

## The Marine Surveyor: Distance Learning: Establishing and Enhancing Education

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### White Paper Memo

*Over and over again, peers and colleagues and our surveyors' potential customers tell us that they don't care how a skilled and knowledgeable marine surveyor became skilled and knowledgeable, they just want a skilled and knowledgeable marine surveyor.*

Distance learning in some form has been the stepchild of more traditional classroom education for over 300 years. Abraham Lincoln took mail order legal instruction during his years in the backwoods. Benjamin Franklin corresponded with anyone who would ask and published how to make things in his early newspapers. Learning across time and space has many configurations now that technology has advanced far enough into the future. Do you remember when we were all talking about how computers would change the face of education? For those of us who can recall mail order courses, correspondence training now goes by many names and techniques: Book study with open book exams, online learning, distance learning, self-study, cyber study, web based research, web based classes.

Distance learning and self-study are now an integral part of all marine training. In a global economy and a knowledge based business world, Self-study is self-power. Over and over again, peers and colleagues and our surveyors' potential customers tell us that they don't care how a skilled and knowledgeable marine surveyor became skilled and knowledgeable, they just want a skilled and knowledgeable marine surveyor. Distance learning is well suited to this niche profession

Every student always asks the same question. "How long is this course?" The answer not just for our courses but for every correspondence based training is that it depends on the student. The gift of distance learning is that the learning becomes unfixed to a date certain and a time restriction. Take your time, speed it up, wait, hurry. The configuration of distance learning is that time, distance, and availability become the charge, responsibility and authority of the student. Marine surveying is, by nature, a self-directed profession. Furthermore, for every learning style, for every reading or comprehension problem, having the required materials in front of the student, without the authority of "the other" gives the student more autonomy and flexibility in how to earn the diploma or certificate. No deadlines, no risk of failure, marine surveying skills are powerful and autonomous.

All learning requires motivation, time, and course availability. The student becomes the all-important self-teacher and gradually assumes the crucial role of facilitating the financing and insuring requirements for boats. Maritime distance learning focuses on the goal and not necessarily the process because most marine surveyors already have the boating experience and want and need to prove it.

The marine industry, in fact, all maritime professions, are broad and encompassing. The truth is that over 75% of skilled and experience mariners learned their particular trade or niche skill by DOING. In doing they have gained valuable experience. The jobs are so varied that not one certificate or diploma could possibly encompass this broad based knowledge. For those pedagogical skeptics, the naysayers who believe that "you can't just call yourself" a marine surveyor—we agree. However, with the proper codification and thought processes, an experienced boater or maritime professional can realign their experience into a worthwhile and needed profession. The advantage of distance training in the maritime industry are many. Correspondence, web based and distance training all provides

- Critical time to think, reflect, mine and cull prior experience to application skills
- Allows for learner interest level exploration and skill level determined by the learner.
- Turns highly experienced mariners into LIFETIME learners.