



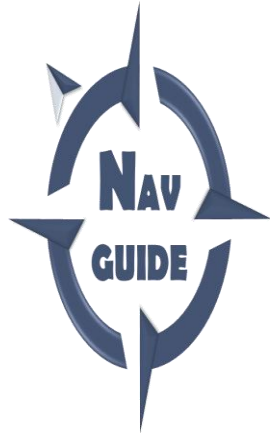
DECODING THE YOUNG MILLENNIAL MARINER (AND GEN Zs)

Inside the minds of the Young Seafarer:

**The largest and least understood
workforce in today's maritime world!**

Their possibilities and triggers!

**CAPTAIN
DEBASHIS BASU**



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Ordering Information:

Quantity sales. Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the publisher at the email address above.

Printed by Navguide Solutions. Printed in India.

Third Edition, 2026.



Venue: Safety4Sea Singapore Forum, 26th October 2023

Topic: The Pulse of the Young Generation of Seafarers

Watch on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/EMLqVG9GMPg>

*This book is dedicated to the gentleman
who taught me how to write it.*

*My loving father,
Arun K. Basu*

*And a lady who inspired me to.
My loving wife, Ishani.*

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Millennials & The Gen-Z!

Dear Paul,

How have been all these days?
Your mom and I miss you.
Please log out of Instagram and
come downstairs for something
to eat.

Love, Dad.



A mixed bag

M

illennials & GenZ. Often known by their predecessors as a bunch of lazy,

entitled, purposeless youngsters who just want free food, bean bags and a lot of money. Why do we need to talk about them?

Well, because how they think and feel matters to us now more than ever.

Who are these people?

The term *millennials* refers to people born between 1981 and 1996. Gen Z is the generation that followed them. In this book, we shall broadly talk about the *young millennials and Gen-Z*, now in their mid-teens to late twenties or thirties. As per BIMCO and ICS reports, they account for the largest single chunk of the maritime workforce.

That's the kicker. They are all around—running companies, handling key positions and taking decisions. What's more, they are growing, followed by the Gen-A kids who will take over from them soon enough.



As such, the '*all of them from this generation are the same*' blanket approach will not work for us for very long. We need to delve deeper into their minds and discover what's in there!

As a master mariner, I have always been fascinated by how the young mind works. In my twenty-three years of sea experience working with the young generation from all over the world, I have always been excited about the fantastic quirks that, if given the right environment, could work wonders! Work-life, especially at sea, will become much simpler and stress-free if we can unleash its true potential.

How to decode the Young Mariner

Have these thoughts ever crossed your mind:

The young generation does not seem to be interested in anything!

We have created excellent procedures; how do we get them to follow?

We are spending so much on training; how do we develop an interest in them?

How do we stop unfortunate incidents like suicide and alcohol abuse?

I founded [Navguide Solutions](#) to create a software that would be a pocket mentor for every seafarer. In the process, we had to study the behavioural psychology of the present generation without judging them. We had to reverse-engineer traditional concepts, and as a result, today our app, *Guide2Inspections*, is used by tens of thousands of seafarers on hundreds of vessels, upskilling them organically.

This book is based on extensive studies on the young mind, coupled with my personal experience and interpretation while dealing with them. I hope you will be able to relate.

I may, at times, focus on training methods because that is what I do, but my primary purpose is not to tell you *how to teach* the young millennials their jobs! On the contrary, we need to check our efforts! Not every method we use is working!

My purpose is to create an awareness of how they think.

If we truly understand this generation, our approach may change. Here in this book, we will try to get inside their minds, see how they roll, what drives them, what motivates them, what their principles are and how to work towards achieving the best for them and your organisation.

If you are working with a millennial, it is not the time to teach; it is time to learn.

Captain Debashis Basu

Founder and Owner

Navguide Solutions LLP

PS: (Gender disclaimer) This book is written in the form of a conversation with you, the reader. I have used the male form several times. They refer equally to female individuals and female seafarers.

PS: At various points in the book, I will ask you to **brainstorm** and let me know. Connect with us at contact@navguidesolutions.com and let us know.

Problem or opportunity?



Smarty-pants

It was 2008, and I was a freshly promoted Chief Officer on an oil tanker.

As always, I had some fantastic people and some who sucked. Worse yet, the 'fantastic' category started realising they were that good!

...and then they became over-smart and sucked harder!

There was a deck cadet with me. He was better at his job than many of my deckhands at the time. I could trust him with valve overhauling jobs or could keep him in the pump room during discharge operations. When it came to hands-on work, he would do it better than the deck fitter! We all encouraged him, hoping to keep him motivated. I was happy, for a few days anyway.

He started feeling indispensable in a few days. He behaved rudely with his coworkers, even seniors. One day, he spoke back to me, undermining my authority.

This story does not have a sad ending. But think. It's a moment of truth!

What would you do with a person like that?

Would you tolerate this behaviour because he is so valuable to you? Will he respect you and grow in his job if you do? Or will you sign him off at the next port?

A transformation

I did not react at the time. Sometime later, I called and told him not to come to work until I told him to. *He would get paid; he just did not have to work.*

For two days, he enjoyed freedom.

He then started feeling miserable; he was losing the respect of everyone he had gained over months! Even his less intelligent colleagues began making fun of him. His importance was being overridden. He was losing ground in the only place he thought he was good at, the only job he knew! It created a strange drive in him. He came back, requesting me to allow him to work. That's when I explained to him that no one is indispensable. If he were not humble, his learning curve would stop.

He was a changed man after that. Still efficient, but serious, curious and humble; not over-smart! This incident taught him humility, and it taught *me*, a young manager at the time, a few valuable lessons too!

One, people working for us or with us are often young and hot-headed. If we can channel the anger inside into creating something useful, we earn genuine respect.

And two, it showed me what drives the Millennial generation!

Pattern recognition

No, I do not wish to categorise young seafarers as one big gigantic hot-headed group!

We often generalise a group of people based on age or experience, ridiculing them without knowing their strengths. Does this conversation sound familiar?

"How many years have you been in this rank?"

"One"

"Eh, really? Aren't you too young to hold the position?"

"Did you look at what I can do?"

"No. But people must have the experience to run a place like this!"

Do we care?

Every generation saw the next generation and thought the world was going to hell! It is a vicious cycle.

In today's maritime world, far too many are unwilling to consider what the young generation needs. That creates a big rift! In the ship's microcosm, it creates underproductive management styles. At an organisational level, it turns the youngsters off. Instead, let us be non-judgmental and see how their traits and idiosyncrasies can help all of us grow together.

I have spent some time studying what triggers a young seafarer. Some of what I have learnt may come as a shock. In the following chapters, I will discuss broad, often disruptive strategies that work when used effectively. I am a man on the job! This is not a theory; these strategies are practical and hands-on.

That said, these are not universal. There are old souls who throw all these concepts to the test! As they say, exceptions are there only to prove the rule!

Relatability

Imagine talking to a class of eight-year-olds². You and I are up on the stage.

Our job: To motivate them to study science!

I tell them:

"You are all too young. When you are old enough, you will understand how interesting science can be; how it can benefit you! Believe me."

And then you get on the stage, smile, and you say:

"Have you ever heard of the red planet Mars? Now, a show of hands – Who wants to be on a rocket to Mars? I can promise you that if you work hard enough, you will surely book your seat on that mission fifteen years from now!"

You win that round, hands down!! Isn't it?

Relatability is non-negotiable.

Are they Unmotivated?

The young generation often gets categorised as being unmotivated, but in reality, we usually mean one of two things:

"We are trying to motivate them, but it does not seem to work!" OR

"It's not our job to motivate!?! They should come motivated from within!"

These excuses mean that what we are doing is not enough. The effort we spend is pointless if the job is not done. To motivate, we need to relate to them.

There is a ton of expertise available. The wine is good. We must now work on the package. It is equally tasty in the old box and may be sold, but in a new package, it becomes exciting! People in the store will pick it up even if you don't push it.

That is where a major opportunity lies.



Dopamine addicted generation



The Brain's Reward Circuit

Let me guess: You woke up with your phone next to you this morning!

What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you wake up? For many, it is: "Lemme see if I received any messages." Before we step foot on the ground or say Good morning to anyone, we pick up our cell phones from the bedside table and check notifications. As of 2025–2026, the average urban adult globally spends approximately 6.5–7.5 hours per day, with younger demographics often exceeding 9 hours per day.



Our phones are our best friends. Why?

One share, a few likes or just one poke from a special someone; the feeling of being validated; the trauma of being unfriended; and the comfort of being connected to this virtual world is much stronger than we can imagine! It releases a chemical called Dopamine in our system.

Addiction to Dopamine

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that activates the brain's reward circuit! It produces euphoric feelings, like a child who receives a long-awaited reward. Additionally, it pushes our memory centre to remember this pleasant feeling. As it fades away, it leaves you miserable and creates a longing for more.

Dopamine is also triggered by alcohol, gambling, weed and sex. In small doses, it is a beautiful hormone. It helps us feel a sense of achievement and blissful joy, which makes us human and helps us strive for our goals. I am sure you have experienced this feeling!



Here's the catch. Alcohol is not bad; too much of it is terrible. Gambling is fun; too much gambling is a disaster! Like any other addiction, when too much dopamine gets released, we are hooked! We cannot do without our phones for even one minute. You know what I'm talking about, we all know that guy in a meeting with his phone hidden in his lap, face-up, and you have seen him peeking into it off and on, haven't you?

The only reality

If you work in the real world, you are guilty of using your cellphones for virtually everything. But it's one step further if you are young and alive today!

For some, *this* may be the *only* reality. Their parents handed them over the cell phone when they were two to keep them quiet. And just like that, through no fault of their own, they became this dopamine-addicted generation!

Let us leave the good or bad for another day and instead see whether we can use this to our advantage.

Onboard Discipline

It's the Master's wheelhouse!

There are specific protocols to be followed if you are sailing. The one thing more critical than competence is discipline! Discipline is paramount!

We cannot allow our juniors to use their cell phones during work or in meetings. However, according to several research papers^{4/5}, 96% of the young generation seafarers use mobile devices during their free time. As per Sailors' Society's 2025 Cadet Report — drawing on 9,000+ Gen Z seafarers — found ~70% of cadets spend more than three hours online every day, with 70–75% of European and South-East Asian cadets self-reporting some level of digital addiction." Even on ships with limited internet, everyone rushes to their cell phones after a watch.

Way back in 2014, mobile-only internet users surpassed the desktop-only group. The number has grown ever since. Younger the mind, more portable it wants access to be.

Here are a few things we can do to make this addiction work for their benefit:

Three approaches that work

1. Create information delivery channels for all portable devices

Checklists, instructions, and training materials customised to a mobile device create a subconscious connection, hence already moving up on the acceptability scale.

When we want to know something, we would rather approach a friend. Learning from someone I am comfortable with puts me at ease. For many, their mobile devices are their best friends! They have grown up with it; they wake up and sleep with it! When they felt bad, they found it comforting; when they felt good, they reached out to their friends through it! It bears a subconscious validation—the path of least resistance!

2. Use video content

YouTube—the world's second-largest search engine. Guess who is most addicted? Young adults! If you wanted to make a sandwich, would you go for a cookbook, a cooking class, or would you just type on YouTube, “*How to make the best sandwich in the world?*”

YouTube has created the world’s largest Video SOP collection and made it addictive.

