

## ETO /AVIT ENGINEER OR SHORE SIDE SUPPORT COMPANY?

Robertson ETO's delves deeper into this interesting topic providing some helpful insights. How did we get to where we are? To understand a little history we rewind back to when ships required RO's (Radio Officers) on-board to look after and take care of all radio communications between ship and Shore. The Radio Officer was a highly esteemed role, sadly nowadays the Radio Officer role is almost unheard of as there is no longer work available, Radio Communications have become simpler and operator certificates obtained by bridge navigational officers. Step forward to 2010 – 2020 and we see a massive surge and demand for technical crew to look after and maintain the state of the art electrical and AVIT systems found on-board ships and super yachts.

What exactly is an ETO and how has the name been miss used / miss understood in the industry:

- In the true sense of the acronym, ETO stands for Electro Technical Officer. The ETO is a licensed position forming part of the Engineering team who reports to the Chief Engineer. To be an ETO you must pass and obtain your ETO CoC (Certificate of Competency). This certification is fairly new and traditional "ETO's" who have been signed on as "ETO's" and who have more than 12 months sea time prior to Jan 2016 can be grandfathered in as an ETO following the "experienced ETO route" by completing advanced modules, written examinations and an oral interview.

- AVIT Engineers or ITO's (IT Officers) main role is to look after and upgrade all AV IT and broadcast systems found onboard a super yacht.

### Size matters!

- Depending on the size of vessel, this will govern how many ETO's / AVIT engineers you'd expect to find onboard. Smaller yachts, less than 60m generally do not carry ETO's / AVIT engineers, this responsibility is usually delegated to a senior crew member who is most interested and capable to handle it.

Pro's and Con's of employing an ETO / AVIT Engineer:

- Salaries – ETO's / AVIT Engineers are not cheap! Depending on experience, size and complexity of the vessel, they can be earning top dollar salaries. Some ETO's may be at a certain point in their career with family commitment or lifestyle choices and may only be looking for rotational work. Rotational crew cost the boat more with extra flights, insurances needing to be accounted for.

- Having an ETO / AVIT Engineer onboard and at the ready may be priceless to the Owners and Guests. If something were to go wrong with time sensitive incident like a TV broadcast or internet connection going down in the middle of a major sports game or business deal the ETO / AVIT engineer would be able to resolve immediately.

- ETO's / AVIT Engineers are known for bringing great ideas and technological improvements onboard. They are constantly learning and seeking new ways to improve systems.

- Shore side contractors and technical service providers are absolutely essential to the smooth operation and running of AVIT systems on yachts. Traditionally shore side service providers can be hugely expensive but increasingly they are offering monthly / annual care packs to maintain and support systems for a reduced rate compared to pay as you go service. If you are not able to run with ETO's / AVIT engineers onboard, then having a shore side AVIT company look after and maintain all your systems is a logical strategy.

- What happens if you employ ETO's / AVIT Engineers and you still have to rely on shore side contractors? Usually this happens on new builds when the yachts are still under warranty and installers / integrators are ironing out warranty issues. After the warranty period is



over, it depends on the Owner / Management / Captain whether or not they deem it feasible or not to continue with support contracts. Deciding to continue with support contracts depends very much on boat to boat. Some Owners may have a large fleet and having one company maintain and look after all AVIT certainly makes sense.

In conclusion ETO's / AVIT engineers and shore side support contractors have their work cut out for them! There is much to do and lots of opportunity out there.

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