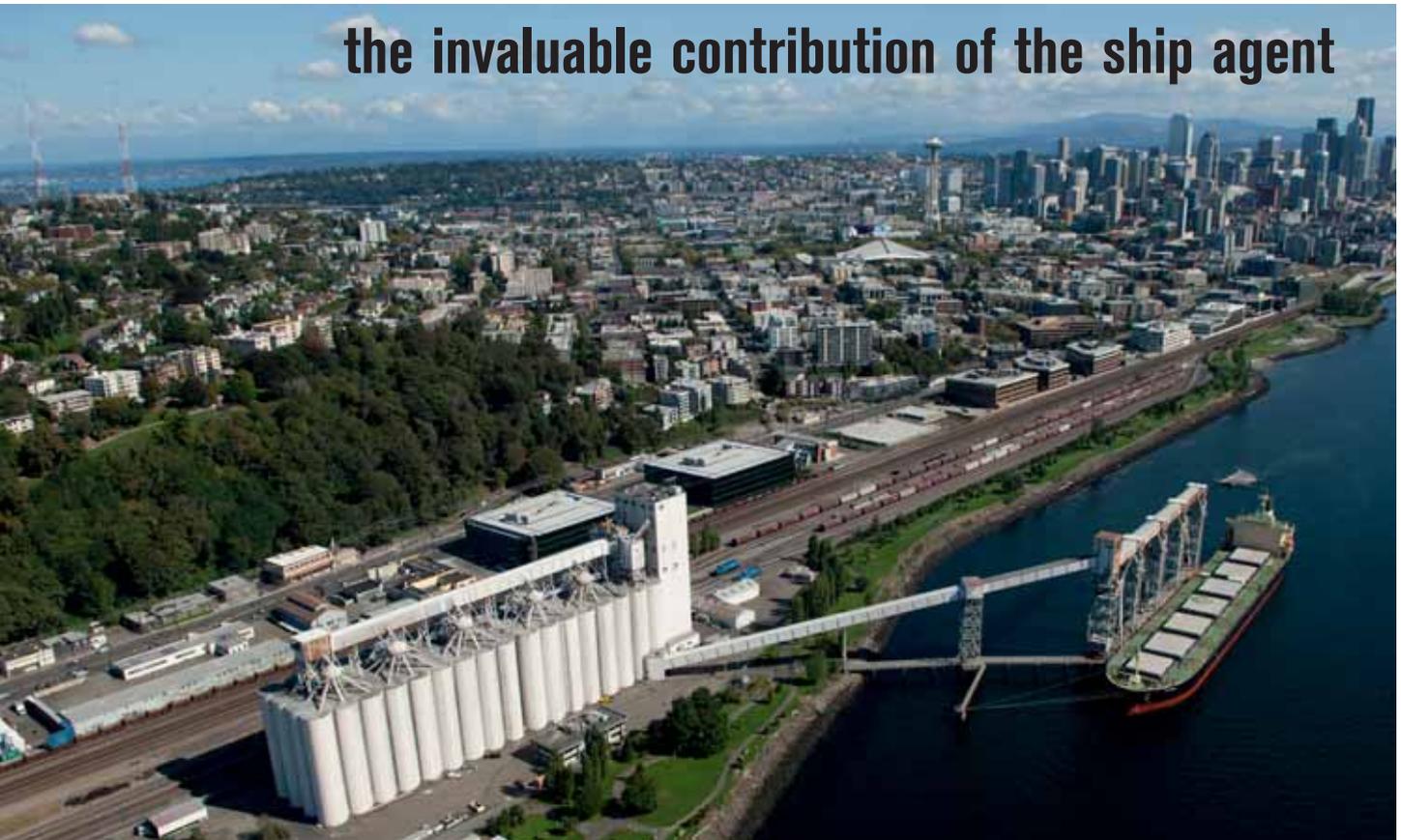


Keeping cargo transport ship-shape

the invaluable contribution of the ship agent



ASBA's landmark Agent Member Certification celebrates ten years Member ship agents: tested – trusted – certified

In a recent survey conducted by the Association of Ship Brokers & Agents (USA) Inc. (ASBA), maritime principals ranked the qualities deemed most important in their decision to appoint a ship's agent.

- ❖ fiscally responsible company
- ❖ trained boarding agents
- ❖ past experience with the ship agent and the agent's experience with the cargo and vessel type

ASBA's Agent Member Certification, renewed annually, specifically addresses these qualities. This month, ASBA celebrates ten years of its Agent Member Certification. However, in order to describe what it means to be ASBA certified — what, exactly, is an agent, and what does an agent do?

“Except for the pilot, the first and last person to board or depart during every ship's port call is the ship's agent.” The agent is like a control tower for a ship's port call, co-ordinating local scheduling and logistics with the key players — the owner, charterer, shipper, receiver, terminal, and, of course, the ship.

The agent dispatches the local services necessary for a successful port call by arranging pilotage, towage, and customs entry and clearance, while navigating deftly through the myriad

national and local regulatory requirements involving the ship, her cargo and crew. Beyond the commercial operation there is often an extensive list of husbanding requirements that includes co-ordination of ship's stores and spare parts as well as crew changes, crew medical, and service technicians.

An agent's job is to safely and economically expedite the vessel's port call. Understanding the impact of high daily operating costs of ships and marine terminals, the pressures of berth congestion, and contract deadlines for loading and unloading cargoes contributes positively to the success of a voyage. Solid rapport and good standing within the local marine community is critical. The agent stands in the shoes of his, or her, principal, protecting their interest at a specified port.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

ASBA member agents must retain an external Certified Public Accountant to complete a procedural review in order to attest in writing to ASBA that the member maintains separate files by principal and that all financial transactions are properly supported by invoices and receipts that tie back to their general ledger. Fiscally sound accounting practices should be a key component of the principal's risk management strategy.

TRAINED

Certified Agent Members must maintain a well-trained staff that is service oriented and armed with knowledge to make necessary decisions on behalf of their principals. All member boarding agents and their managers must successfully complete a comprehensive exam administered by ASBA.

ASBA provides a variety of maritime courses and seminars on shipbroking, chartering, and agency to meet the needs of members for initial training and ongoing education. Other courses offered by ASBA include maritime law, marine insurance, and commercial trade transactions. ASBA's Annual Cargo Conference has become the must attend maritime event in the USA and provides member agents with another avenue to expand their industry knowledge. Panellists include charterers, owners, and operators that share their thoughts on the hot topics of the year as well as their views on the market and trends in shipping.



total, approximately 14,000 were dry bulk and breakbulk vessels. Based on the association's calculations, ASBA Certified Agents have represented close to 65% of the dry and wet bulk vessels calling US ports last year. In terms of experience, these statistics tell a clear story.

ASBA was formed in 1934.

Members use the Association to address issues affecting their companies and principals on a national level — and to advocate for quality. ASBA's landmark member certification was embraced by its international counterpart, the Federation of National Associations of Ship Brokers & Agents (FONASBA) in 2007, is called the FONASBA Quality Standard and is now being awarded in 22 member countries. Owner's organizations, BIMCO, INTERTANKO, and INTERCARGO, recognized the value of promoting

'quality' in the appointment of ship agents when they endorsed the Quality Standard.

As a best practice that supports operational excellence and risk mitigation, ASBA encourages all vessel charterers, owners, and operators to nominate and appoint ASBA-certified agents at USA and Canada ports whenever possible.

EXPERIENCED

ASBA's 30 member agents handled approximately 43,000 non-container vessel calls in the USA and Canada in 2013. Of this