



The Human Factors Series: The Maritime Leader's Blindspot

Maritime leaders both at sea and ashore are often highly skilled technical specialists with qualifications in navigation, ship command, engineering and electronic control systems among many other highly task focused capabilities. Often they have had only occasional training or mentoring in management and leadership.

Many serious maritime incidents are caused by human factors, fatigue, high stress, false perceptions, poor communications and the failure of leadership at critical moments.

The following quote, from an article in the marine technology magazine MotorShip, by the head of Maritime Solutions - Dr Aspen Cramer, underscores the need for high quality management and leadership skills in maritime industries:

"Companies within this industry need a mature organisation in terms of hands on, long term management, good proactive communication, teamwork involving all parts of the organisation and last but not least focused leadership".

Consider the following human factor problems and the potential consequences:

- Inappropriate management of human factors in environments where stress and fatigue can affect leadership judgment
- Low morale leading to poor bridge communication and cross cultural communication on vessels with international crews
- An inability to deal with conflicts, allowing them to fester
- Unmanaged poor performance causing low morale among high performers
- Dysfunctional ship and/ship-shore teams not contributing effectively to organisational goals

- Ineffective change management compromising project momentum
- An inability to motivate crew, leading to low morale, change resistance and failure to observe safety procedures and accepted industry codes of practice (ISM)
- The inability to understand and manage a range of behaviours providing an environment that allows safety behaviours to fall below critical mass
- An inability to apply situational leadership and delegate authority appropriately leaving managers stuck in autocratic model.

Walker Wilson Associates has a unique collaborative relationship with the Company of Master Mariners and provides a full range of human factor organisational and behavioural capabilities. We specialize in coaching and development for high performing maritime leaders and ship/shore teams.

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