



## The Human Factors Series: The Maritime Leader's Blindspot

**Maritime leaders** both on ships and on shore are often highly skilled technical specialists with qualifications in navigation, ship command, engineering and electronic control systems among many other highly task focused capabilities. They may 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 is from an article in the marine technology magazine MotorShip, and refers to the head of maritime solutions Dr Aspen Cramer:

*"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 managing of human factors where stress and fatigue can affect leadership judgment
- Low morale affecting bridge communication and cross cultural communication on vessels with international crews
- An inability in dealing with conflicts, letting them fester
- Not managing poor performers causing low morale among high performers
- Allowing ship and/ship-shore teams to languish or not function effectively

- Losing project momentum by not managing change effectively
- Inability to motivate crew, resulting in low morale, change resistance and failure of safety procedures (ISM Codes of practice)
- Allowing safety behaviours to fall below critical mass due to an inability to understand and manage a range of behaviours
- An inability to apply situational leadership and delegate authority appropriately - stuck in autocratic mode.

**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.

John Walker is the Managing Director of Walker Wilson Associates.

### Walker Wilson & Associates

Level 3, 30 Alfred Street  
Milsons Point NSW 2061

T: 02 9687 8090

M: 0408 162 811

F: 02 9460 3366

johnwalker@walkerwilson.com.au

www.walkerwilson.com.au

