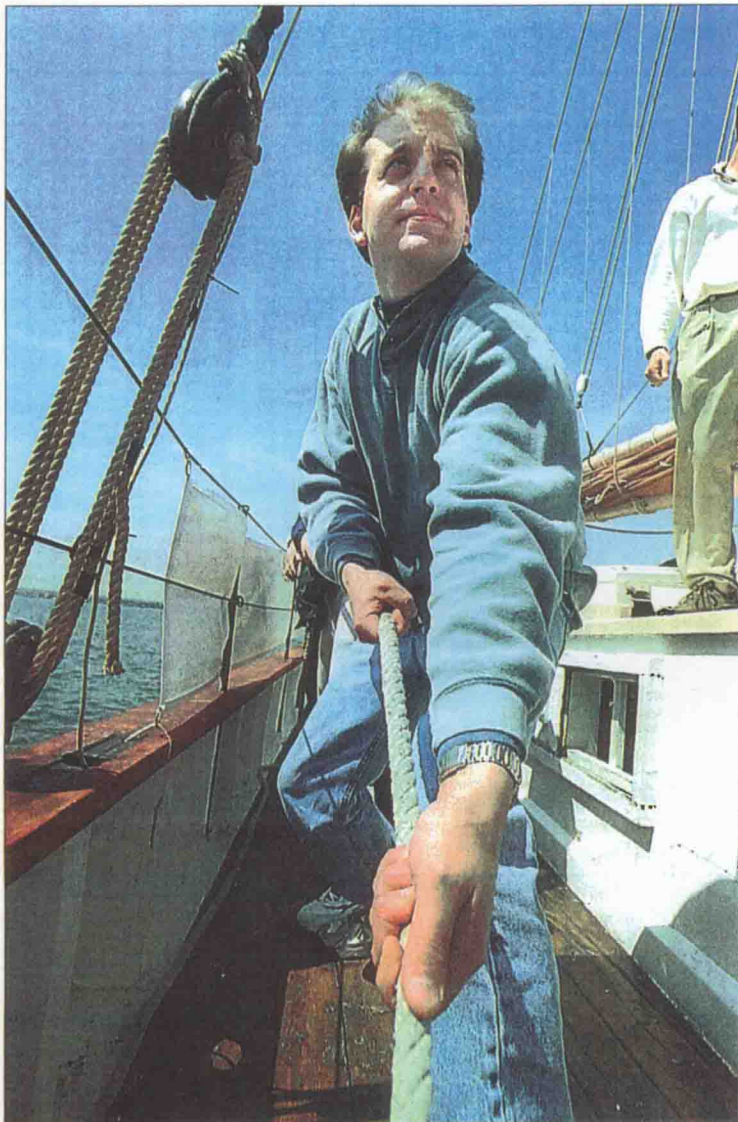
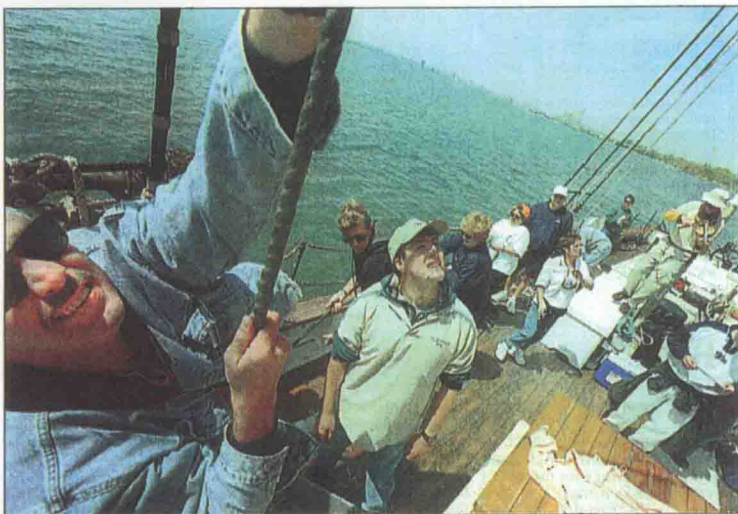


A sea change

Hey, ho, and up the organization rises



HARD WORK Greg Aldrich of the Danzas AEI office in Darien helps raise the mainsail of the Quinpiack. AEI Danzas employees took part in a L.E.A.D. (Leadership, Empowerment, Achievement, Dynamics) exercise.



RIGGING LESSONS Danzas AEI employees check the rigging of a schooner during a training seminar. Jim Bronnan, left, of the firm's Darien office, raises the sails as Quinpiack educator and deck hand.



Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photos

TEAM EFFORT Betty Downing, left, of Danzas AEI in Darien, and Nancie Wardrop of Danzas AEI's Hartford office fold the mainsail of the schooner Quinpiack last month in New Haven Harbor.

By Richard Lee

Staff Writer

The voyage wasn't too far — just to the mouth of New Haven Harbor, but for those on board the schooner Quinpiack, it could have been one of the most important journeys in their business careers.

