





# HOW TO: LEAD A TEAM & MENTOR YOUR CREW

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**A**s captain or head of department you are expected to be a lot of things: a tower of strength, a leader and innovator, a shoulder to cry on, a dynamic motivator, a stern but fair judge, a diplomat, a politician, a financial wizard, a protector, a saviour and a saint. You are also expected to be a buffer zone between higher management and your staff. There are a number of ways you can do all these things; here are some suggestions for how to become the best leader you can.

## INSTALL RESPECT & COMMAND AUTHORITY

The ability to instill respect from and command authority over the crew is

probably the first thing that comes to mind when people think of leadership. In many ways, this happens on its own when you get everything else right. As a leader, you will get respect and command authority when crews believe that you:

- » Are willing to exercise the power vested in your position.
- » Possess the necessary knowledge and competence.
- » Understand their crew's situation and care about their welfare.
- » Are able to communicate clearly.
- » Are prepared to act confidently and decisively.

### Features that tend to work:

- » Having confidence in your decisions and sticking to them.
- » Creating a good atmosphere.
- » Admitting mistakes when you are

sure you are wrong.

- » Demonstrating staff care and respect through everyday actions.
- » Earning respect through your actions.

### Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Demanding respect from subordinates.
- » Using the power vested in your position as a threat.
- » Refusing to listen when challenged.
- » Acting unnecessarily tough when there is no justification.

## LEAD THE TEAM BY EXAMPLE

Leading the team by example is the combination of two things: being seen

to be practicing what you preach and pulling your weight as a key part of the team. You have to give your crew something to aspire to. The bottom line is: if you do not care, why should they? This is especially important for safety rules. You have to set an example in everything you do. Think before you speak. Be proactive, not reactive. Make your team better than you.

### Features that tend to work:

- » Always being seen to follow simple, visible (safety) rules during everyday activities.
- » Being seen to be playing an active role, not just behind the scenes.
- » Making drills and meetings fun.
- » Inspiring loyalty and team spirit.
- » Occasionally being seen to assist in subordinates' tasks where necessary.

### Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Applying hard disciplines for non-compliance whilst flouting rules yourself.
- » Avoiding "getting your hands dirty" with subordinates' tasks.

## KNOW YOUR TEAM AND HOW IT WORKS

According to British researcher and management theorist Meredith Belbin, there are nine team roles\* – and we all carry out one or more functions of these team roles. Yes, it is fun to identify your own but it is much more useful to identify your team's and then work with that information.

- » The Plant is an original thinker who generates new ideas, offers solutions to problems and thinks in radically different ways – laterally and imaginatively.
- » The Resource Investigator is creative; he/she likes to take ideas and run with them and he/she is an extrovert and popular.
- » The Coordinator is highly disciplined and controlled; he/she can focus on objectives and unifies a team.
- » The Shaper is very achievement-orientated; he/she likes to be

challenged and to get results.

- » The Monitor Evaluator analyses, balances and weighs; he/she is calm and detached, and is an objective thinker.
- » The Team Worker is supportive and cooperative, and makes a good diplomat because he/she only wants what is best for the team.
- » The Implementer has good organisational skills and displays common sense; he/she likes to get the job done.
- » The Completer checks details; he/she tidies up after themselves and is painstakingly conscientious.
- » The Specialist is dedicated to acquiring a specialised skill; he/she is extremely professional and has drive to dedication.

## REMAIN CALM IN A CRISIS

People need strong, clear leadership in a crisis and rely more on their leaders than would otherwise be the case. Calmness in a crisis situation is a core requirement that will rely on many of the other leadership qualities described including commanding

### Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Infrequent or inconsistent emergency drills.
- » Failing to address language issues in emergency planning.

## PRACTICE "TOUGH EMPATHY"

Empathy is all about identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives. It requires the capacity to put yourself in another's place, and the cultivation of good listening skills. Good leaders empathise realistically with employees and care intensely about the work they do – but this does not mean that they always agree with them or join in with concerns and grumbles. Instead they practice "tough empathy", which means giving people what they need, rather than necessarily what they want; another way of looking at this is "care with detachment". An example is providing staff with safety

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authority and drawing on knowledge and experience. In particular, it is important to have confidence and trust in the crew's abilities and emergency preparedness. Attendance at safety training and at response drilling is essential for all crew.