Learning from videos is now a legitimate way to learn a skill. There are videos for practically everything; our youngsters know that too well! Yet, we keep creating written SOPs—even in 2026!

We have had videos in the world of maritime training, but with a massive drawback! They are too long; *they are not seen; they have to be forced*. People see them out of compulsion, which is a fear response. Secondly, they are not portable; they are not on their mobile devices! There is a subconscious resistance; even with great content, they are not attractive. It’s just a job!



Slight tweaks would change the game completely.

We decided to create videos that were 3 to 5 minutes long, taken live on board vessels, visualising operations and creating well-researched video SOPs. The camera movement, the background music or the narration was natural, just the way a senior would teach a junior. This connected at a deeper level, and we saw a massive spike in adoption. We then embedded it in an app and gave it to them just before they did a job. That simple concept created a measurable boost in performance and took us all the way to the IMO as a game-changing method of upskilling.

3. Gamification

Almost every maritime course we have done came with a test. Yet, these tests seldom felt attractive to the seafarer; they felt *like a job!*

Why? Here’s what happens: One question; five options. One of them is right, and the system knows which one! The system is trying to impart knowledge. It is the typical authoritarian approach to classroom education, dating back a few hundred years. It made sense to the earlier generations. But, when you grow up knowing that you can have an answer to any question, the traditional approach does not attract you at all.

You do it because your company is asking you to!

We decided to develop interactive games as testing tools. Games which create an involvement. Creating a scenario where we can interact with other people, see their reactions and expressions. It seems less labour-intensive than answering boring questions in front of a monochrome screen, yet more enticing to a young seafarer! Later in this book, I have given examples of such gamified modules.

The engagement is organic. The message goes – *"If you know your stuff, I will help you know it better. If you don't, I will show you. I don't want to lead. I want to walk by you to guide you only when you need it! And let's have fun while we are at it."*

Do you see the difference here?

Association of Dopamine

The famous 1927 study¹⁰ by Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov on Classical conditioning demonstrated something peculiar and interesting. Classical conditioning means that a specific stimulus causes an appropriate response. For instance, if you see food (a stimulant), you will salivate (a response). You didn't need a psychologist to tell you that! Salivation at the sight of food is an unconditioned response.

Now he took it one step further. He rang a bell every time he fed the dogs. Unlike food, an unconditioned stimulus, the bell became a conditioned stimulus. This is because the dogs learned that when the bell rang, food would arrive. Pavlov formed a paired association between an unconditioned stimulus (dog food) and a conditioned stimulus (a bell). The dogs were conditioned that the bell meant food was on its way, and they learned! Eventually, the food and the bell elicited the same response, i.e. salivation.

This applies to all of us. The mobile phone is subconsciously associated with the release of Dopamine for many of us, especially in the younger generation. Since dopamine is addictive, we reach out to our phones, and anything on it seems naturally acceptable.

Do you see the potential in this concept to transform youngsters?



The Connected generation



Six degrees of separation

A wheat farmer in Kansas received an envelope in his mail one day. It had the name "Alice" and a set of instructions for him. *Alice* happened to be a Boston divinity school student with no connection to this farmer whatsoever. The farmer followed the instructions, and a few days later, Alice received this envelope in Boston.

This farmer was among hundreds of participants in an ambitious scientific experiment. His objective was to reach Alice, a total stranger. All he had to do was pass on the folder to someone in his social circle who might be more likely to know Alice, who then took up the same task. The farmer had delivered the package to an Episcopalian minister in his hometown, who then mailed it to a colleague in Boston, where it soon reached its target.

This was an interesting experiment carried out by sociologists in the USA over 50 years ago. This study, also called the *small-world research*, was done by Stanley Milgram, one of the most renowned social psychologists. With hundreds of subjects, it proved that a randomly chosen American could send the envelope to another fellow American whom he did not know by an average of six transfers. In other words, people were separated from one another by six people on average, hence – *Six degrees of separation*.

The age of Social Media

Well, this was before the age of Facebook, TikTok, X(formerly Twitter) and Instagram! It's funny if you think of it now. Six degrees is too much!

For the most part, we are all now connected with one or two dots at the most. You can contact Donald Trump tomorrow morning on X and tell him what you feel about his policy matters. If you want to get in touch with your childhood friend, your long-lost lover, or drop a comment on Elon Musk's post tomorrow morning, it's just a few clicks.

Social Media came as a tool to connect people worldwide, and they have.

Our young millennials are more connected to each other than ever. They are in touch with their kindergarten friends, that one-time-coffee friend and everyone in between!

This connection has created a different power-shift too.

The power shift

A few hundred years back, physical strength determined your social status. Before the industrial revolution, if you were strong and capable, you could work more, and you were rich! We then invented machines to do our physical jobs for us.

Now, if you are strong, you may guard our doors or be a bodyguard. Anything more, and physical strength cannot help you. You need information; you require skills.

That led to the age when knowledge and ability determined your social position.

Well, that was until the information age hit us!

Welcome to the AI age

Information and skill largely determine your social importance, but not for long.

Ask a sixty-year-old a math problem, and he will still try to do a mental calculation. Ask a forty-five-year-old, and he'll reach for the calculator on his iPhone. Ask a twenty-year-old, and he'll ask ChatGPT — and then ask it to explain the answer.



This is a dynamic shift in concepts. A new age is dawning. They call it the AI revolution. Information is no longer a valuable commodity.

We cannot think of getting information the hard way. Knowledge, even specific ones, is at your fingertips! The Information Age is already in the rear-view mirror. ChatGPT launched in November 2022; by 2025, 58% of adults under 30 in the US — and an even higher share of mariners under 30 worldwide — used it weekly. Information isn't merely free anymore. It's actively rewritten and personalised for you, in seconds, in conversational English. Your young 3rd Officer doesn't look things up. He asks.

Surprisingly, it often is more reliable too. If I had a degree in World History and you wanted the name of the first in command in Hitler's army, would you consult Google or me? I might not remember, but Google sure does.

This fact bears a tremendous potential that we are not tapping into!

The power of experience sharing

Our profession involves several aspects where experience is key! Our expertise is one of the most valuable things we can share.

A few years back, I was sailing with a 2nd Officer who was thorough with the JRC ECDIS! He just knew it like the back of his hand. Internet was newly installed onboard— a luxury

compared with the always-on Starlink most vessels now carry.. His friends contacted him personally for help. He could answer them much faster than they would look it up in the manual and even tell them specific areas of the manual to refer to.

There are Chief officers that know the Nakakita Valve system and the Alfa Laval Ballast Water Treatment system better than anybody; 3rd Engineers who can troubleshoot a boiler problem like a pro. Can we all benefit from their knowledge?

We once had a problem with the Main Engine exhaust valve, and we lost over 12 hours on a loaded voyage. The vessel had an ME Engine. Engineers struggled to find the root cause, with the makers' help, literally racking their brains! Finally, the problem was found in the PCB; we rectified it in 20 minutes! We lost the twelve hours, but the Chief Engineer became much more equipped and experienced to diagnose such issues with the ME-Engine – Something, the maker's manual, could never have taught him!

Get them connected

You know a certain thing because you have worked on it.

Another seafarer in a different part of the world is struggling with this equipment, trying to find a solution he needs to know right now!

The two of you can and should benefit from each other's knowledge. Yet, there is no common platform to connect the dots and make this information available to the collective information pool.

What about Company circulars?

Circulars talk about problems and sharing experiences, but we are missing the whole point. While our company circulars are very informative, they do not tap into the point of interest of the millennial mind!! The young seafarer feels no *personal connection* to them; they do it because it's an instruction to follow.

Like it or not, this generation of millennials wants things to be exciting and interesting! Imagine the amount of entertainment surrounding them. And honestly, every generation before them wanted things to be interesting too! Only options were fewer then.

The solution

So what do we do about all this? Try Cross platform mentoring.

Cross-platform mentoring is not just feasible; it is very productive. Modern learning management systems such as the one we use can achieve that. We connect two people on the learning platform to solve each other's problems in a controlled environment.

Allowing the young generation to share their experiences changes the game.

Firstly, most young millennials would be happy to contribute if appreciated for it! It gives them a sense of purpose, driving them to enhance their skill sets in the long run.

Sharing a particular piece of information does not only benefit the person who receives it; it also activates the reward centre in the person who shares it. A positive comment shoots that satisfaction to ecstasy; it is a direct dopamine-delivery system! A positive comment on a blog post from someone he does not know is more motivating to many young seafarers than a bonus!

Secondly, the person receiving the information may have just saved a disaster or at least a significant amount of time searching out the solution.

Experience sharing may not be limited to in-house use. With some tweaks, we can use this information pool to benefit mariners and superintendents worldwide and overcome their challenges. Connecting the minds of our juniors in a string, under supervision, is a total game changer!

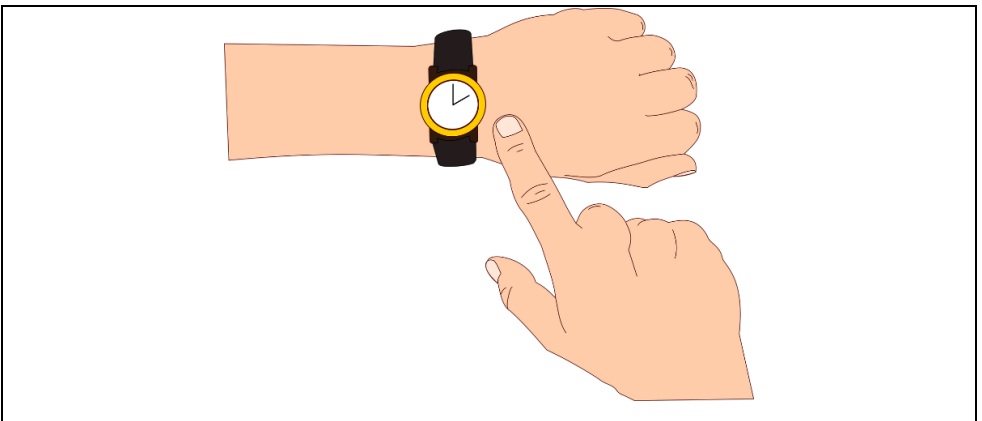
Brainstorm

- Can you imagine other options apart from the ones we discussed to connect young minds so they can benefit from one another in their shipboard knowledge? How about a *Quora* for Mariners? A Custom AI trained on your company SMS, fleet's circulars and SOPs? Let us know, and we'll make it work.
- What will make the younger generation keen to learn? Share with us one such idea. Try thinking beyond conventional methods; think out of the box.

[Mail us at contact@navguidesolutions.com]



The Impatient generation



Here's the myth about attention span— it is NOT just seven (7) seconds, as some studies claim. MIT Media Lab (Glasp 2024) data shows a 36.7% decline in sustained attention on digital content since 2000 but it has become “pickier”, not shorter. — we'll happily binge eight hours of Netflix, but scroll past anything that doesn't earn its **first three seconds**. So if I lose you on the next page, It's because I didn't earn it.

I don't want to wait for three days for my Amazon delivery. That's too long!! I would rather subscribe to Amazon Prime and get it the next day.

