

Quality in a service or product is not what you put into it, it's what the customer gets out of it.

– Peter Drucker



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF “MISE EN PLACE”

The seasonal challenges of our operation.

When I was in hotel school I remember one of the first words in French we had to learn was “mise en place” pronounced (meez ahn plahs), which means to have all your ingredients prepared and ready to go before you start cooking. Translated, “to put in place.”

This concept has guided many professionals over the years to successfully operate their hospitality businesses and ventures. It also helped me to understand the first step in the management process and planning. Perhaps the great French chefs didn't have this in mind when they came up with the term, but what a perfect solution to the failed efforts of starting a recipe only to find out you are missing a few of the key ingredients. On land, remedying that is fairly easy. You jump in your car and head to the store or call a neighbor and plead to borrow the forgotten ingredient. Unfortunately, our business does not have this easy option. Once the ship leaves port, the options are limited. This situation requires the ultimate “mise en place”!

Our Expedition ships are cruising within two distinctively different seasons requiring us to be experts in both The Arctic and Antarctica. Not only does running a seasonal business have its own set of challenges compared to a year-round operation, but catering to such uniquely different parts of the world simultaneously requires a serious “mise en place”! Luckily, most of the ports are familiar and repeat during the season, but creating those “Once in a Lifetime experiences” for our guests requires us to be at the top of our game, preparing for whatever they may need and not resting on our laurels of familiarity.

At our corporate office in Miami, we are busy with our “mise en place”- readying logistical plans for each season and communicating with our charterers as well as our ship management teams about the special needs for each upcoming operating period. Coordination is of utmost importance, considering input from all constituents involved. We carefully consider the ingredients we will need for a successful outcome. The biggest obstacles faced are sourcing in some of the more remote ports of calls, such as Northern Canada and parts of the North-West Passage. Kugluktuk and Resolute are two of our favorites as there is not much available to buy locally, containers cannot be shipped easily or in a timely fashion, leaving airlifts as our only option. The planning and organization in these challenging destinations take a lot of communication, precision and attention to detail for all stakeholders.

It starts with the guest counts and proper ordering from each ship. We must consider freezer storage space per vessel, consumption history and the menu cycle. To make it a success it is a real team effort between the ship's hotel department, the corporate

purchasing department and inventory functions. We are fortunate to use a sophisticated system which does make life easier. Most of the local items needed must be brought to the ports either by ship or air; however, it is a delicate balance as many of the destinations we visit must make their living within the same season of our visit. Relationships, community understanding and participation is critical for everyone cruising in those destinations. While they need the revenue, we also can't empty a supermarket without prior planning and notification, leaving the residents without food.

One aspect of the business requiring considerable planning is our very busy human resources department. At the end of each season they must coordinate the sign-offs of our crew members going on their well-deserved vacations and after 6-8 weeks bring them back for the beginning of the next season. No sooner after having finished the sign off, the busy HR team begin preparing new contracts, ensuring everyone has a valid medical certificate and the proper visas in place to re-join the ship in a different country and continent. It has become more complicated for us to manage these processes due to the new security environment worldwide, and it is our objective to welcome back as many crew members as possible for the next season. On board the ship when winding down for the season, we must implement the important SOP procedures for each ship, inventory must be audited and spot checks performed, cabins must be secured and properly cleaned before most of the crew leave the ship. A skeleton hotel crew remain on board during the reposition of the vessels, as well as during dry docks to take care of the inventories and provide meals for the marine crew on board as part of the off season activities.

Once the season starts again, we transition to the necessary mode of maintaining the many standards we have put in place. Proper planning helps even when you must face the unexpected, e.g. occasional extreme weather conditions or turnaround ports that are not operational due to ice. Preparing for the unexpected is another layer in the process and with each challenge, we can better anticipate a solution.

Problem solving is a pre-requisite for anyone to be successful in the field of expedition/niche cruising. Expedition cruising, by definition, means off the beaten path, the road less traveled, so we must somehow deliver a very accessible experience in an inaccessible environment. Over the years, we have learned a lot, continuously improving our processes and approaches. In the spirit of the great French chefs and “mise en place”, happy cruising and from Miami we wish you a successful summer season.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dietmar Wertanzl'.

Dietmar Wertanzl, President CMIL