On 4 February the Nautical Institute and Comité International Radio-Maritime (CIRM) the principal international association for marine electronics companies) launched a joint initiative to improve the usability of navigation and communication technology in ships.

Speaking at the International e-Navigation Underway Conference in a vessel steaming Copenhagen-Oslo-Copenhagen, David Patraiko, Director of Projects for the Nautical Institute, and Richard Doherty, Chief Technical Officer for CIRM, announced the development of the CIRM User Feedback Forum.

It was recognised that the best way to achieve usability in a system, product or service is to ask users what they think at each stage of the design. This is the principle that underlies the concept of human-centred design (HCD). Applying HCD is a key goal of the International Maritime Organization’s eNavigation strategy.

Patraiko commented: ‘As a design concept goes, this all makes perfect sense. Many mariners are keen to offer feedback into the design process but struggle to identify how to.’

Doherty confirmed that CIRM members are willing to listen and of course will need to demonstrate this as outlined in the IMO e-Navigation HCD Guidelines. These issues were also confirmed during a recent EU funded Human Factors project CyClaDes (www.cyclades-project.eu).

To encourage mariners’ input, CIRM created the CIRM User Feedback Forum, which brings together willing seafarers and interested manufacturers to ensure that designs are validated using human-centred design principles. The Forum can be accessed at http://cirm.org/services/cuff.html.

The Nautical Institute will encourage mariners from around the world to register as potential ‘beta testers’ for CIRM members’ research and development projects. The process is absolutely free for seafarers and confidential for the manufacturers. Training centres are also invited to become involved and to form relationships with manufacturers that may be interested in running trials.

Mariners gain by being able to preview, understand and influence new designs. Patraiko said that mariners often challenge why, or even how, certain design
features have been developed. The Forum provides an opportunity for them to get involved with the design before it ends up on their ships.

Cost considerations often make it hard for training centres to expose students and instructors to the latest technology. Now maritime colleges will not only be able to see the latest designs, but will also be able to use their training experience to assist in the development of new equipment and systems.

Doherty describes this as a practical approach and a win-win solution, bringing manufacturers and users together: ‘This is a golden opportunity for all mariners and trainers to improve the design of systems they may have to use in the future, while enjoying the process of working with the design teams,” said Mr Patraiko.

The Nautical Institute also plans to publish case studies from these trials, which will spread the benefits to the whole industry.

CIRM and The Nautical Institute invite the industry to promote the Forum and encourage users to register so that it can make a positive contribution to future navigation and communication systems.

About The Nautical Institute
The Nautical Institute is the international professional body for qualified seafarers and others with an interest in nautical matters. It provides a wide range of services to enhance the professional standing and knowledge of members who are drawn from all sectors of the maritime world. Founded in 1972, it has nearly 50 branches worldwide and some 7,000 members in 120 countries. In 2015, the Institute was the proud recipient of the Investment in People award for its Navigator magazine at the Seatrade Awards. http://www.nautinst.org

About CIRM
The Comité International Radio-Maritime (CIRM) is the principal international association for marine electronics companies. CIRM exists to promote the application of electronic technology to the safety of life and efficient conduct of vessels at sea. CIRM also strives to foster relations between all organisations concerned with electronic aids to marine navigation, communications and information systems. http://www.cirm.org
About eNavigation
E-navigation is defined as “the harmonized collection, integration, exchange, presentation and analysis of marine information on board and ashore by electronic means to enhance berth to berth navigation and related services for safety and security at sea and protection of the marine environment”.

See also:

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