Why would I wait a week to watch the next episode of Game of Thrones, or House of the Dragon, or whatever's trending this month?? I have Netflix. I'll just binge when I want!

Want love but preoccupied? Nervous about meeting someone? No social skills? Two words - Dating apps! Swipe right, and Bam! You're a stud just like that!

This is the time of instant gratification, a time of impatience.

This concept is most challenging to grasp for people born before the eighties but it is equally hardwired into young minds! They got dealt a hand like that! Is it a bad hand?

The Classic Deep-Shallow Argument

For people born in the seventies or earlier, it may be very shallow to see that youngsters have a miniscule attention span! It is frustrating, literally!

They have strived to reach where they are today. They have learnt everything the hard way! They had to sit through manuals and drawings to identify faults. They had to read journals and magazines to stay updated. Our youngsters do not have time; they think they can learn anything and everything from the internet. Should things be so easy? Aren't these just shallow shortcuts?

It turns out, learning most things *has* become *that easy*! Just because something is simple to learn today does not mean it is substandard information. **Technology has brought us there.** The internet is a wonderland! If you have to know what to look for, you get it. Chances are, you are reading this book on the internet as well!

In 2016, while being a Master mariner with zero background in web design, I learnt how to build my website with one month of effort. My site ranked within the top 3% worldwide in 6 months. In 2018, I learnt how to create cross-platform apps for my website. In 2019 I launched Navguide Solutions, a global business from this knowledge. All this with just a few clicks and the internet, and while having another full-time job!

Today, with ChatGPT and Claude as pair-programmers, a Master mariner could build the same website in an afternoon and the cross-platform app in a weekend. The wall I had to climb between idea and execution barely exists anymore.

It's not just me. Information is available. If you are interested, it is there for you!

That is not to say there is no junk. Of a billion plus websites, many are just junk! But then, that was always the case. In the 20th century, there were good books and bad books; you

just had to know which one to choose. Today, you have to know where to look for; like all things, the more you practice, the better you are at it!

The Young generation believes learning must be easy, fun, comfortable and exciting to the very core! But they do not want substandard information; it's not a trade-off!

You cannot show me **One** skill set you cannot learn through the internet today!

Oh, wait.... There is one! You cannot learn how to be a seafarer from the internet. You need to smell and feel the salty wind on your face before that happens. Before that, we will not trust you as a seafarer!

I agree with that. Trying to learn your job without stepping on board a ship is like trying to take swimming lessons on the internet without hitting a pool. This is an acquired taste and an acquired skill.

The devil's advocate

But it's not about what I feel. For a moment, let me try to play the devil's advocate!

What would a young seafarer feel?

We find fantastic, hard-working kids from the nautical academy with their aspirations; and will to make an impact!



But their impatient nature kicks in. They look around and realize that this is nothing like what they expected! Over the first few months, they feel pretty useless on the ship. There are no simple ways to learn their skills unless they have

cooperative seniors. There are Books, checklists and Computer-based training. None of that interests them.

Most companies have moved away from Paper files to paperless computer-based SMS and checklists, calling it '*digitization*'. It might look modern, and it has reduced the job-pressure (thanks to CTRL+C and CTRL+V ☺), but it is still nowhere close to being interesting!

When the young mind thinks of simplified information, he does not imagine books on the PC or checklists on the computer! It's 2026, and the world has gone very far! Many of them soon realize they cannot make an impression or impact. Job satisfaction goes for a toss, some quit, some drag on because there is no other option.

To add to that, their seniors often typecast them as useless and unmotivated!

Two doors

There are two doors. We can go one of two ways from here.

One: The more common condescending approach.

"They 'must be motivated' to learn their jobs! We cannot take responsibility for their unrealistic expectations of sea life! They must go through the hardships of going through all relevant books and publications and slough to gain experience just like 'we' had."

Every generation felt the next ones were of no use; it is an easy argument. With this, we can absolve ourselves of any innovation and blame it on them.

In this approach, we are saying, *"We will keep giving you Books, checklists and SMS on the computer, the same things we had; We will call you to classes and give you lectures, We will call them CBTs instead of question papers to sound modern. We believe this is the only way to learn. You **will** learn this way, like it or not!"*

Two: A modern innovative approach

What if we met them halfway? What if we suited our methods to gel with them? Why not create short trigger content that can generate interest in the young mind?

Imagine a simple task like wearing an SCBA with all checks done. You have to get your hands dirty if you have to master the skill of wearing it in an emergency.

A short 5 minute guide is more appealing than learning from a manual. Spend a mere few minutes watching it, and go ahead and try it on your own!

Microlearning works

This is the miracle of microlearning. The idea is to leverage the power of learning in bits and pieces. Instead of expecting someone to attend a classroom course and become an expert in a few hours, we impart that same information in small chunks a few minutes every day, turning that person into a true expert, perhaps over a few months.



Watch on YouTube:

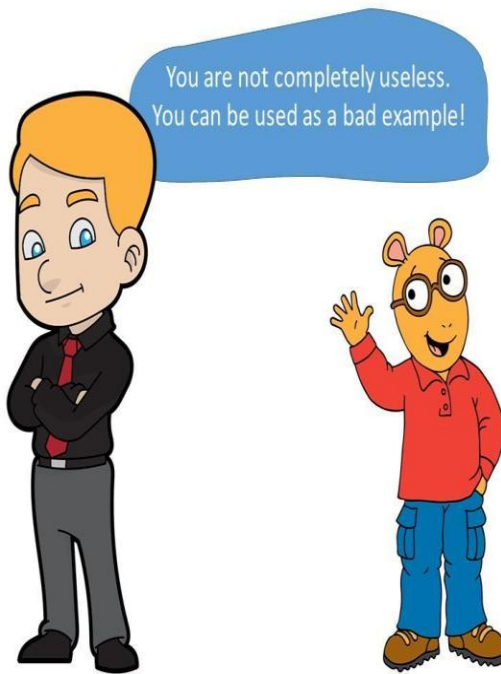
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KjVTTfJDEY>

Brainstorm: Write to us about your thoughts on microlearning or share an idea that will trigger the proper response in the



impatient young minds. [Mail us: contact@navguidesolutions.com]

Myths about the Young Seafarer



A costly mistake

I'm going to call out a few common myths!

You may or may not believe them, but these myths are widely accepted truths! What that means is that most decision-makers believe them! Whether or not we like it, industry decisions & policies are based on these fundamentals.

If they are myths indeed, we are being led in a direction slightly different from the most productive path each time. In other words, they adversely affect all of us!

Myth No. 1: Too much has changed!

Almost the entire industry is unanimous about this:

Too many things are changing too fast in the marine industry!

We all know Regulations are flipping over like pages of a book; they are becoming more and more stringent, strict rule implementations and personal fines are increasing, and so on. There are stricter control measures to prevent misconduct and non-compliance.

We attribute this as the leading cause of increasing Port State detentions, increase in job pressure and the young generation feeling disinterested in this profession.

Is that true, though?

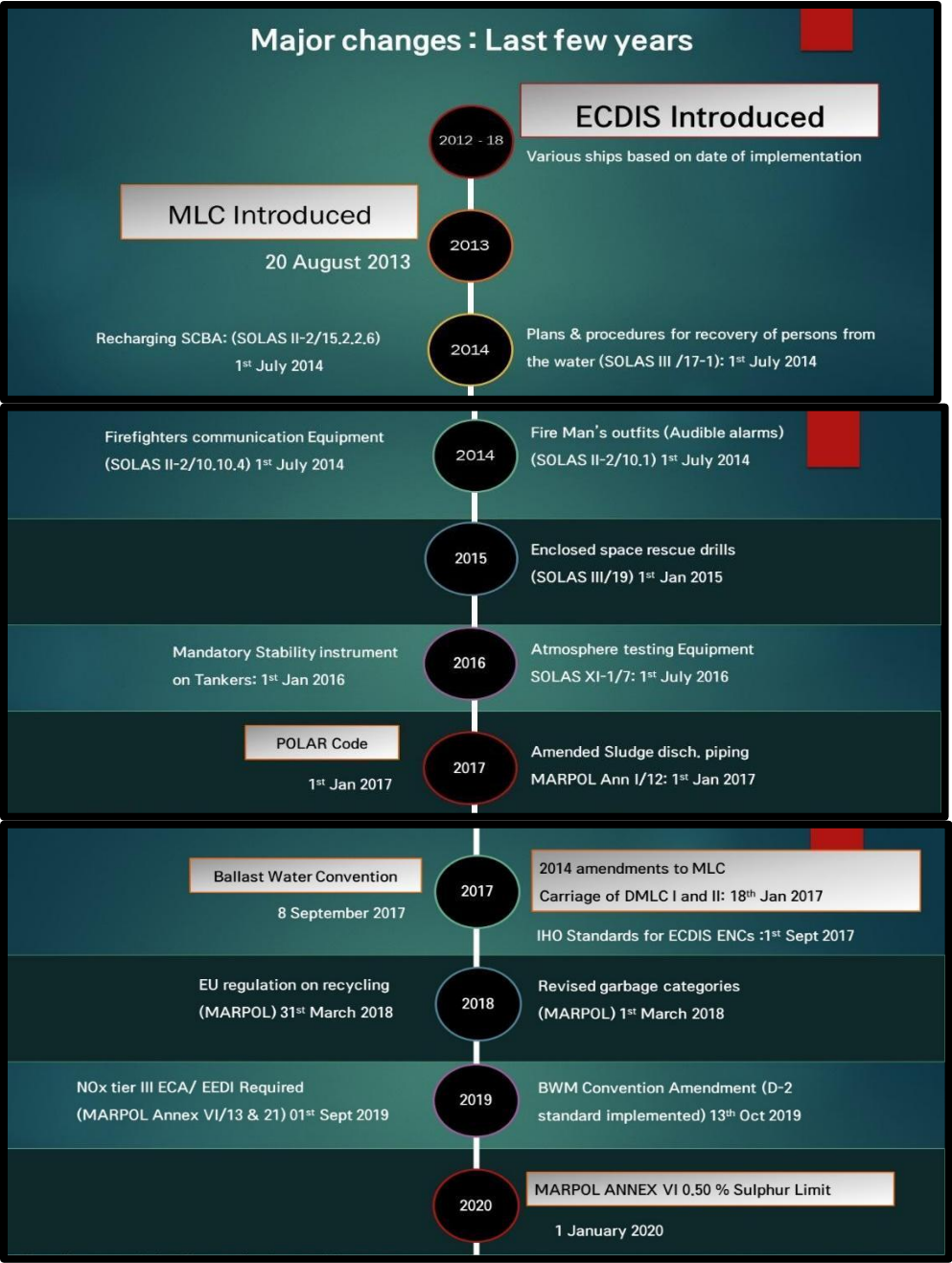
What are you comparing it with when you say 'too fast, too soon'? Is the change coming at a rate faster than our ability to deal with transitions? Are the changes causing the detentions and findings during audits, and loss of interest?

If you have been at sea for over forty years, you deserve a standing ovation! I cannot imagine living through SOLAS modified with 1974 amendments, Port state regimes getting implemented, MARPOL 73/78 introduced, OPA 90 and ISPS coming into force. They truly changed aspects of sea life like never before!

