

BY MAURICIO GARRIDO, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SALVAGE ASSOCIATION

## SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THE MARINE SALVAGE INDUSTRY



**“We have to do a better job of letting people know about shipping, but more importantly who salvors are and what they bring to the table.”**

Raising your client’s awareness of your ability to provide a product or deliver a service is essential to any successful business plan. Most if not all industries in today’s society would seem to clearly recognize that their ultimate client is society itself—all except our maritime industry.

While seaborne transportation is as old as global trade and while it is responsible for delivering 90% of the world’s trade volume, I seriously doubt the shipping community is doing enough to let the average citizen know the true value of its contribution to everyday life. Well, if folks don’t know about shipping then how can we expect them to know about salvage? Despite the recent Discovery Channel and History Channel episodes and Clive Cussler’s dedicated support, people continue to jitter in a state of perplexity when they hear that ships collide and run aground every day. Salvage even has a hard time getting traction at schools charged with producing merchant marine officers, where they are barely exposed to salvage law and principles. Our future and survival as an industry is, in my opinion, directly related to our ability to spread the word outside the maritime circle and raise the awareness of society as a whole.

The American Salvage Association (ASA) and the International Salvage Union (ISU) have done a commendable job over the past 10 years in spreading the word within the shipping world. Continuous liaison with insurers and shipping groups,

steady participation at international conferences and seminars, training of regulatory agencies, and direct engagement with lawmakers have all yielded very encouraging results. Yet we just don’t do enough to educate the rest of society, perhaps because we don’t think they have a role to play and are too far removed from the financial cycle supporting our business. Think again. The *Deepwater Horizon* incident certainly proved otherwise and affirmed the public has the most important and pivotal role. Public pressure led to legislative action, multi-billion dollar expenditures, lawsuits, government reorganization and drilling moratoriums for the oil and gas sector.

The salvage community has for some time now been engaged in campaigning for crucially important issues such as the need to keep salvors busy and keep the oil in the ship, as well as salvor immunity, wreck oil removal and environmental awards. While we are making headway on some fronts, others seem to be in need of a catalyzing agent to get them moving forward as these are issues with a direct positive contribution not just to the maritime industry but to the entire society. We have to do a better job at letting people know about shipping, but more importantly who salvors are and what they bring to the table.

While such publicity campaigns will not churn out immediate results, I’m confident their increased awareness over time will yield positive and permanent results for the common good.

[www.americansalvage.org](http://www.americansalvage.org)

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