

# Why Land Based Employers Fail to Understand Cruise Ship Employees

Every day crew members who have spent years working on ships enter the job market seeking employment on land. Many of them find it very challenging to land a jobs in similar position that they held onboard ships. Crew members often spend months attempting to find employment on land and eventually cave in, taking jobs they are seriously overqualified for that pays no better than the positions they held on ships before.



## So why is it such a challenge for former cruise employees to find employment on land?

The answer lies in the knowledge the potential employer has of the cruise industry and employment practices. Employers who have not previously worked on ships themselves have virtually no knowledge of what employees do onboard. Their knowledge extends to the cruise vacations they imagine taking. Therein lies the challenge that crew members encounter when seeking jobs.

No place is this more evident than in the hotel industry. If I had a nickel for every time I heard a from a crew member who couldn't find a job in the hotel industry after leaving ships other than an entry level position. There are exceptions however, Managers in high-level positions like Guest Relations, Human Resources, Hotel Director, and Food & Beverage Managers won't encounter these kind of challenges.

## So what can a former cruise employee do to educate future employers as to why they are more qualified than most other candidates for higher level jobs?

- Show the employer your previous job descriptions
- Show them your KPI's
- Give them your performance appraisals
- Find articles that accurately describe what employment on ships is like
- Get references from within the cruise industry
- Reference how you overcame the most challenging problems you encountered on ships that make similar challenges on land extremely simple

- Explain how crew members often have multiple jobs

**If you are an employer/recruiter and you are not familiar with the operation on a luxury ocean liner, here are some examples why a crew member who has worked on ships may be your best possible candidate:**

- Failure is not an option. There is no room for failure when dealing with passengers. They aren't going anywhere, passengers can spend anywhere from 3 days to 100 days on a cruise and every day is a new opportunity.
- We eat challenges for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Crewmembers are no stranger to challenges. They overcome them routinely. Could you think of any hotel that could check out and check in 1000 guests or more within less than 10 hours, re set all restaurants and bar and a take a full provisioning for 14 days, at the very same time?
- Can you work long hours? Crew are accustomed to early mornings and late nights, and even when you're off, you're not really off because you must always be on call for emergencies.
- Time Changes are part of daily life for crewmembers. Imagine having to wake up an hour earlier each day for 5 days in a row, that's the norm for crew.
- Can you handle multiple roles? Crew often hold multiple positions. Usually they have their main job, then their emergency job, and quite possibly other responsibilities.
- Are you available to work weekends & holidays? Crewmembers rarely get a full day off during their contracts that last anywhere from 4-10 months depending on their positions.
- Are you available to relocate? They have been working on ships for years. They sleep at a constant 20knots.
- Can you multitask? A crewmember's life is nothing but multitasking in fast paced environments that require quick thinking and effective solutions.
- Are you a Leader? You have to be a leader to succeed on ships and most cruise lines spend time and money training crew to become leaders. They also spend time continually developing their leaders and looking for way to improve them.
- Are you a Team player? No one crew member can run the operation on a ship on their own. It requires teamwork to be effective. There are often 30 or more different nationalities working on board, so if you require someone with an international experience, only a very few people are more diverse than a person who has worked on a cruise ship.
- People working on ships spend months in much narrowed spaces. Meaning your colleagues are also your family and friends when you are not on duty. Many crewmembers have great listening skills with an even greater anticipation of others needs and challenges.

There are many reasons why crew members are more qualified than most applicants when applying for positions on land, but employers need to see beyond the common misconceptions of working on ships and research what life is like in the cruise industry before jumping to conclusions. Former crew members must also share their experiences with future employers. Don't expect the employer to have any idea of what it's like to work onboard or do your job. Finally, cruise lines need to make more of an effort informing the rest of the hotel industry why their employees are more than qualified to tackle anything that comes their way.