I joined the sea in 1998, and we still crib about changes. We always had SOLAS, MARPOL and OPA 90; we always knew the USCG and the AMSA!

Let us look at the changes over the last few years objectively.

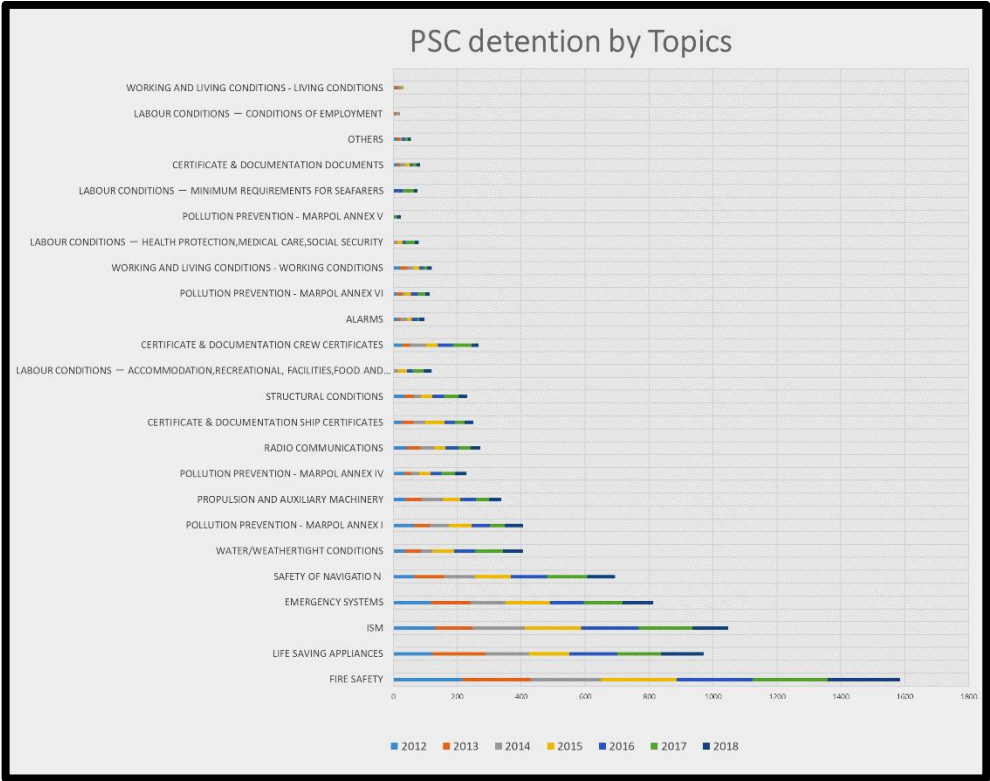
Significant changes over the last few years:



Let us now find out the leading cause of Port State detentions of the present era! Here is a study by class NKK using data from over 8000 ships over the same period.

And the winners are....

Fire Safety, LSA Code and ISM.



Yes, changes have come in. But it seems we keep faltering on the same rules and regulations for more than twenty-five years. One more thing:

Think about how the young millennial generation of seafarers has grown up. There was a flood of developments in the technological world; you have seen more changes in how we communicate, commute, play games, share experiences and live life in the last twenty years than in the two hundred years before that combined!!

If you are from the previous generation, changes might bother you. Guess who is not afraid of changes!! Yes! That generation who discards a phone every two years because it is outdated!! The young Millennial generation! You cannot scare them with changes!

Changes are their thing!

If they are not taking an interest in their jobs, perhaps attributing that to new regulations and changes would not be the most prudent thing to do.

Myth No. 2: Checklists are designed to perform!

To make sure things are in order, use a checklist!

Not only in our industry, many others still use conventional checklists (paper or electronic) to ensure they don't miss anything. In our industry, checklists come with a fatal flaw! We do not talk much about it because we fail to see the better alternative.

They say: *'If it ain't broke, do not fix it.'* I wish to replace that with: *'Just because something is working does not mean it can't be better.'*



For small jobs, checklists work just fine. If I wanted to test bridge controls or carry out a pre-arrival cargo system test, I would benefit from a checklist.

However, they seem impractical when we talk about a broader area, such as covering the entire ship! Have you used a Pre-SIRE checklist on a tanker or an Audit checklist for a bulk carrier.

Impractical distribution

In most companies, these checklists are divided by topics to cover. Let us take a Pre-Vetting checklist on a tanker divided based on SIRE 2.0

Enclosed Space Entry



Look at this question dealing with Enclosed space Entry. If I broke down this question on a checklist, you will have to check the documentation, train the people and physically go on deck to verify whether the enclosed spaces are correctly marked!

That completes this one question for you.

What is the next section? It is the Pumproom entry. This time you will have to check documentation again, train your staff and then enter the pumproom.

Topic-based distribution does not work for the seafarer. Would you remember to carry out cybersecurity checks while in the Engine control room? Would you remember to check the SWL of pad eyes in the Forecastle store?

The checklists ask you to move around in Brownian motion! No one (*and I mean **No One***) is doing that! The officer often sits at a computer ticking it off and, if in doubt, makes a sidenote to check it later.

The millennial problem

As if that distribution wasn't bad enough, let's add to this the millennial problem. Have you used Amazon, Facebook, YouTube or Google Gemini? Do you know why these apps or websites are so popular? Why are they used by over one-third of the world's population daily? Sure, they are informative and efficient, but **they are also damn simple to use!**

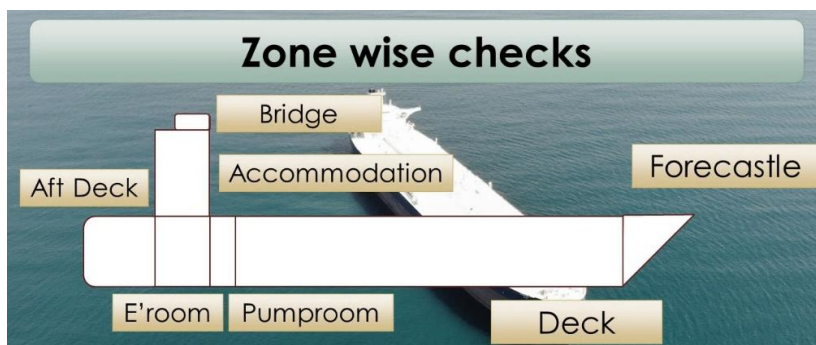
They are not for the intelligent. Companies spend billions of dollars to make those interfaces user-friendly; comfortable for a ninety-year-old, a three-year-old, a smart corporate Boss, a daily-wage earner and everyone in between! Statistically, if you want a piece of information and the website is slow or hard to read, you will quit within the first five seconds! You will jump to a clear, concise site that is easy to navigate. What does that say about the young generation's mindset?

Make checklists complicated, and you have lost them. They may use it because they have no other choice, but there will be no interest; that is half the battle lost.

Break the pattern

What if we considered how the mariner would move on board and organized checklists that way? Instead of dividing it by topics, why not go by zones?

Imagine a set of checks based on areas of the ship you would find them in, i.e. a Zone based checklist instead of a Topic-based one. This means if you are inspecting the Engine-room bottom platform today, you should see all physical checks that need to be done, irrespective of whether those are from MARPOL, SOLAS, ISPS, RISQ or SIRE. Paperwork is separated from physical checks. When you come to the Chief Engineer's office or control room, you will check all the Engine Room paperwork in one place.



This way, we have something we can actually follow. Your eyes get trained to detect physical aspects as you go about in that place. This distribution helps us optimize our rounds and minimize time while achieving superb results!

Myth No 3: Checklists help us know our jobs

What does a checklist necessarily do? It reminds you of something you already know, right? Let's say your checklist on the lifeboat will ask you to check the air bottle pressure and the fuel level or try out the engines! What if you did not know how to check the air bottle pressure? Can a checklist teach you that?

You probably have a checklist on board asking you to try out the 3-way valve in the Oily Water Separator; it assumes you know which valve it is and how to check it.

Brainstorm

Can you write an engine-room checklist which your Oiler can follow? Or a deck checklist that a deck boy can understand without any mentorship from seniors?

Instructional content

What if, instead of a checklist, we used a tool that tells you what to do and shows you how to do it without spending a single extra second?

YouTube. It is the second-largest search engine in the world! Over two billion searches worldwide per month and more than half of them start with a 'how to....'.

What does that tell you?

Young millennials want to learn from YouTube. From cooking a lasagna to building a backyard fence! They love videos that show them what to do in a short time. Even though unconventional, YouTube is the world's most comprehensive learning tool today.

This justifies the need of short skill-development videos as we discussed earlier. Why reel them in and make them genuinely interested? Most vessels do well in compliance because of the competence and control of the senior staff. We cannot find the young seafarers particularly interested in the training tools we have given them.

Isn't that risky, considering they will be our leaders in a few years? Isn't it time we made content that swung their interest?

Myth No. 4: No one can develop the eye of an inspector without the experience



This one is not entirely a myth. Imagine you had to share years of your experience with me.

How do you quantify a pool of experience?

Lazy answer – you cannot! Never!

Vessel Inspectors and auditors visit ships for a few hours and can often identify defects & non-compliances as soon as they step on board, which seafarers have missed. After all, it has come from visiting hundreds of vessels over the years! The difference is that between a chef and a cook, between a tailor and a designer!

They just have different visions!

Information on demand

What if those videos we spoke about earlier were as robust and detailed as an inspector's round? For this we need senior inspectors involved during the creation process. I have worked on this for over three and a half years, and it's a killer concept.

A twenty-four-year-old third officer is going to inspect the lifeboat. Do you ask him to study a checklist on the lifeboat or watch a five-minute video before he goes for it? What's more attractive an practical? Which one has a higher retention?

Brainstorm:

The third officer would not need any guide if the video was watched a couple of times, followed by the job. Can we say he now has a more advanced vision? Would you agree that this is as close as we can come to quantifying a pool of experience?

Myth No. 5: We have the best learning tools!

Of all the myths, this one is farthest from the truth and costs the most money. Companies spend millions in developing state-of-the-art institutes and course material! Extensive discussions and debates happen on Competence Management Systems on the importance of ensuring competence in the workplace.

The problem is it is not engaging enough to bring about a fundamental change!

If you were a cook and spent substantial time and money developing your culinary skills, justified that by your effort & investment, will that be enough? No. It won't. The question is very simple. *Can you cook good food? Can I eat it? Will I enjoy it?*

The real question is not how much money is spent. Is it effective?

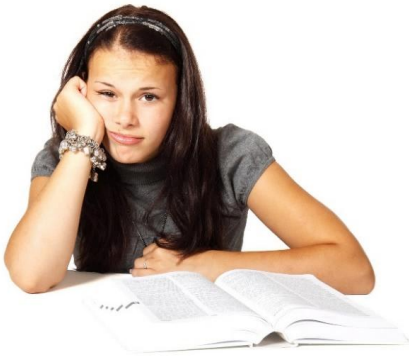
When was the last time you found a young millennial seafarer excited about the job? Have you seen him thrilled about the next CBT Training module or a visit to the training institute? No. That does not happen, unfortunately.
--

It does not resonate with the users because the decision never involved their needs.

