In the industry, the size of the labour market is highly competitive as there are more applicants than vacancies available. Those who are skilled in managing the regulatory framework for training and certification of seafarers under the STCW-95 convention. Training varies from routine work or from their colleagues. However, both ways offer an excellent opportunity for continuous learning. Seafarers are also advised to make themselves familiar and learn from the educational resources that may be available aboard. This may take the form of manuals, procedure guides, publications, videos and computer-based programmes.

The next question after obtaining training qualifications is to find a good employer. Many seafarers work for substandard companies simply because they don’t know how to seize the opportunities or find reputable employers. Sending poorly written CVs and applications is the best way to go unnoticed. There are many books published on the subject of writing CVs and information can also be found on the internet. Applying for jobs with the largest companies simply is equally ineffective. Even the best written CV is worthless if there is no interest in the job.

To summarise, the prudent seafarer needs to have in place a strategy which will allow him or her to become more employable and attractive to first-class employers and cope in a fiercely competitive market. The best way forward for seafarers is to embark on a programme of continuous self-motivated training in the workplace and by attending relevant courses and training which will set them above thousands of other seafarers worldwide. Regardless of the outlook for 2003 and beyond, the long-term problem in the industry is skill and quality as opposed to quantity. Employers need to always exist for those who are prepared to build up a solid training and skills portfolio.