

Bridge team without teamwork



Safety: Eddie Janson

Captain Eddie Janson of MariTrain AB, instructor and consultant in maritime safety, points the Shipgaz spotlight at safety related matters.

In the previous issue of Shipgaz we could read about the grounding of the chemical tanker Maria M. According to the investigation report from the Swedish Transport Agency the main contributing factors were: that the master was not familiar with the bridge equipment, that he took over the conn on the bridge without clearly stating so, that the master had problems receiving information from the officers on board and that he acted in a way so the third officer did not want to challenge him.

How can something like this happen to an experienced master with 45 years at sea? If we continue to look at these causes we can find the human factor behind all of them.

Why was the master not familiar with the bridge equipment?

According to the ISM code “the company should ensure that the master is properly qualified for com-

»Hopefully the younger generation of captains will enforce a more team oriented management style.«

OCIMF Vessel Inspection Questionnaires

3.6: Have senior deck officers attended bridge team management courses?

TMSA 5.3.3:

Vessel operators provide bridge resource management training courses for all deck officers.

mand”. In this case he was not. According to the report he mixed up the rudder indicator and the rate of turn indicator. He had been on board for two days. The vessel had a safety management certificate and their managers had a document of compliance, so there must have been a procedure for familiarization in place. We do not know if this procedure had been adhered to, but we can say for sure that the master was not familiar with the bridge equipment.

Why did the master take over the conn on the bridge without clearly stating so?

According to the STCW code the

master shall inform specifically that he assumes the responsibility.

Why did the master have problems with receiving information from the officers and why did not the third officer want to challenge him?

The Italian master was 66 years, the Filipino third officer 38 years and this was his first contract as an officer in charge of a navigational watch. It is easy to understand that the third officer did not want to challenge the master. He was new as an officer and had respect for an experienced captain, a captain that according to the VDR had called someone “idiot” at at least two times during the approach. If the third officer’s respect was due to the master’s age and experience or caused by fear we do not know. The captain is in this case practising an old management style. Hopefully the younger generation of captains will enforce a more team oriented management style.

In addition, the cultural background of Filipinos and Italians has to be taken into account here as well. Both Filipinos and Southern Europeans usually have a “high power distance”, the definition of which is that the superior does not wish to delegate or share power but wish to distin-



PHOTO: JOHANNES SPRANIS

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guish themselves as much as possible from those who have no power, while the subordinates have no initiative and need supervision. This high power distance creates a bridge team without teamwork but will result in a one man show.

We do not wish to change anyone's culture, but we want everyone to be aware of our cultural background so we can take it into account. The master is the team leader on the bridge and it is his responsibility to create a team spirit, taking into account all team members' different abilities.

All of the causes listed are proof of lack of bridge resource management although many officers today attend Bridge Resource Management (BRM) courses.

BRM is a course that was originally developed from the airline industry's Crew Resource Management (CRM). The work to convert the CRM training programme into BRM was carried out by Scandinavian Airlines Systems, The Swedish Club and six other major maritime organisations. Now that engineers are included in the target group for the training the name has changed to Marine Resource Management (MRM). The MRM course aims at creating good team leaders and team members by addressing issues related to leadership, management styles, culture, communication, automation, stress, fatigue etc.

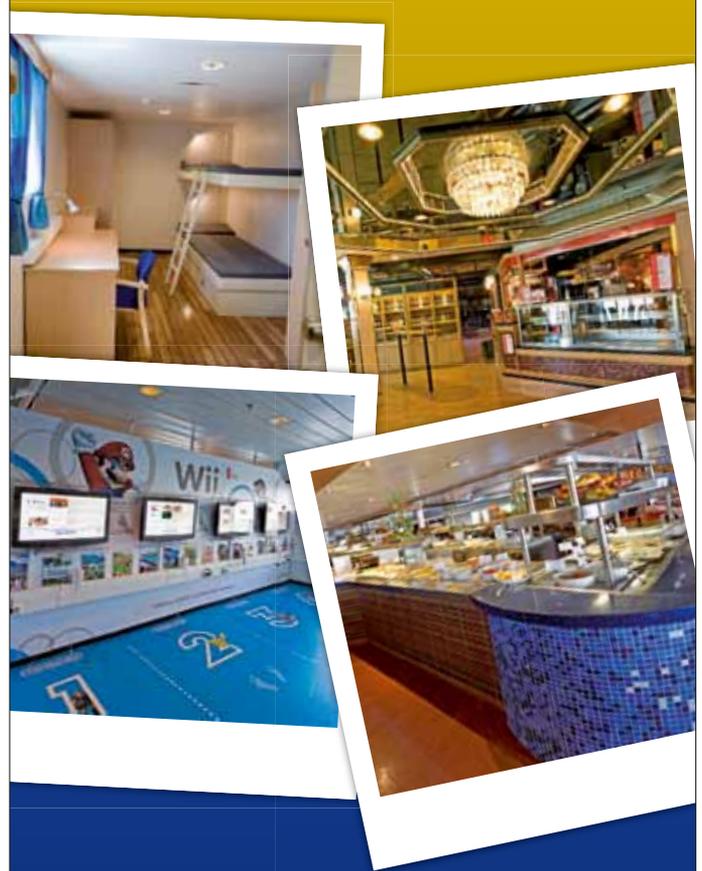
Bridge Team Management (BTM) normally has a totally different syllabus. Most BTM courses are based on the IMO model course 1.22 - Ship Simulator and Bridge Teamwork, which includes bridge procedures, ship handling and passage planning.

It is very surprising that none of these courses are mandatory for officers in charge of a navigational watch. We know that the most common cause for accidents is the human factor, therefore it would be beneficial if both BRM/MRM and BTM were mandatory courses with refresher courses every five years. *

STCW SECTION A-VIII/2

→ 23.3 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall continue to be responsible for the safe navigation of the ship, despite the presence of the master on the bridge, until informed specifically that the master has assumed that responsibility and this is mutually understood.

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