Decision-makers assume – *We think it is interesting, they will indeed feel interested!* Well, it does not work that way anymore. This generation has entertainment all over!

If something is not attractive, *they are not sitting down for it; they are sitting through it!* Nothing is going in! If you have you seen people on a ship gather for a training video on a Saturday, you know what I mean. A few minutes into most videos, interest is lost.

When young seafarers feel motivated, their compliance level shoots up, and life for the seniors becomes stress-free. The overall compliance develops organically.



The self-serving bias¹¹

When we spend time and money developing content, we will find a way to justify it.

A student gets a good grade on a test and tells herself she studied hard. She gets a bad grade on another test and says the teacher doesn't like her or the test is unfair.

Athletes win a game and attribute their win to hard work and practice. When they lose the following week, they blame the loss on bad calls by the referees.

Welcome to what psychologists call the *self-serving bias*. We are familiar with how it works. Whether in casual coffee-table discussions or billion-dollar boardroom debates, we have a way to rationalize a specific occurrence based on what we feel is right. We believe them to be the absolute truth, and instead of checking them against facts, we cherrypick pieces of evidence to support our findings.

The fundamental question is: Companies are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to build training content. But is the millennial seafarer better trained than their predecessors?

Brainstorm

Did you agree with the concepts discussed? Do you think all this talk is useless and nothing can change the situation? Do you think the methods discussed might work? If not, can you suggest a plan that would work to get the young seafarer interested?

Tell us exactly what you feel. We promise to listen with an open mind, as always.

A new definition of Authority



***I just told ChatGPT I
was a Master Mariner
with 30 years'
experience, it said
"Fascinating!" & gave
me an upgrade plan!***

Did you think you'll be respected *just because you are senior?*

Welcome to the new world. Now you have to earn it!

I am, so you are!

We have come a long way. The Pharaohs of ancient Egypt ruled with a theocratic monarchy; the king ruled with the mandate of the heavens. People followed them to the grave, with or without their will, because they saw them as descendants of the Gods. Then came the leaders of the twentieth century. These leaders broadly believed in a more directive or autocratic (Top-down) management style. People believed they were not just superiors in rank but also in intellect, experience, skill and understanding. Leaders led, and others followed (a style called McGregor's Theory X). They used the word 'leaders' to mean what we now call 'managers'.

And now your teenage son would not listen to you!

Then and Now

Here's what changed between 'then' and 'now'.

Broadly, over the last few decades, parents worldwide started including their children in their decisions, household structures became more flexible, with everyone having a say, and the minds of the millennial generation started forming more and more opinions. They started taking confident decisions in real-life and were often validated, even encouraged for those decisions, starting from what they wanted to eat for breakfast to whom they wanted to go out with.

Secondly, many jobs started turning from being labour-intensive to white-collar. Everyone wanted their say, which made more sense in the workplace.

If there was a thin string of doubt in that, there came the tech boom to liberate us!

We are in a global age now. Before technology, we did not know the concept of freedom of thought & expression spread around the world! If you are in a suppressed family, society, or workplace, you need to break out because you can now see the rest of the world. The internet became the ultimate expression of freedom!

Everyone is valuable, and everyone is important now! Open Instagram or TikTok for thirty seconds — everyone around you seems to have figured it out, the holiday, the body, the next promotion, the perfect coffee. The young mind asks— if everyone's got an opinion, why shouldn't I?"

Hierarchy replaced by authenticity

This collaborative and connected environment brought about a significant change in the

hierarchy and authority concept.

GenXs (one generation before the millennials), for the most part, thought of their bosses as experts in their fields. It was the top-down style or the control and command style. The bosses felt more in control, and what they said would be the accepted truth!

Well, did they know all of it? Or was it an illusion? We could not know for sure at the time. There was hardly any way to verify.

On the other hand, millennials stopped associating any particular person in a hierarchy as being ideal. They always had access to information to crosscheck, and they realized that the person preaching may not always be perfect.

If you are working with the millennial generation, do not expect them to respect the chain of command just for the sake of it. They feel equal and empowered, just a little lower in the food-chain; they believe their voices are just as important!

Is this arrogance?

I do not mean that they are all arrogant or insubordinate. There are protocols which they adhere to because their profession demands them. A soldier would dare not talk back to his commanding officer! A junior engineer on a ship will listen to the orders of a Chief engineer without question.



The ship is not a democracy! We *do not*, and we *should not* take a vote before every decision. There are places where the senior will decide, and the junior will follow, no questions asked. This concept must be clear.

All I am saying is, if they keep quiet, it does not mean they think you are right. It may be out of respect for the rank, or they believe it is not their place to comment, or feel duty-bound to follow orders without question.

Earn your respect

It is a big reason for complaints from many from the older generation. But if you think harder, we are merely complaining about a lost tradition of free passes – a time when we used to assume all our seniors were champions in their jobs!

Respect still exists. Only now you have to deserve it!

If you ask a deck cadet to wear their safety shoes, they look at your feet. Are you practising what you preach? Perhaps there was a time when you could get away with:

Do as I say, don't do as I do! Why? Because I said so.

But not anymore. You walk on deck one day without your proper protective gear, and there will be a near-miss report from a junior that you have to answer to. You take a shortcut to violate a regulation, and there will be someone clicking a photograph! The Boss is also under scrutiny! The one message which keeps echoing is –

"Rules are not only for us! If you want us to follow them, you do that first."

Individuals, not ranks

Here's the thing about the young millennials. **They respect individuals, not ranks!**

Earning your respect takes some effort, but when you do, it is much more organic. It sticks with you even when you have lost your rank.

It works if we can set an example, not just through knowledge but also behaviour. Stay composed, stay directed, exude confidence, and show compassion. Motivate them with active participation, not only words!

Seniors *have* to get involved. If they see you once a month, you are not that important. Interact face to face. Speak, and share goals, and objectives. Hold them accountable. Push their limits. Trust them, and incentivize when you can. Encourage. Motivate!



✓ Allow your staff to walk in at any time to discuss personal problems. You are never too busy for them.

✓ Keep promises. Don't make them unless you can keep them.

✓ Defend your people. Support them before third parties, and reprimand them in

private if necessary. Take responsibility for their mistakes. Share your victory!

✓ It takes time to create an environment of sharing ideas but it takes an instant to break it. Just laugh at an opinion, and no one will ever come forward.

✓ Create leaders! Share your principles with those who are aspiring to be.

- ✓ Communicate clearly. Address doubts before a job.
- ✓ Laughter is a great motivator. Well-timed, not deprecating and not cheap.
- ✓ Allow teams to work independently; step in only when necessary.
- ✓ Reward performance. Reward safety.
- ✓ Teach them only when you see the interest. Don't push it.
- ✓ Allow them to give feedback without being scared.
- ✓ Do not hit the individual—hit the system when something goes wrong.

Be proud of them, and they will make you proud!

An example of authentic leadership¹

The former president of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, shared a genuinely inspiring story.

In 1979, the Indian Space Research Organization was about to launch The Satellite Launch Vehicle 3(SLV3). Dr Kalam was the mission director, and it was his job to put the satellite into orbit. Thousands of people worked for a decade for this moment.

The countdown was on, T minus 5 mins, T minus 4 mins.....

The computer put a hold at T minus 40 seconds, warning not to launch!

The system indicated a leakage. Experts suggested it would be okay to launch. Dr Kalam decided to go ahead and launch the SLV-3 by bypassing the Computer. The first stage went well. The second stage failed, and the SLV-3 landed in the Bay of Bengal!

Dr Satish Dhawan, Chairman of the ISRO, called Dr Kalam for the press conference that day. The world media was looking at India with sarcasm. Dr Dhawan takes sole responsibility for this massive failure before the entire world and supports his team. He promises that next year the same team will put the SLV successfully in orbit!

On July 18, 1980, ISRO successfully launched the SLV into orbit, still under Dr Kalam and Dhawan's command. This time Mr Dhawan does not go to the press conference. He asks Dr Kalam to conduct it on his behalf!

In failure, the leader took it up. In success, he gave it all to his team. This remained an unforgettable instance of true leadership in Dr Kalam's mind.

We are moving from an era of Directive leadership to participative leadership. People follow managers because they *have to*. They follow leaders because they *want to*. Leaders command respect. One who is part of the group sharing the same concerns and knows when to step in and when to step out is respected and followed.

Seafarers often feel every relationship ends at the gangway.

Like any relationship, it does not end there if you have worked for it.

Learn to Say I don't know

One of the most beautiful things is that with this generation, you can now say: *I do not*

know and still maintain authority. We have all seen masters and bosses of the past too reluctant to admit that they don't know. Quite justifiably, because with the previous generation, that would make you look weak.

With the young millennial generation, you can confidently say that you do not know the answer and will find it out. You do not have to *look knowledgeable*; that would not work for you. It is a collaborative world! They can find it out quickly.

The young generation of seafarers does not assume that leaders come from a different planet. They see them as individuals, honest enough to admit when they do not know something and ask for help when he needs assistance, yet in control of the situation at all times. That is the leader they want to follow.

Your junior asked you a question. There is no need to shoot off a confident answer if you are unsure. Just take the time to find it out along with him. You will see how he engages himself when he sees you involved! If you give him a false confident answer, it harms him; if he calls you bluff and finds out the accurate information, all your charisma becomes an illusion. His respect for you flies out of the window! You are not the leader he wants to follow anymore.

Young millennials are not arrogant; they are disruptive!



Seven things young seafarers covet



Us Vs Them

Growing up in the nineties, I had one channel on TV, one movie on the weekend and a few shirts in the wardrobe. I had a few real friends to hang around with and a few places to visit. If I wanted to listen to music, I had one record player and a few cassettes.

It was not a question of **what we wanted**; it was a question of **what we had**. Did we like it? Not always. But there was nothing to complain about; there was no other option.

Our profession, for the most part, still runs like that!

The world has morphed into this gigantic ball of tech-driven wonderland, with biometric scanners to passive entry cars, video-conferencing turning to holograms, and paddle shifts progressing towards a driverless Tesla! The ship's operation, however, remains almost the same. Equipment has changed, *paper charts turned into ECDIS*, and Engines have become Camless! But the working styles remain as they were.

Onboard training remains restricted to books, checklists, SMS-s and a few training CBTs. We are giving the young millennials much of what we were given at their age. We tell

them – *"It is not a question of what you want; this is what you have! Would you like it? Not always. Don't complain because there is no other choice."*

Do they accept it? Eh... that's another story! Since they opened their eyes, guess what this young generation has always had? Choice!



Here are the top Seven things the young generation covets more than anything. They are also valid for any industry, office or organization, as they are in shipping.

1. Technology

More than 21 billion devices are connected to the internet in 2025 — almost three connected devices for every human on the planet

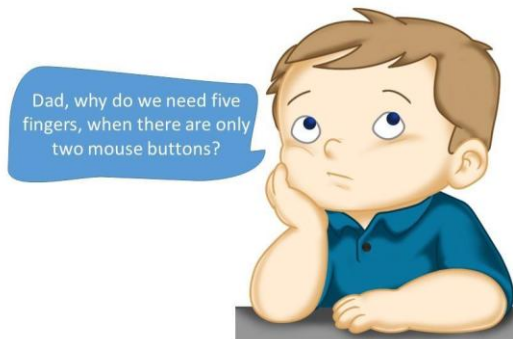
It isn't a shocker that this generation is tech-savvy! Your one-year-old girl can probably unlock your phone and play her favourite music. Give it another twenty-four years and imagine what she will do. We know they can adapt to new technologies way faster! What we often underestimate is the impact we can have if we adapt to that more closely.