Under the watchful eye of Captain John Wisch and his four-person crew, 20 employees of Darien-based Danzas AEI recently took to the "high seas" to learn that it takes just as much teamwork to sail a ship as it does to run a business.

In Connecticut for a week of management training, the crew came from Danzas AEI offices all around the United States — as far away as Seattle and Miami. The three-hour experience, which cost about \$7,500, put their teamwork to the test.

After boarding the 91-foot schooner moored at the Long Wharf docks, they received their sailing orders from the vessel's real crew; as well as from Rich Kuepper, president of L.E.A.D. (Leadership, Empowerment, Achievement, Dynamics), the West Haven-based leadership and corporate team building business that organized the day for Danzas AEI; and from L.E.A.D. trainer Adam Clark.

"It's an adventure every time I go out. When you see people light up and connect — that's the reward," said Kuepper, who for three years has brought similar corporate groups to the Quinpiack, owned and operated by Schooner, Sound Learning, a nonprofit organization.

A replica of a late-19th century Biloxi, Miss., cargo schooner, the Quinpiack was built in 1984 in Maine. Wisch, a University of Rhode Island graduate who came to the schooner as a volunteer, is now its paid skipper with six years tenure.

Manning the wheel at the stern of the ship, Wisch watched closely as his first visiting crew of the season listened to Clark and Kuepper detail their challenge.

"It's up to them to pull together," said Wisch, adding that he finds it amazing how fast people will form an effective team.

"It's like a crash course in schooner sailing," he said.

None of the Danzas AEI "crew" had ever been on a schooner. The terms mainsail, foresail, staysail and jib were foreign to most of them.

"Does somebody have a dictionary around here? What's a jib?" asked Doria Wosk, in charge of the company's Caterpillar account for Latin America in
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WATERSIDE Walter Koloskiwsky of the firm's Miami office takes in the view during an employee training exercise aboard the schooner Quinpiack.



Danzas

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Miami.

Striking a pose reminiscent of Christopher Columbus, she kidded, "Is this the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria?"

Brent Biederman, director of training and development at Danzas, was pleased that none of the participants had any real sailing experience. The voyage's goal was to put the employees in an unfamiliar situation and force them to work together.

"Once they go through this, they bond better as managers. There will be that connection always there. They'll go out of their way to help each other," said Biederman, who used the Quinpiack last year for the training

session.

Last year's training session followed the merger of Swiss-based Danzas with American-based Air Express International in 1999, creating an international air and ocean freight forwarder, warehouse and distributor, whose parent company, Deutsche Post, is located in Bonn, Germany.

Biederman, who participated in last year's voyage, left operations of the Quinpiack to the new crew and Wisch and his staff. One of the crew's first tasks was to cast off the dock lines. Walter Koloskiwsky, district manager of the Miami office, took charge of the dock line team.

"I wanted to get everyone on

the same page. It's a team effort," he said. "This is definitely a first for me," said Koloskiwsky, as he and his teammates disconnected the lines.

Slowly the Quinpiack chugged toward Long Island Sound, thanks to Donna Scro, export manager at John F. Kennedy International Airport; Janet Baker, a trainer at the Darien office; and Darlene Liskiewicz, district manager of the Buffalo office, who comprised the engine crew.

"We needed a little bit of guidance, but we figured out what had to be done," Baker said. "Now we work on the mainsail. We're awaiting word from the captain." A few minutes later, Wisch gave

the order to raise the mainsail, a daunting task requiring the combined strength of most of the crew.

Dan Thompson, one of the Quinpiack's regular crew members, got out his fiddle and played a tune to spur on the visitors while they strained to raise the sail.

Chris Meister, manager of international operations at the Miami office, took charge, organizing the effort, while Kuepper urged them on as he singsonged "Heave away, haul away."

Minutes later, having conquered the biggest challenge, the crew quickly raised the smaller foresail, staysail and jib. Under a light wind, the Quinpiack plowed through the water at

speeds ranging between 2 and 5 knots.

The team effort involved in raising of the mainsail was a good example of cross-training, said Koloskiwsky, noting that the teams involved in starting the engine, casting away the lines and raising the smaller sails all played a role.

Also playing his part was Bob Masarik, who spent four years in the Navy, most of it as a radioman and none of it aboard a sailing vessel.

"We learned basic seamanship in basic training," said Masarik, domestic operations manager for the company. "I had no experience whatsoever. I'm used to ships with gas turbine engines."

Masarik was part of the Quinpiack's navigation crew. "I knew where to go, but I don't know how to get there," he said with a laugh.

As the Quinpiack sailed back to the dock, the crew broke out in a rendition of "What Shall We Do with the Competition?" As they did, Kuepper passed out "tattoos" to mark their passage as novice sailors.

The experience was a memorable one for Greg Aldrich, the company's information technology director.

"It certainly wasn't what I expected. The team is absolutely essential, and the teams are interdependent upon each other," Aldrich said.