



EMBED COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AMONG MARITIME LEADERS

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While traditional leadership is crucial for guiding teams and maintaining control, strengthening collaborative leadership takes performance to the next level. The reason behind this is that collaborative leadership draws on the collective skills, knowledge, and expertise of the entire team. When leadership teams work together, sharing insights and ideas, the result is better informed decision-making leading to more effective problem solving, enhanced safety, and improved overall performance.

What collaborative leadership means

In an environment with collaborative leadership, officers value everyone's contributions equally and make shared decisions, creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels heard, respected, and valued for their opinions and contributions. The core principle is that every member's input matters, with the goal of reaching decisions that reflect the collective insights and ideas of the entire team.

Collaborative leadership also means that everyone's professional knowledge and expertise is invited and respected. It's not about "the boss" or one officer making all the decisions. When teams collaborate, they bring together different perspectives, ideas, and strengths to create innovative solutions.

Officers who embrace a collaborative leadership style prioritise cooperation, open communication, and collective problem-solving, stimulating a work culture on board with a high level of psychological safety.

Traditional leadership vs. collaborative leadership

Traditional and hierarchical leadership principles

generally involve centralized authority and top-down decision-making – 'Since I'm the officer in charge I make the decisions.'

When a Captain who applies traditional or hierarchical leadership is considering e.g. how to avoid rushed job preparations during operations, he/she will decide on a new approach without involving those who perform the work or his officer team. Down the hierarchy all crew members are expected to respect and apply this decision and execute this approach despite the fact that they were not involved in the decision-making process.

The same situation in a collaborative leadership perspective would mean that the captain being a collaborative leader invites input from various crew ranks respecting their views and experiences. The team, along with the leaders are involved in the process of finding the best solution. Through open dialogue and collaboration, ideas are exchanged, and the team, when necessary, makes a collective decision that foster greater accountability for the performance.

Core principles of collaborative leadership

To start feeling the benefits of collaborative leadership it is of great importance to understand the principles to be applied by any officer.

- **Shared decision-making:** Collaborative leadership means getting input from all officers helping make informed and aligned decisions. It means acknowledging the value of diverse perspectives and insights and genuinely looks for input and feedback.
- **Collective intelligence:** Collaborative leaders recognize and appreciate

the strengths of any officer's/ crew members unique knowledge, diverse experiences, skills, and background. They use each person's strengths to solve problems, innovate, and achieve common goals.

- **Reduces feelings of isolation among the officers:** Feelings of isolation can negatively impact an officers' ability to lead. Factors like reduced social interaction, lack of recognition, and communication challenges can contribute to this. The more support and connection the officers have from each other, the higher the levels of happiness and job satisfaction are achieved.
- **Mutual respect and trust:** Transparent and open communication is at the heart of collaborative leadership. The goal is to create an environment where team members are valued and respected. They should feel welcome to share their thoughts without fear of judgment.
- **The sense of belonging:** Collaborative leaders recognize the significance of building relationships among team members. An onboard work culture where everyone feels connected, valued, and aligned on common objectives boosts morale and encourages team members to support one another, fostering a stronger and more cohesive team dynamic.
- **As a leadership team be open to change and new ideas:** To work as a collaborative leadership team a prerequisite is to show empathy and compassion. This means being ready to take in new perspectives, thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Doing so also sends a strong signal to the rest of the crew that you care about

others perspective and that you as a leadership team present yourself as a bonded team.

- **Value others equally:** Each member of the leadership team should try and put themselves in an environment where their professional expertise has minimal credibility or importance. A place where they "have to be like everyone else." For example, join a sports team where they rely on each team member's individual ability and the team's ability to perform as a unit. Each leadership member can draw learnings from that as they find places where they either have fun or feel uncomfortable.

Now, you may argue that there is not always time and space to apply collaborative leadership. Quick, here-and-now decisions may be required in dire situations. Therefore, here are examples of when collaborative leadership makes the most sense:

Examples of when to apply collaborative leadership

This is where the officers can support each other in critical matters as

well as making sure to be aligned on routine and development matters.

- Dealing with crew issues and where decisions can rely on personal relations and perceptions
- Responding to review reports, hereunder Safety Delta Diagnosis reports
- Organisation of audits, vettings or inspections
- Giving clear directions on safety, ensuring a uniform approach
- When improved crew performance levels are to be managed

Examples of when to apply collaborative leadership with crew

Collaborative leadership towards the crew is especially important during situations where the inputs of many people can help ensure better decisions.

- Toolbox talks
- Operational debriefings
- Planning work involving many people.
- Management of crew issues
- Organisation of audits, vettings or inspections
- Performing risk assessments



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