Are they shocked by the tech boom?

Did you ever realize that the advancement of technology only astonishes you if you have seen the time before that? Consider this.

Your baby girl will never remember a time before she could see you on the phone on WhatsApp or Facetime! That's not technology for her, that is how phones work! **The phone is 'broken'!** if she cannot see you in it! Your boy will never remember a reality when he could not play 3D games with another kid from another country!

Technology is not shocking to them; it is just part of life.



If you were born before the eighties and have travelled far and wide to attend classes to gain knowledge, the *Google revolution* may amaze you! For young millennials, having the correct answers at their fingertips is not shocking; it is how they have always seen it. If you ask them to work hard to get that information, you might think it's making a lot of sense, but they feel thrown back to the stone age. There is a subconscious resistance. It affects how well and how fast they pick up that information.

2. Flexibility: Micromanagement Vs Autonomy

Tell me what to do or how to do it, not both!

Today's youth need to feel independent. Most of them felt independent at home by the time they were sixteen, and then they carried that emotion in the workplace. Deloitte's 2025 Gen Z & Millennial Survey of 23,000+ respondents found three in four want hybrid or flexible work. Comparative studies show that young minds want to have control on:

What they do, how they do it when they do it, and whom they do it with.

The same studies also show that only a handful of companies give them even one of those choices, let alone all of them. To be honest, we cannot leave everything to choice, especially in a highly competitive profession like sea life. But we can be a bit creative.

Let them choose what they do

Not completely applicable on board, isn't it? We cannot exactly let them decide what they will do all day. But we can encourage a session where everyone participates in an activity and share their ideas, with a token gift at the end for the best idea! The award can be something material or time off, within reason.

Allow them free will.

... how they do it

If I were to choose one sentence that created the most significant rift between the generations, it would be :

That's not how I would do it!

We have destroyed too much peace because someone expected the whole world to do it 'the way they have always done it!'

If You Always Do What You've Always Done, You'll Always Get What You Always got.

Henry Ford

Imagine this scenario:

You are the Master, and you need the cargo tanks to be washed and ready for the next cargo. Can your young Chief officer do it confidently and safely?

If yes, leave him alone. Let him do it. It is his job! If not, step in and step out whenever you feel confident that he has a grasp of it now.

That does not mean you lose control!

Keep passive control on the job. Walk into the Control room, be friendly, and find out what is happening. Suggest, don't push! If you feel you need to step in because otherwise the job would be delayed, or if it is a safety issue, do step in! Do that without making him feel small. Otherwise, if he is doing it safely and timely, his own way, give him a pat on the back and chill out. Not only are you working with combined experience, but you are also now instantly building a connection which will help in the long run!

I have seen Masters with a compulsive need to micromanage how the Chief officer opens a particular valve or the jobs he assigns to a certain deckhand. Everything irritates them because they would have done it another way, and that's how it breaks down.



Keeping passive control over their jobs will be more effective when working with the young generation. They want to feel in control. Let them have that.

... when they do it

I used to declare to my officers: "Job output eats time for breakfast!"

Do not tell me you work for two hours after your watch; You have an obvious idea of your responsibilities on the deck or the bridge! Take care of those responsibilities.

If I go on deck and find a fire hose leaking or your SCBA cylinder pressure is inadequate, you will need to explain why! Whatever you are assigned to, however small or big, you will keep it in utmost readiness. If you have taken care of your jobs, relax.

This empowers. Your juniors feel more responsible and more in control.

Whether you are a Master managing young officers or a chief officer managing a smart deckhand, stop micromanaging! Set targets, and leave them alone! Make them answerable; make them feel accountable. But do not micromanage.

I did say '*as much as possible*'.

I am not saying this applies to everyone! Sometimes you *will* find people who do not understand the implications of what they are doing. They would then need to be micromanaged. Often it is just a nudge or strict supervision.

Some people feel the need to micromanage everyone they come across, they feel no one acts correct unless they hover over. The problem in such cases is not with *others*.

3. Passion

The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire!

Ferdinand Foch

Young minds usually come with an inherent passion, and we often miss it because we try to fit that into our mould and our own need before we understand it from their point of

view. In a later chapter, we will discuss this in detail. Just don't underestimate the power of that passion if you are interested in getting the best out of them.

4. Impact

They do want to create an impact!

Many of the young millennials come with a flood of enthusiasm! They are misdirected at times, maybe, but you cannot deny the energy they carry within. They want to make a difference in the world in their own way. At times, it only makes sense to them.

As managers, what do we do with that enthusiasm? Sadly, we often simply ignore it! We smile and say: *"They will settle down with time!"* Or worse yet, to make them sit and learn traditional ways, we cut them down to size! We kill the enthusiasm at its core!

We expect all the energy of a seafarer to be directed towards the ship. Well, that is not always the case. You can make them do something by asking them, but you cannot make them *feel interested* in doing it so easily.

So, when you feel that the young officer lacks enthusiasm, you mean that he requires more energy in those things you find necessary! He might find it boring or hard or just uninteresting! Even though they have that energy, it is not always directed!

How to redirect it?

Let's talk about redirecting this energy into something beautiful. I have worked on this for years. But first up, even if you cannot shift their enthusiasm, please do not kill it. Here are a few common sentences which can destroy passion and enthusiasm:

- ✓ *"Don't be too energetic! Stop jumping around. You are useless!"* Replace that. Instead, Smile and say: *"Calm down and focus your energy."*
- ✓ *"Stick to your job. You are asking me too many questions! You don't need to know this now."*
Replace that. Clarify their doubts or find someone who can. Say: *"Good question. Now let me see if you can find out the answer to it. Here's where you look..."*
- ✓ *"Get out; I am busy now."* Instead, replace by: *"Come back later, and we will discuss it. I am busy now."*

It is easy to overlook as a senior, but for some sensitive youngsters, just one public mockery of their energy or a laugh at their expense can kill the energy in them or make

them defensive. We may have wasted a great potential!

Reverse mentoring.

Reverse mentoring is when a junior takes the stage to train while the senior oversees. It is a great way to encourage them.

1. Let your young deck rating demonstrate a skill, and let him train with everyone

on board instead of a senior officer. Step in only when necessary; otherwise, support him.

2. Allow them to hold the toolbox meeting before a job. See how much he knows and what he misses out on.

3. Allow your chief officer to take charge of anchoring and as the Master, just follow the actions. Clarify the reason for making a particular decision, and correct him only if necessary.



Why reverse mentoring

works

It works because it's a very lively exchange.

Imagine a duo between a bright young officer and his GenX Master trying to brief the crew on how to respond in an emergency.

What the 3rd officer has is the energy and a will to contribute. This energy is likely to encourage others to get involved and listen. The Master has the experience and a deeper understanding of the job. Reverse mentoring feeds on the strengths of both! The young mind feels self-importance and energetic, while his senior steps in only when necessary to support him. It develops the young seafarer and makes him feel mentored at the same time. Everyone else imbibes the healthy nature of a supportive culture.

5. Care

"I don't care how much you know unless I know how much you care."

Most young millennials like being cared for by the people they work for! It might sound a bit counterintuitive. You might ask: *"Why should they expect care in the workplace? Am I supposed to be their boss or their father!?"*

Well, that's a simplistic interpretation. That is certainly not what this means. They are neither looking for a Boss nor a father; they are looking for a mentor, a coach.

Even though you may not realize this, relationships come before work roles for this generation. If they do not have a relationship with their work or their seniors, they will still do their jobs out of compulsion but not out of interest. Give them a human connection, and performance shoots up! Compulsion cannot bring out the best in anyone; interest brings it out very easily! And isn't that the idea of this entire discussion?

Care comes in several ways. People misunderstand this concept a lot.

You do not have to be timid or submissive as a senior to show you care. If you do that, you will lose respect! Secondly, to show that you are interested in your juniors, you do not have to be involved in the same stuff. You do not have to wear the same clothes, use the same vocabulary or listen to the same music! If you are a senior in the workplace, maintain your individuality, but respect theirs too.

Action items

- There must be no compromise in work ethics or discipline! Make that clear.
- As the Master, keep your door always open for anything they want to share; should they need to walk in, they can. Let them know you will support them through thick and thin, no matter what! Follow up on those promises!
- The AB on the bridge is holding the steering for 2 hours straight and has another two hours to go! It's his job. Relieve him for fifteen minutes, let someone else take the steering. People respond to care.
- Your engine hand is working for days on a specific project. Care enough to explain to them **why** this is important, perhaps teach the basics, or the principle behind the design. Knowing **why** turns a job into an apprenticeship.
- Most companies actively work on making their people feel connected to their organization. There are numerous creative ways to do that.

6. Personalized Feedback

It is a myth to think that young millennials always crave appreciation. What they do desire is well-intentioned personalized feedback. They will accept it and work harder if it is well-intentioned.

What does the young millennial generation feels as being '*normal*'?

- Purchased a new outfit? Facebook or Instagram appreciates you!
- Bungee-jumped or skydived? You can share it with the whole world!
- You can post a picture of what you are cooking and get a few likes on that too!

With the advent of technology, appreciation is a drug that has been ingrained in young minds. Appreciate their work when they deserve it.

No matter where you are in the world, you cannot escape the dopamine feed inside.

How to appreciate them?

Is It difficult? Expensive? No, just underrated. Very few people in senior ranks consider this. A simple pat on the back after a hectic preparation schedule, a simple “good job” after a two-hour-long mooring station in freezing cold winters, a simple personalized appreciation email from the company, even for a job which they were ‘supposed to do’, goes a longer way than you can imagine.

Before a Vetting Inspection, What do you think will be more exciting if you wanted to discuss common interview questions? Pushing them to a Computerised training session?

Or a simple quiz contest with two teams, some laughs and a token gift to the best performer who can answer all questions confidently and correctly? The last one develops a sense of competition and reward. It is a hundred times more effective!

I found that a small ten-dollar allowance to the maker of the best near-miss report or a safety idea on board increased participation tenfold over one month.

It is not the value of the gift; it is the pride of winning it on a public platform that matters much more. The examples are all right there in front of us!

But do not overdo appreciation, or you will lose the impact.

Appreciation Vs Feedback

While appreciation focuses on the positives only, constructive feedback can be both positive and negative. If you remain constructive, you will find young officers asking you how they can improve, thus inviting negative comments about themselves!

Make sure you do not lose this opportunity. Be sure to point out their faults. But the keyword here is ‘personalized’! When you offer negative comments, ensure it is targeted at his development, comes from a place of care, and improve the entire workplace. It must not be just to shred off *your* tension.

Also, your negative ones will not be accepted unless you provide positive feedback. Yelling

at someone is never considered valuable negative feedback!

When your junior feels you care enough to appreciate when they do something good, they are more receptive to your negative comments about his job.

When you need your people, you are the leader they will follow without question!

7. The ability to morph into a tiger

All this while we have spoken about a senior who is caring, one who is understanding. That said, an essential quality of a manager is to be able to morph into a tiger when the situation demands.

