Maritime Leadership — study guide

Free study guide · maritimetest.com

Leadership at sea is not a personality trait — it is a set of behaviours that keep a team together under pressure. This guide covers communication styles, engagement, team building and self-awareness.[1]

Communication styles

Assertive communicators speak for what they want without violating the rights of others, clearly state their opinions, and use hand gestures with a calm or happy face. By contrast, **aggressive** communication is about demonstrating that you can violate the rights of a crew member.

What is particular to the maritime industry

Aspects that apply more often to the maritime industry than to others include an unstable workload due to changing weather, the widespread use of handover from one team to the next, and constantly changing teams because of leave rotations.

Engagement

An engaged crew member can say: "I have the training and resources needed to thrive in my role"; "my opinion is heard and valued by my colleagues"; and "I know what is expected of my work". Leaders who have been on board and experienced hardship at sea — "one of the team" — earn higher empathy for the crew and higher respect from them.

Leading through difficult times

To lead a team through difficult times, remind the team that their work is valuable, and describe how the team or company plans to move forward. Factors that commonly contribute to maritime accidents include lack of communication between the Master and the crew, lack of procedure training, and lack of teamwork in the crew.

Handling conflict and building teams

A situation becomes a conflict you need to confront and solve when a behaviour in the crew is negatively impacting the performance of others. **Team building** is defined as "the ability to identify and motivate individual employees to form a team that stays together, works together and achieves together".

Self-awareness

Self-aware leaders are open-minded about their weaknesses, mindful of their own thoughts, emotions and values, and frequently ask a question out of curiosity.

Key facts to remember

© 2026 maritimetest.com · free study guide

- Assertive: state opinions, respect others' rights, calm face/hand gestures. Aggressive: violating others' rights.
- Maritime-specific: weather-driven workload, frequent handovers, changing crews from leave rotations.
- Engaged crew: has training/resources, is heard and valued, knows expectations.
- "One of the team" leader: higher empathy and respect.
- Hard times: remind the team their work is valuable; describe the plan forward.
- Accident contributors: poor Master–crew communication, lack of procedure training, lack of teamwork. Confront conflict when behaviour harms others' performance.
- Team building = identifying and motivating people to form a team that stays, works and achieves together. Self-aware: open-minded, mindful, curious.

Sources

1. STCW Convention and Code — leadership and teamwork competence at management level (Sections A-II/1 and A-II/2).