### Features that tend to work:

- » Developing excellent knowledge of, and confidence in, the crew's abilities.
- » Implementing a firm policy on compulsory attendance at emergency safety training and response drills.

footwear that is comfortable and safe, rather than spending more money to provide a more fashionable style.

### Features that tend to work:

- » Encouraging crew to provide feedback on their situation, feelings and motives.
- » Having and showing trust in your team.
- » Being prepared to acknowledge, mirror or summarise feedback to demonstrate understanding, then explaining your conclusions and intended course of action. >

## Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Making a point of listening to what people say but then taking a different decision without any clear demonstration that you have heard and understood, nor giving an explanation of your rationale.
- » Overemphasising listening at the expense of decision making – this can lead to loss of respect and authority.

## BE SENSITIVE TO DIFFERENT CULTURES

Good leaders are sensitive to differences in the social and behavioral norms of national cultures yet at the same time value all crewmembers equally irrespective of their nationality.

## Features that tend to work:

- » Ensuring as far as possible that one working language is used – even in social situations – and that crewmembers have adequate training in this language.
- » Trying to avoid a large “critical mass” of one nationality developing, where possible.
- » Learning the key features of typical behavioural signals exhibited by the nationalities represented onboard – training in this is available.
- » Consciously seeking to build trust, familiarity and integration of disparate social groups through organised or semi-organised social activities onboard.

## Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Possessing ingrained value judgments about different nationalities.
- » Overdoing political correctness in terms of dealing with different nationalities, so that relations become forced and unnatural.

## RECOGNISE THE CREW'S LIMITATIONS

Good leaders have clear understanding of how operational and other demands can be realistically met by the crew and are able to judge

whether fatigue levels are such that action should be taken.

## Features that tend to work:

- » Monitoring and being aware of the signs of excessive fatigue in crewmembers.
- » Ensuring that working hours are adequately supervised and recorded.
- » Accepting their limitations.
- » Being able to decide when it is necessary to slow or halt operations temporarily.

## Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Relying on crewmembers to tell you if they are suffering from excess fatigue.
- » Accepting that high levels of fatigue are an acceptable norm.

## MOTIVATE AND CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Research has shown that people in work are typically motivated by satisfaction or pride in completing a good job, and the feeling of being part of the team – not just money. Leaders have an important role to play in creating conditions to encourage and maintain these “healthy” motivators. Demonstrating respect for staff is often a key part of this. Meeting someone’s basic needs is often the key to keeping their motivation high.

## Features that tend to work:

- » Involving staff in aspects of management, eg development of detailed working and operational practices.
- » Ensuring that feedback is always given on staff suggestions or questions.
- » Demonstrating interest in, and care for, crew welfare issues.
- » Taking part in and encouraging social activities involving the staff.

## Features that tend NOT to work:

- » One-off staff morale-boosting initiatives or reward schemes that could be perceived as

condescending or trivial.

- » Involving staff in theory but in practice take little note of their inputs.

## COMMUNICATE AND LISTEN CLEARLY

The ability to communicate clearly is important at all levels in an organisation. For a master, most often the key issue is how to encourage better two-way rather than one-way communication, balancing authority and approachability. Being open to criticism is a part of this.

## Features that tend to work:

- » Holding safety tours and informal discussions with all levels.
- » Ensuring that your listening skills are adequate. If necessary obtain training or coaching in effective listening.
- » Implementing an “open door” policy for crewmembers who wish to see you.
- » Ensuring that there are no barriers preventing the open reporting of safety incidents and near-misses. If necessary consider using a confidential reporting system.
- » Cultivating an atmosphere of openness through your own personal management style and everyday interactions.

## Features that tend NOT to work:

- » Declaring a “no-blame” policy without acknowledging the need for discipline.
- » Suggesting schemes that are poorly followed up and maintained.
- » Holding safety tours that become primarily an excuse to check up on crew and chastise them. ■

\* Source: belbin.com

To comment on these management styles or to suggest your own visit [TheCrewReport.com/IssueFocus](http://TheCrewReport.com/IssueFocus)

At Mega Marine, Captain Carsten Franik is active in yacht brokerage, supervision of new builds and supporting shipyards and yacht crew with consultancy and human resources services. [mmyacht.com](http://mmyacht.com)