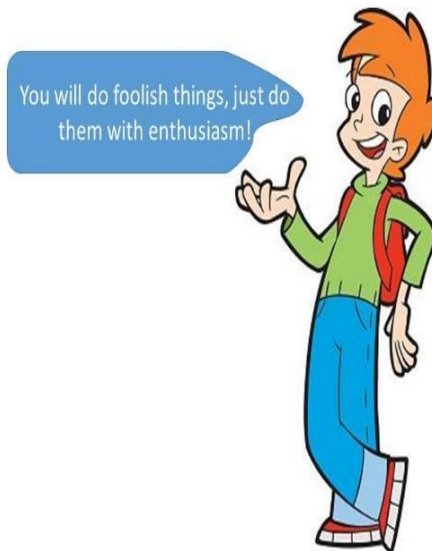
Imagine this scenario: A fire has broken out, and you need to mobilize your team in the next few minutes to get the situation under control. You find your crew non-responsive and timid. Do you stay patient?

No. You act. You hit the nail on the head!

As a senior, you cannot always stay patient and calm, and you do not need to. Sometimes you need to fire up, put your foot down and restore balance. There is a right and a wrong way to do it. We will deal with this later when we discuss workplace anger and how it can work for you.



Eight ways to make enthusiasm work for you



An open blade

Enthusiasm is raw power. It is neither *good nor bad*.

It is an open blade. It is immensely powerful! When misdirected, it can wreak havoc! All the violent crimes ever committed were misdirected enthusiasm, weren't they?

Imagine an energetic third officer trying to ask a question. His senior makes a mockery of him and publicly ridicules him. He retreats into his shell and never finds the courage to ask another. This is enthusiasm slapped down!

Luckily there is another option. If you pivot your styles with enthusiasm instead of slapping it down, you can turn over-entitled brats into invaluable assets!

Try these in your workplace, and you will see the change.

1. Build a culture of trust.

Yes, the cadet is not very productive right now. After all, he has just joined the vessel. Or, perhaps no one trained him properly! Make them feel trusted, and tell them that they can also contribute. If our default setting is to believe in people, it works!

Identify a young seafarer! Assign him an optional task and wait for their feedback. Tell them they are fully responsible for it and tell them explicitly that you trust them with this job (even if you don't believe that)! Do not compare them to you or anyone else! Just see if you can get them to perform better *than themselves* every time. If you see an improvement, however slight, appreciate that.

You may have succeeded in saving someone from depression!

2. Communicate! Share the why, not just the what!

You are a Chief officer in the control room. You have a young officer with you, and he is too scared to talk or ask questions because you are busy! As you instruct him to open a valve, or start a pump, spare a second and tell him **why** you need that done!

When their questions turn from **how** to **why**, is when they start turning into assets.

"Open the COP drain valve. We need to strip out the Pump casing!" is way better than "Open valve number 637!"

Explain the 'how' to them if you can. "Shut up and do as I say", pushes them away. "I'll explain to you later" instantly builds a bond.

3. Let them to use their creativity

"This is what we have to do. Where do you think we should start?"

is way better than: *"We will do this, and you will do as I say."*

You may not always need opinions, but by rephrasing our questions, we can turn a young mind interested in their job, make them think out of the box, get fantastic ideas from them & make them feel special.

Have you been astonished by an idea from a young, energetic employee which you could not figure out by yourself, even with your years of experience? I have.

When you solve an unexpected problem, you are not using your logical mind as much as your imagination! Imagination and creativity have this beautiful ability to solve problems never seen before! We involve our mighty subconscious mind when we are creative, unlike our frankly primitive logical mind! As experienced seniors, we are often restricted in our ways, looking at problems with logic only.

Creativity may slow down with age; we may end up believing that there is only one way to do a job. It is not the baggage that a young seafarer has. They have a fresh eye.

4. Involve them in decisions

It was 2003.

I was a junior officer. We encountered a tropical storm in the Pacific Ocean while on a voyage from Singapore to Chiba, Japan. It was one of the fiercest storms that year and one of the worst I have ever encountered in my sea life. It developed close to the equator, and we expected it to catch up with us in about five days. Weather forecasts at the time were not as accurate. While crossing the Luzon Strait between Taiwan and the Philippines, the storm was slowly catching up with us from the South East.

Captain Surinder Singh, the Master seventeen years in command, called all of us officers on the bridge and explained the situation. He allowed us to give our feedback on how to proceed. We all knew it was **his** decision and a big one!

Option one was to take shelter in the Japanese Ryukyu and Okinawa islands and take a longer route. Option two was to stop before the Luzon Strait, which many other ships were doing, but then we might encounter another cyclone behind. Option three was to proceed as planned and take our chances.

After some deliberation, we decided to take shelter in the Okinawa islands. We were still

affected by the storm, but that incident bore a lasting impression on me.

That was one of the very few times in my career when someone asked me to give an opinion on something that was not my direct responsibility! I had the trust and respect of being able to contribute! I can proudly say, "*The bridge team decided to do this.....*" instead of "*The Captain wanted us to do this*".

Small things like this create strong impressions in young minds. More than anything, today's youth wants to feel important. They want to be involved. Involve them! Not everything they say will be brilliant. A senior manager can filter those out. Treat them with understanding when you think they are saying something stupid! Do not humiliate or belittle them.

You may find a suggestion which works. Something even you did not consider. Try it. You will have created an interested and empowered individual, at the very least.

5. Find time to spend with them

Find out people who want to progress. Separate them from those who lack motivation! Spend time with them, even if you meet them once in your lifetime. It is gratifying!

Listen to them! They will be your most significant workforce in the future. Teach them the meaning of leadership, of taking responsibility. You will have created a generation of young enthusiasts worldwide, across nationalities, who will forever remember you!

Isn't that something to aspire for?



6. Address their calling within yours

We spoke about loyalty. Loyalty develops when people see their calling getting answered. For most, you cannot change their calling. We might believe once they step on board, they *should* just want to develop as seafarers, but they might feel their calling is to be a world-traveller or a blogger. They may only want to provide for their families.

Their calling may make sense or look stupid to you; it does not matter. That is the only thing they are loyal to. This young generation is keenly aware of their quality of work

when their calling matches what they do. More so than the previous generations!

I have seen many old hands who stopped caring. They have experience to back them up; they know their jobs, but if the process does not work, they do not care. With exceptions, I have seen younger minds caring much more for outcome, not process.

This is a tremendous and highly underrated potential!

If we can show we care for *their goals and aspirations*, they will *care* for our goals and aspirations. They will learn their jobs much faster and with a lot more enthusiasm. Caring comes from a place of emotion and is a powerful kicker!

Tell them that only if they are excellent in their profession can they have the peace of mind to be a blogger and have the financial freedom to do whatever they want, like travelling, to earn enough to provide for their family! Show them how, if they put in the effort at this stage, they will benefit in the long run.

Try discovering their 'why'. *Why should I be better at my job?* It is not a philosophical question; it is a personal one. Even in the best jobs, people often miss the 'why'!

"I do it because I care" is a bigger motivator than *"... because I get paid."*

"I think this profession can help me reach my goals" is way better than *"I could not find anything else I could do, so I had to sail!"*

As an employer, *"You get paid well, so you cannot leave!"* is a binary argument. It may work for one person but not for another. But *"In this organization, you can reach your **aspirations**. Let me show you how!"* is a far more universal statement!

Give them that reason, and it can turn them into rock stars in their jobs.

7. Show them the next rung

One big change with the yung generation is that they do not associate rank with age. In most companies too, performance matters more than age or years in rank. Those who perform must be rewarded. Show them the next rung, the next rank.

"If I know my job and you don't, I deserve to rise faster than you" is the premise here.

Token gifts and appreciation are great for the shorter run, but everyone who is putting in their efforts wants to see the greater vision. Promotion not only means more money, but it also implies recognition and self-importance.

Robust appraisal mechanisms will help, it separates the competent from the incompetent. It gives the performer a sense of hope and satisfaction and the underperformer a sense of challenge.

8. Intermediate appraisals and reality checks

Most seafarers understand that their promotion depends on their assessments and performance reviews. But getting to the next rung is just one piece of the puzzle. Staying there is harder, especially in a demanding profession like ours.

Mentorship on board plays a crucial role. As seniors, if we care for their development, intermediate verbal appraisals and mentoring are essential.

A few years back, as I was taking over, the Master told me that the 2nd Officer was worthless! He made so many mistakes that the Master had to do all passage calculations. Working with him, I found that he was indeed terrible at his calculations.

After a month, he was doing his calculations, and I was doing my job. What happened? Nothing much, just a little trust, a little nudge and a little mentoring.

That 2nd officer still keeps in touch!

In a Pearson 2025 study, 97% of Gen Z workers said they were open to ongoing feedback and 86% wanted their manager to act as a mentor, not a supervisor. Your intermediate appraisal isn't a chore; for this cohort, it's the single biggest retention lever you have.

Brainstorm: Share an experience where mentorship you did or received earned you a lifelong relationship, founded in deep trust and respect.

[Mail us at contact@navguidesolutions.com]



The multi-generational blend



A cocktail of Generations

How should the ideal workplace look like when many generations are working together?

We are in the boardroom of a large travel agency. They had brought in a very senior consultant to work with the team, with a lot of experience in the hospitality industry. He would work side by side with the people who built this company, tech geniuses, essentially young millennials.

The aged consultant felt largely left out at first. He had no idea how the software worked or how the system could benefit from his experience. In most board meetings, things went over his head; he tried to fit in but returned home feeling disgusted and depressed. Soon, the management started second-guessing whether bringing him in was a prudent decision at all. After all, he had nothing to offer!

Then one day, a friendly young lady brought him some coffee, smiled and sat next to him. She explained how their technology worked to reach large audiences; she helped him catch up in board meetings. They spent personal time after work to clarify his backlogs and bring him up to speed. He patiently listened as she patiently explained. Now, the natural beauty of his experience was starting to unfold!

He did not understand software, but he understood people! Having spent decades in the industry, he could recognize patterns; he knew exactly what would work! He felt confident enough to speak up & started adding value.

His suggestions turned heads. The company started consulting him in major decisions, and his experience turned out to be the most valuable asset earning them six figures!

Diverse teams

Diverse teams often are more successful when they feed on each other's strengths. There is a cross-generational environment today onboard ships, as in most other workplaces; at least two, sometimes three generations, are working together. Equilibrium can only prevail if we follow the basic premise:

Everyone brings something to the table.

Experience and its value

Experience is an asset!

Many senior Chief officers can recognize problems by the sound of the pump; many senior

Chief Engineers know what is wrong by touching the body of the machinery!

How does that happen?

In midlife and later, we usually find pattern recognition ability; our emotional wisdom peaks at this stage. Our analytical mind and human intuition create feedback loops. In simple words, things we hear, see, touch or feel get registered consciously or subconsciously – they form associations that we remember in the back of our minds. For example, you subconsciously associate the sound of a racing pump with previous cavitation experience. Out at sea, this means that you are a rock star!

If we can merge this experience with the energy and enthusiasm from the young millennials, we can create wonders!

