

Life After Yachting: From Captain to West Nautical Client Manager



During the 2022 MYS, we got the chance to interview ex Superyacht Captain of the renowned Explorer Yacht, Gamechanger, and current West Nautical Senior Client Manager, [Mike Rouse](#) who recently transitioned to his shore-based role.

In his life after yachting story, Mike shares how he became a captain on board Superyachts, to moving up to manage an extensive refit, and now enjoying the simpler things in life, like his morning coffee in his own kitchen, before starting his current position at [West Nautical](#) as a senior client manager.

SYC: So, ex-Captain of the world-renowned Explorer Yacht, Gamechanger. Tell us about your time on board; what was it like?, and how long was your career?

My father taught sailing and still teaches sailing. When I finished school, I was fortunate enough to go out on yachts with him and do yachting courses. From there, I decided I liked it. And it was at the very, very start of what is now

the master 3000 class four system. So, I was meeting people that were working on yachts when I was young, it sounded like a really exciting job, and still is an exciting job. Just meeting those people and talking to them, I knew that I wanted to have a look at this and see what it was all about. That was when I was 16, and I'm 42 now.

SYC: You've now left the Superyacht Industry. What is your current job position?

I'm the senior client manager at West Nautical, which means I'm involved in the new builds, whether it be from spec reviews through shipyard visits, delivering boats through to chartering and sales.

SYC: How have you found your transition from sea-to-land, and being based somewhere permanently?

It's been different, but I'm enjoying it because it's introduced more balance to my life. When you're a yacht captain, you are focused solely on your boss, and what their requirements and needs are, whereas, within my new role and West Nautical, I'm now dealing with so many different owners. That is interesting to me because I'm now looking at things from many different angles, and understanding all owner's expectations, and requirements. It's also nice to be able to sleep in your bed at night...

I'm lucky, I like where I live, I have a good group of friends around me, and I get to still do my hobbies whilst working. I'll always say it's a lifestyle job, pretty much everybody on our team would agree. Your phones are on 24/7, and you've got emails coming in from clients in whatever timezone it may be,

but fortunately, after a lot of years in yachting, I still love my job. So I don't see it as a burden, I see it as fun. Overall, it was a good transition that was a natural progression which made sense to me at the time.

SYC: So you say your transition to land came after some changes on board Game Changer. Before leaving, did you have an exit strategy or time to think about what you want?

I think when opportunities present themselves, you have to sit and evaluate them and take the advice of others. This opportunity in particular just made sense to me. I had/have got a good relationship with Geoff, who owns WN. Over time he's seen my career progress, whilst I've seen him build the business. It especially made sense with the new builds we have going on at the moment to step in with him.

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SYC: During your time on board Game-changer, you did an extension. Would you say this was your biggest

project to date and what lessons did you learn from the process?

Yeah, I would say that was the biggest project. I learned the huge value of having a good crew and good technical support. And also, I think, not over-committing yourself because I believe you don't get the best out of yourself or those around you if you're overcommitted.

If I was to step back now and do it again, without a doubt, I would do things differently but in hindsight, it was great.

SYC: What would be your advice for a Captain who's just about to go into their first yacht extension?

Spec. Get the spec right, lock in the spec, make sure your research is done and ensure your numbers are crunched, so you can manage the expectations of the owner. It's massively important. Without a good spec and a good technical team, it will be challenging.

SYC: So, what are you looking to achieve at West Nautical? What's your biggest goal? and how do you see your position evolving?

We've got a lot of boats in build, and I'd like to broaden my knowledge of the build aspect of it with different builders. We're in several different shipyards at the moment where I enjoy working with a team and adding/seeing where I can add value to the team but also where I can learn too. It's a different generation coming through now and they look at

things differently. So being receptive to that generation, and learning from that, but equally adding some experience to it as well.

Seeing it evolving, getting involved in more projects, dealing with different aspects of the industry that I maybe hadn't done in the past, but bringing a level of experience to that situation, from operating yachts and chartering yachts out too. So, I think theres a lot of value I can add, but equally there's a lot I can learn and that's what makes it interesting.

I'm very open minded to a younger generation as well because I didn't get to where I am without asking people questions and I certainly didn't get here without people a generation above me giving me the time... I got involved in mentoring and what I like is having the younger generation ask questions. They want to grow and they want to learn, and I think we've got a moral and professional obligation to share that knowledge and pass it on because they are the next generation; The next generation of buyers is different than the last generation of buyers.

SYC: So when you decided that you were leaving the industry, did you have any career options in mind or did you genuinely see yourself in the role that you are in now?

It's something I'd always considered stepping into. I've always enjoyed being involved in the build of yachts. For me, it's a really fun process and I love delivering a yacht to an owner, and hopefully exceeding their expectations too. That and the sales process is interesting. But I mean, sales aside, it's an overall interesting process; getting involved and

understanding different clients, what they're looking for, and how you can meet those expectations.

SYC: Very different from driving yachts and managing crew then?

Absolutely, yeah. I suppose the teams you work with are completely different and it's quite nice to now have a working relationship, not work, living, socialising.

It's nice that when I leave work, I leave, and when I have a coffee in the morning it's generally in my own kitchen and I'm alone, rather than having lots of crew around. Sometimes it's fun and other times it's nice to come away with a team. For instance, we went for a work dinner last night and it's nice to be on a normal level with people interacting. David, West Nautical's Marketing and Design Manager, and I cycle socially together, and then we work together. You know, we can't do our job without them doing their job. Their job can't exist without us doing our job. So it's nice to have that relationship and it's equally as nice to go home.

SYC: If you could go back to the start of your yachting career, would you change anything on the path you've taken?

Would I change anything? That's a really good question. Certain things about myself are not lost on me. So I am aware that I have a purpose. To answer the question, I probably wouldn't, no. Because I think in fairness, I've always been truthful and honest with myself.

I think the benefit of hindsight, there are always things you would do differently. But first of all, I have to be honest

with myself and I think that no I wouldn't. There are lots of different things I'd like to do if I could go back, but at the time, every decision I've made, I felt was the right. And you can only play with the options in front of you...

SYC: So, I guess our last question would probably be if you could give someone coming into the industry three pieces of advice, what would that advice be?

1. We are in an incredible industry to work in. It's very diverse, it's not an industry that needs to exist, but it exists because people want to have fun and pleasure. So I think it's important for green crew to be open-minded.
2. I think go out there and enjoy it. See the world. You know, I think for me mixing with different cultures and doing all the travelling has made me a richer person mentally, and I'm thankful for it.
3. Don't get caught up in the lifestyle. Because we all know it's a well-paying industry, but we're not the owners; We work for the owners. People need to be mindful of that because lifestyles can rapidly exceed the ability to sustain them at some point.

If you have any questions please do get in touch with Mike Rouse, West Nautical senior client manager at +44 7467 485919