

## The Importance of Effective Communication

Ships and their bridges are living spaces, not just workspaces. Ships operate with diverse and multinational crews who need to fully understand each other to ensure the safe and efficient running of operations, which is why communication is one of the most critical aspects of bridge resource management. So let's talk about effective communication at sea. Without effective communication, teams cannot perform to their full potential, and the risk of accidents is greatly increased. Communication is way more than simply speaking in the same language.

It encompasses teamwork, training, leadership skills, and hard skills. Body language such as eye contact, facial expressions, even your tone of voice plays a role. The way in which a sentence is expressed to a fellow bridge team member can affect how the message is received. I don't know. I don't know.

I don't know. Selecting the suitable medium to deliver a message is crucial for effective communication. The choice depends on factors, such as the nature of the message, the audience, and the desired impact. For instance, monthly reports may be best conveyed through email, while face to face meetings are more appropriate for complex discussions or sensitive topics. Communication is defined as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

Be aware that the communicator and recipient are not performing one way roles. They are constantly providing each other with feedback, which is why closed loop communication is very useful to run a safe ship. It's a method in which the message is repeated back to ensure understanding. Consider this example. A ship is approaching port, Port control is advised that the berth is still occupied and awaiting clearance, so the captain calls the engine room on the phone.

Chief engineer, we will have some delays. We will stop and remain drifting. The chief engineer receives the message but doesn't acknowledge it or provide any indication of understanding. There is no follow-up from the captain.

## The Importance of Effective Communication

He assumes that the message has been received and understood and does not follow-up with the chief engineer for updates.

The chief engineer, without clear instructions or feedback, prioritized other tasks and stopped the engine for quick inspection. The master noticed that the engine was stopped, and the ship was drifting towards the channel entrance. That requires an immediate start of the engine, causing disorder and panic. So let's take a look at an example of good practice. Officer, be advised that weather conditions in the harbor are deteriorating.

We're expecting strong offshore wind. Please check the current mooring line status and keep your eyes on the wind speed and direction and update me. I'll immediately check the weather conditions and update you with the mooring line status. Standby. Captain, the current wind speed is 20 knots from the North East.

Mooring lines are all in good order. I recommend deploying additional mooring ropes. The final arrangement to be 4 ahead and stern lines, 2 breast lines, 2 spring lines, forward and aft. Please advise. Thank you for the update.

Proceed and you can call an extra hand on deck. Keep them informed of any further changes. Of course, not all operations go smoothly. Challenge and response is one of the key elements within BRM linked to effective communication. During briefings, any member of the team should challenge the pilot or conning officer if they are unsure of the intended action.

The ability to challenge an order on the bridge can be very daunting, but creating an environment where orders can be challenged should be encouraged. Communication doesn't only happen between humans. Visual and audible communication is the way in which information is conveyed on the bridge through radar, ECDIS, VHF, walkie talkies, CCTV, etcetera. While technology has significantly improved communication efficiency, it's crucial to avoid allowing it to become a source of distraction. There is an art to effective communication.

## The Importance of Effective Communication

Let's look at an example of effective communication in the following briefing. Our ETA into Sandy Hook pilot station is 9 o'clock Monday morning. Pilot on arrival VHF 13. The pilot station has 3 other inbound vessels so transit to the berth may be slowed depending on the boarding sequence. Monitor the pilot helms ordering during passage.

The chief officer will conduct the maneuver. Tugs will be made fast from the forward and aft center fare leads. This is the berthing diagram port side alongside spring lines first and final tire will be 6 and 3 forward and aft. Midship gangway will be used. Any questions?

Communication should be clear with the avoidance of complex words, slang, and phrases. Avoid excessive words and longer than necessary explanations. Spelling mistakes and badly phrased grammatically incorrect written sentences can form a barrier to the effective communication of a message, particularly when dealing with different crew nationalities and cultures. Communication should make sense and be logical. Incomplete or partial information leaves the receiver unsure of the message.

Finally, the officer was open to feedback. But let's be real, Communication on ships is not always easy. There are many barriers that can affect how we communicate with each other. Let's take a look at those. Our cultural background means we might interpret the same message in different ways.

Even the word yes can be understood differently based on context, tone, and nonverbal cues, so do our personality and leadership traits. According to the IMO standard communication phrases, language barriers can be caused by overly complex language or inappropriate words. Let's take a look at some barriers. Some people are very good at talking and not so good at listening, which will hinder the communication process. Noise in the environment can adversely impact the process. Gender based issues, diversity and inclusion, and language barriers all offer particular challenges that we should be aware of, which brings us to one very important point, conflict resolution. Conflicts are almost unavoidable, so learning how to deal with them is extremely important.

## The Importance of Effective Communication

1st, don't say what comes spontaneously. Breathe, think carefully, and then speak. 2nd, adopting a diffusing state of mind which implies a shift towards a calmer more relaxed mindset that will enable all parties to take a step back.

3rd, assessing the situation. The diffuser will listen to the parties in conflict and ensure that they are aware that they are being heard. Finally, choose the outcome you want. Use the help of a diffuser to decide the best outcome, considering the risks involved, the reduction of anxiety, and acknowledging the complexity of the situation. There you have it.

As humans, we communicate with each other all the time, and still that doesn't mean we're great at it. It's always worth it to learn better ways to express ourselves and interpret what others are saying to create a healthier, safer, and more effective workplace.