



Getting into Top Gear on the high seas Preparing the next generation of Sales Directors

A Merry Marine Case Study

Lex is a progressive contract leasing company with over 40 years experience of providing vehicle management solutions to corporate and private customers. Its position as the UK's largest vehicle leasing company is maintained in no small part due to the importance it places on developing the best people.



Inspirations Learning and Development Limited has designed *Top Gear* as Lex's development programme aimed at preparing the very best sales directors. *Top Gear* is a 4 stage development programme which covers all aspects of leadership and personal effectiveness. The participants undergo a rigorous development centre to assess their suitability for the programme and upon completion, are expected to be able to rise to the challenge of leading a top-flight sales organisation.

Inspirations needed a high-impact and unforgettable experience to anchor the team's development experience – here's how it was achieved...

Merry Marine was engaged to provide a two and a half day sailing event to help consolidate and reinforce the leadership concepts that the candidates had been exposed to during the *Top Gear* programme.

After a careful assessment of both Lex's and Inspirations' needs, we chose Mallorca to stage the sailing event. The opportunity to experience Mallorca from the water provides an alternative and very stylish window on this beautiful island; an aspect that would fit in well with this very high profile programme – and also bring an element of recognition to the high achieving team. For the team – four candidates, the business sponsor and the *Inspirations* consultant (who all had virtually no sailing experience before the event) we chose a 44' Hunter Legend sailing yacht – an American design with all mod cons – this boat even boasted air conditioning!

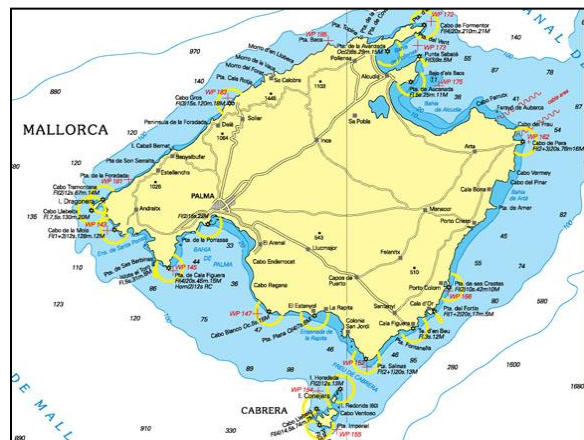
The team arrived in Palma late Monday morning following an early flight from Gatwick. After the boat safety briefing, the crew started



getting used to their new environment during a gentle motor to the anchorage of Las Illetas, a half hour south-west of Palma. Here, the team had the chance to wash off some of its travel weariness by taking a quick swim before lunch. Lunch was followed by a briefing on the event and a 'workshop' review of topics from earlier parts of the programme.

The afternoon was spent undertaking basic instruction on how to sail the boat. During this very new learning experience, the team was able to refer to some of the personality profiling and leadership themes that they have covered throughout the *Top Gear* programme. The team was also introduced to basic navigation and other nautical elements that would be needed in the challenges of the following two days.

The evening's berth was at the exclusive Marina of Puerto Portals, where the team did their second workshop session amidst the Superyachts that cruise the Mediterranean. Dinner was taken at El Bistro de Tristan, one of Portals' many fine restaurants. During dinner, the candidates were introduced to the sailing tasks they would be expected to complete over the next two days.



Tuesday morning saw the first opportunity for the team to put its new found sailing skills to use in the

completion of Merry Marine's original *Flashlight Challenge™* activity. This is a sailing exercise in which points are scored en-route to a given final destination. We set complex "business" rules, from which the team decides the route to take and success is achieved by simulating the business processes of:

- Setting a shared vision
- Setting Strategy
- Having clear objectives and goals
- Having role clarity
- Planning well
- Managing effectively
- Strong Teamwork
- Clear Communications
- Monitoring progress and success criteria
- Adapting tactics (and sometimes strategy) to cater for unplanned events and conditions.

Each candidate was given the opportunity to lead one of the four challenges completed during the event. During the challenges, the team was encouraged to observe and experiment with behaviours and leadership concepts that the *Top Gear* programme had introduced them to.



A swim, lunch and more workshop activity while anchored at Portals Vells was followed by the second challenge -

and as the team was now becoming more adept at the challenge and familiar with the rules, the challenge was made progressively more difficult, this time focussing on a tighter tolerance in achieving milestones.

The evening's stop was at the beautiful port of Andraitx on the west coast of Mallorca. Another workshop session was followed by dinner at a traditional Mallorcan restaurant located on Andraitx's spectacular waterfront.

Wednesday started with an increasingly difficult *Flashlight Challenge™*. This time, leadership and team working skills were tested by the inclusion of tight deadlines and simulated mechanical failures on the yacht.

The final challenge started as soon as the previous one finished and in line with the increasing difficulty of the challenges, pressure was put on this session's leader to make an instant decision that would impact the

morale of the crew. Combined with further simulated mechanical failure and a 'man overboard' simulation, the event ended in one of the most demanding challenges we have run.



During the final event review session, the team reflected on how well the experience gave them the opportunity to practice, demonstrate and observe leadership behaviours in a real, challenging and most enjoyable environment.

"A fabulous experience. The learning from both a leadership and nautical perspective will stay with them for a lifetime. You can't ask for more than that"

Penny Le Besque

Director, Inspirations Learning & Development



Lex is the leading contract hire company in the UK, with extensive experience in providing award winning, bespoke fleet solutions.

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Inspirations Learning & Development specialise in people development, providing: design and delivery of training programmes, learning and development consultancy and a wide range of management development support services.

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Merry Marine provides leadership and team development services and specialises in using offshore sailing as a real and challenging environment to reinforce concepts in leadership and management. In conjunction with associated business psychologists and organisational development specialists, we also provide a full range of organisational and people development services.



www.merrymarine.com

+44 (0771) 500 5323

info@merrymarine.com