's ability to offer key services that benefit both organizations. In 1996 and 1997, Sea-Land sent human resources professionals to USMMA to offer a series of workshops in communication and interviewing, focused on communication skills, résumé preparation, and networking/employment search strategies. While the benefit to the participating midshipmen is apparent, the gain for Sea-Land emerged in a more subtle fashion. Because midshipmen who completed the workshops were better prepared to articulate their skills and ambitions during interviews, Sea-Land was better able to match the right candidate to the right opportunity, thus minimizing the risk of failure and additional recruitment expense.

Shipboard Training

An important dimension of education and training at USMMA is the period of approximately 300 days spent at sea by midshipmen as deck or engine cadets aboard operating merchant ships. While at sea as cadets, midshipmen typically assist in the operation of the vessels to which they are assigned, performing such diverse tasks as conducting spare parts inventories, standing watch with licensed officers, and assisting in machinery or equipment repair. Midshipmen are tasked by the Academy with the completion of several demanding Sea Projects. These projects require documentation of cadets' participation in the navigation, cargo, and/or engineering operations of the vessels on which they sail, as well as the acquisition of detailed information pertaining to the ships, their crews, and the ports at which they call. Ship's officers and other vessel personnel are a crucial resource for midshipmen working on these projects.

This unique and pivotal component of the USMMA experience relies heavily on vessels of the Sea-Land fleet. A conservative estimate from the Academy's Department of Shipboard Training is that more than 50 percent of USMMA midshipmen serve some part of their Sea Year aboard vessels operated by Sea-Land.

Sea-Land Hong Kong Internship Experience

EMMA WILSON

Having the opportunity to work overseas before one has even begun one's career is uncommon for most undergraduate students in this country. Fortunately for me, through the relationship between the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and Sea-Land, I was able to spend my 6-week internship participating in what I call a "miniature management training program" with Sea-Land's Hong Kong office.

Organized by Sea-Land's then Vice President for Central Asia Edward W. Aldridge, this program gave me a chance not only to be immersed in the culture of one of the major global centers of commerce, but also to gain invaluable experience in the world's busiest container port. During the internship, I was exposed to all major facets of the Hong Kong operation, including terminal operations, logistics, engineering/maintenance, sales and marketing, yield management, and documentation. I observed the operations of Sea-Land's third-party logistics provider, Buyers Consolidators (since renamed Sea-Land Logistics). I was also given the opportunity to travel to Shanghai to learn about Sea-Land's extensive China network. Every day presented another experience from which to learn about the industry—from making sales calls over dim sum, to riding in gantry cranes, to making cargo deliveries with truck drivers or checking containers at the gate. Though I was not aware of it at the time, my internship also provided an invaluable introduction to the career I have now begun at Sea-Land.

Following graduation from USMMA in June 1997, I joined Sea-Land's 18-month management training program. Much like my Hong Kong internship, this program provides opportunities at various locations to learn Sea-Land's business through direct experience. An initial 8 months of terminal operations training serves as the foundation for the remaining segments in customer service, documentation/network operations, and sales, as well as a stint at Corporate Headquarters.

The knowledge and perspective I have acquired as a result of the Academy's relationship with Sea-Land are evidence of a strong and effective partnership between two organizations that emphasize the development of leaders through hands-on responsibility and immediate operational experience.

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Internships

In addition to their Sea Year, midshipmen enrolled at the Academy spend 2–6 weeks as interns in a wide variety of transportation-related government, military, and commercial organizations. Sea-Land offers many USMMA students the opportunity to acquire direct experience in terminal operations, inland operations, ocean carrier management, and other aspects of the firm's multifaceted activities.

Implications for Sea-Land

The collaboration between Sea-Land and USMMA provides direct value to the firm. Recruitment is

Malcom P. McLean, founding father of the container revolution and Sea-Land Service, Inc., meets with U.S. Merchant Marine Academy midshipmen.



probably the major benefit. The company needs a constant source of bright and capable candidates to fill entry-level positions throughout its global organization. The education provided by USMMA fosters a quick transition into Sea-Land's workplace. Having focused much of their study on logistics, intermodal transportation, and related issues, Academy graduates have consistently been high performers when placed in Sea-Land positions. More than 4 percent of Sea-Land's current workforce has come from maritime schools—the majority from USMMA.

Meredith Neizer, as an example, graduated from USMMA in 1978. She held various positions at Exxon, the Commission of White House Fellows, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey before joining Sea-Land in 1990. While with Exxon, Neizer continued her studies at Stanford University, graduating with an MBA. Currently with Sea-Land, she serves as Country Manager for the Philippines. In that position, she is responsible for all commercial and operational activities in this strategic Southeast Asian location.

Implications for USMMA

From the USMMA perspective, it would be difficult to overstate the value and significance of the relationship between the Academy and Sea-Land Service, Inc. Internship, Sea Year, and employment placement statistics underscore the direct and pivotal interconnection between the two organizations. Involvement of Sea-Land leaders in the Academy's curriculum development process ensures that the institution's programs are precisely and appropri-

ately targeted and of added value for the industry. Experienced Sea-Land personnel, serving as guest lecturers and seminar participants, offer USMMA midshipmen insight into leading-edge industry practices. Contributions of the firm to the refinement of midshipman job skills through workshops and special seminars help guarantee that Academy graduates will continue to be the most effective possible leaders. The current joint development of case studies based on Sea-Land experiences generates challenging analytical tasks modeled directly on real-world issues.

These partnership activities also directly support USMMA efforts to fulfill the objectives of the Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Futures Program, Secretary of Transportation Rodney E. Slater's initiative to ensure the availability of a well-educated and fully qualified workforce for the 21st-century transportation system (see article by Coyner in this issue). A key tenet of that program, in which the Academy plays an important role, is the need for the development of synergistic relationships among industry, government, and academe.

Conclusion and Future Prospects

In today's rapidly changing transportation and logistics environment, nontraditional relationships are playing a greater role in the way work gets done. Sea-Land and USMMA have extended their relationship into new dimensions that are providing much-needed knowledge and skill to both organizations.

In the future, several possibilities for expanding the collaboration can be explored. Among these new possibilities are faculty "externships," in which Academy professors might serve a period as visiting managers at Sea-Land; visiting professorships, in which senior Sea-Land personnel could spend a term at USMMA as "executives in residence"; enhanced and extended internships for midshipmen; collaborative research projects on emerging technological and management issues; and institutionalization of the job skills seminars previously offered at the Academy by Sea-Land human resources professionals.

Put simply, the value of this relationship to Sea-Land is a dependable pipeline of new talent to meet future workforce needs. The Academy's reward is staying closely connected to the realities of global commerce and ocean transportation. This is a partnership between industry and academe that clearly pays off.