

WORLD MARITIME SEAFARER PROFILES



NAME: **YRHEN BERNARD
SABANAL BALINIS**

JOB TITLE: **ORDINARY SEAFARER**

What aspect of your job do you most enjoy?

No two days are ever the same in this profession. The uncertainty of what tomorrow will bring; the thrill of surprises waiting on a brand new day— those are the things that draw me back to the oceans. Let's be honest: life at sea is not always smooth sailing. There will be days that the seas will be rough, the tasks will be tedious, you will be engulfed by loneliness and you will question why did you even choose this profession. But even then— especially then—remember why you started, bear in mind the people who need you, and pat yourself on the back.

What do you think will be the long-term impact of automation on seafarers?

Inevitably, there will be fewer people crewing vessels. Just as how radio operators have been replaced, soon crews, officers or engineers whose jobs are redundant and can be automated will likely be replaced by machines. It will force us to be more digitally-versed. We now have to learn not only maritime communication phrases but also coding language. The challenge therefore is: how do we keep ourselves employable? The answer lies in our ability to learn new skills that cannot easily be automated. From the top of my head, I'll say communication, creativity and interpersonal skills.

How can we help the new generation of seafarers navigate the challenges of digitalization?

Seafarers must be technologically savvy if they want to thrive in the new era of shipping. We, the new generation, grew up tinkering not only with hand tools but also programmes and software. We just need a little bit of further training and education and we can join in revolutionizing the industry for the better! To have competent officers capable of crewing the ships of tomorrow, we first have to level up the quality of our education system and adapt it to the changing times. While it is true that the foundation and principles need to be taught, they also need to teach modern technologies available on board now and in the foreseeable future.

What do you want for the future of shipping?

I often envisage that ships will be operated from shore with screens providing the view from the bridge. I guess I watched too many sci-fi movies! But if one day that vision materializes, and we may not be far from it, we will need competent officers and crew who are not just technically-adept but are also technologically proficient. We need to make the industry attractive to new entrants and advocate for a fairer future for them! I firmly believe that we, the next generation of maritime professionals, will soon be the primary drivers in moving the industry onwards.

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