Strengths of the younger generation

The young seafarers are far better at dealing with technology covering many aspects of sea life. They also handle changes better. A senior master depends on the expertise of his second officer when he wants to alter the ECDIS settings. However, when deciding how to navigate a narrow channel or which course would be most prudent, the experience will be paramount, and the officer submits to the expertise of the master! With time, the need for tech expertise will grow.

People of the previous generation may soon become surrounded by technology. Unless they merge strengths with their young millennial colleague, it will be very difficult!

Intergenerational Improv work

Wisdom and disruption must both be valued!

When the late Tony Bennet and Lady Gaga, collaborated to create melody, they mentored each other! Hi-tech met Hi-touch(!), and the whole world was taken aback. The modern senior is not revered for his rank alone; he is revered for his timeless wisdom and his ability to apply that to contemporary problems.

As we discussed, people are sought after if they are *mentors*, not only *bosses*. Maturity with enthusiasm is indeed a winning blend!

Brainstorm

Can you think of ways and examples where you can benefit from the other generation in your workplace? Tell us how we can create mutual mentorship in the workplace? How can we foster the flow of wisdom between generations without friction?

Diversity, Passion and Loyalty



Faces in the dust

- Deepak is an Ordinary seaman; he aspires to be an officer. He is trying to finish his graduation through correspondence while sailing as the deckhand.
- Abhinesh is the AB who wants to be a Pumpman, trying to get promoted as soon as he can. He gives his best, with bright inputs, to show us his competence.
- Adam Nowinski is a first-time Junior officer. He is from a seafarer's family. He wants to be the best and strives to give his best, sometimes too hard!
- Priya is a 3rd Officer on her second contract. She intends to be the youngest female Master her company has ever promoted, and she's tracking every sea-time hour.
- Ninio Pangalan is the 3rd officer who was an AB before. He is intelligent and calm, and he wishes someone had guided him into the job of an officer when he was the deckhand.
- Hussain is a cadet fresh out of college and stepping on board for the first time. He is amazed at the job's grandeur and is unsure where to start.
- Ashley is a senior deck cadet ready to take over as an officer. She is keen to grasp and breathe in as much knowledge as possible before the responsibility hits her!
- Pawan is a Chief officer keen to be promoted to the rank of Master. He is willing to go the extra mile to learn all he can.

Those are a few young millennials I have sailed with over the last few years. I get blown away by their energy almost every time! When you look closely, each of them has a different challenge, and a different perspective. Most have a passion that can easily be transformed into something much bigger. And almost all of them have an opinion if given a safe place to express!

How do you create innovation?

You cannot create innovation in a factory. That has got to come from the creative juices of smart motivated people. And how do you make smart, motivated people do smart motivating things?

You inspire! You talk to them in a language they understand!

People who will innovate are not necessarily geeks with qualifications. Some work as third officers, cadets, oilers and fourth engineers! They are a different category waiting to be discovered! I have marvelled at their brilliance! Millennials have much to offer if judgmental and condescending attitudes turn into curiosity. And most of them do not even know this!

Work for them, and they will work for you

What do you have to do to turn them into bright professionals?

What do you do to make them pour *their* heart out to achieve *your* goal? You just have to cater to *theirs*!

Very few people in any profession consider spending five minutes listening to their young juniors. In the top-down hierarchy, it is just not regarded as necessary.

Can we change this trend? If you are a senior working with youngsters, try talking less! Just listen. Spend five minutes listening to them if you can. Listen to their stories with interest, and understand their passions and their drives. They will speak to you. Directly or indirectly, they will tell you what drives them and what they can do for it.

Youngsters are creating their world. That deck rating is saving for his dream home, that engine cadet is trying to support his parents, and that engineer in a black boiler suit in the scavenge space is planning to get married at the end of this contract. They have very similar priorities to yours when you were their age.

If we can think a little out of the box, we can very quickly convert that drive into something which benefits everyone, us, them and the organization.

Transforming passions into loyalty

You cannot demand dedication and commitment, but you can create it.

Once you have understood their drives and passions, you need a little out-of-the-box thinking to create a Win-Win situation!

Nothing will be more inspiring for most young millennials than an opportunity to grow. But it must first make sense to them. Try to create an environment where they realize that being the best in their jobs will propel their personal goals in the long run. Here are a few examples if you are working with the ship's team:-

- Identify deck ratings that aspire to be third officers. Let them demonstrate the donning of the SCBA. Challenge him to explain to every crew member!
- Let the junior officer take over the Fire Drill for a day. Don't just delegate, explain that you expect them to set an example through the drill! You will see the energy spike! If it does not go perfectly, handle that with understanding.
- Let the 3rd Engineer take charge of a major repair job and have your 2nd Engineer supervise! Nothing will go out of hand if you know when to step in.

Activate their passions, add a few heartfelt words and see miracles happen. Company policies can inspire young millennial mariners on a much larger scale.

Can money buy me Loyalty?

What is this loyalty thing? Can I eat it?

A sweet young girl, a millennial employee, joins an organization. It is her first job!

On the first day, her boss casually tells her that she will receive a set of visiting cards with her name and must proudly carry them to client meetings. Apparently, the cards are in print and will arrive by the end of the week.

This information just made her day brighter! She had never had a personalized card before, and it was an acknowledgement of her professional life, something she thought she could show her parents proudly! Her first visiting card! She waited all week for this card to arrive.

When it did, however, she was taken aback. It was a generic card with the company name, logo, and a few blank spaces. She had to write her name, number and designation on each. What she was looking forward to with utmost pride and anticipation turned into a disappointing and depressing experience.

How much money do you think the company saved?

How do you think her loyalty would get affected by this simple gesture?

Insecure generation

This generation is insecure. It is rare to see *loyalty* in personal or professional life. Losing jobs, relationships, money, and position is common.

Divorces are more common than ever! Most friends are social media acquaintances; you can have fun with them, but they would not want to be by you in actual times of need. As the internet caused globalization, downsizing started. The 2008 recession laid millennials off. Gen Z had their own version — the COVID lockdowns, then the 2022–23 tech layoffs that wiped out their first-job dreams. People realized that just because you work for somebody does not mean they care for you. We live in a world where we are not loyal to anyone but ourselves! Insecurity isn't a personality trait. It's in the air!

But wait! People **are** loyal to their own dreams and purposes.

Cash is like sugar.

The more sugar you add, the sweeter it is. But is it tastier?

Money works for a short time. Let me assure you – with the millennial generation, if you

give them only money, they are loyal to the money, not you. If you want to push a young employee to work harder, you won't get very far by offering them more money. Very soon, they will get used to it, and it won't matter after a while. From then on, they are just looking for greener pastures, more money, perks, etc.

A few simple acts, however, could work much better!

If we can transform their passions into *our goals*, we will have hit the jackpot! Set their dreams in motion, fulfilling your goals in turn, and you have created the magic potion! This single act of transforming their passions to work for you can go a long way to building a loyal base of young seafarers who will stick to you no matter what!

In the next chapter, we get deeper with real-life examples.

Delegation



This app converts all my problems into your problems!



Money, Motivation and Myths



We are in it just for the money!

Is that true for everyone?

If we had enough money to pay for anything we want, would that make your job that much more enjoyable? Apparently yes.

What does the research say?

A 2010 research by Tim Judge and his colleagues⁶ tried to correlate job satisfaction with money. They reviewed 120 years of research to synthesize the findings from 92 quantitative studies covering over 15,000 individuals and 115 correlation coefficients.

The results were clear and shocking.

It showed that the association was less than a 2% overlap between pay and job satisfaction levels. Furthermore, the correlation between pay and *pay satisfaction* was only marginally higher at a 4.8% overlap.

To put it simply, what that meant was:

1. Would more money make your job more enjoyable? *Temporarily yes, but in the long run, a definite **NO!***
2. Are you satisfied with your salary? *Yes, or No, it does not depend on your salary!*

Also, a cross-cultural comparison revealed that this result is pretty much the same everywhere (for example, there are no significant differences between the U.S., India, Australia, Britain, and Taiwan).

A similar pattern of results emerged when the researchers carried out group-level comparisons. They found that Employees earning high salaries (high-income group) reported equal or even lesser levels of job satisfaction than those employees earning lower wages (Low-income group)

This is consistent with Gallup's engagement research⁷, which indicates no significant difference in employee engagement by pay level. Gallup's findings are based on 1.4 million employees from 192 organizations across 49 industries and 34 nations.

There is yet another interesting inference: *Does a financial reward improve job satisfaction? It turns out that a regular and guaranteed reward does not matter much. After a while, we take it for granted.*

Research work on the behaviourist theory (not to go geeky again) suggest that financial

rewards ensure temporary compliance. If you aim to achieve long-lasting changes in behaviour and attitudes, rewards, like punishment, are strikingly ineffective. When dividends are constant, people get used to them, and it no longer matters. If they are intermittent, people return to old habits when the rewards run out.

Now for the real kicker. Harvard Business review⁸ says something more counterintuitive!

As for productivity, at least two dozen studies over the last three decades have



conclusively shown that people who expect to receive a reward for completing a task *do not perform* as well as those who do it out of their sheer will without expecting a reward.

These studies covered children and adults, males and females, of various cultures. People performed worse when working for a reward whenever the problem needed open-ended or out-of-the-box thinking. The researchers were surprised by their findings; financial incentives decreased productivity.

The implication of these results on management: - Money does not buy engagement.

Do you really believe that the Chief officer is happier with his job deep down than the Messman just because he draws more salary? There must be other factors at play, then.

Money and the young seafarer

Do not get me wrong. Money does matter!

If you are earning less than required to fulfil your basic needs, no amount of pep-talk in the world can make you happy. In our profession, money always did play a vital role in drawing people in. Money matters to us when we leave the ship behind and go home or before we decide to join a particular company. It also matters if it is much lesser than average. However, beyond a certain level, it does not have the same effect in boosting morale. Across generations, it has inspired us to join ships but did not make us any more satisfied, as the studies indicate.

With the young millennials, the equation becomes more complicated. A vast majority of them have had a decently healthy upbringing, cared for and listened to all their lives!

And then they leave for a job thousands of miles from home. Very often, the workplace is thankless; Seniors are not thankful for juniors because their seniors never thank them. Everything is '*just a job*'; you will be reprimanded for a job not done well but never appreciated for a job well done. *You get paid for that!* It does not suit them.

Why? We still believe money is what brings ultimate job satisfaction!

The premise

Why do we think that money will make sense of everything?

Primarily, the 20th-century generation struggled to fight for survival and make a living. When you are doing that, money is almost all that matters. You want to provide for your family and see a promising future; you need to earn!

Young millennials have seen food on their plate, shelter over their heads, and a decent phone in their hands. Survival was never a big deal for this generation. Most of them are not trying to 'make a living'; they are looking for 'quality of life'.

Millennials try to *find meaning* in their jobs. Money does not make sense of everything.

Making sense Vs Making money

As Dave Ramsay said about millennials³:

They are not looking for a job. They are looking for an adventure!

Most millennials want to feel excited about what they do; some are here to use this job as a stepladder to a different goal. Some are not sure why they are here!

I have tested this concept several times. If we let them realize what they are doing, not just the "*I am earning money*" part!, if we make them feel the grandeur of this profession, the stakes they handle, the implications and the change they bring about, it makes them blossom, output shoots up. Here are a few examples.

Let's assume you are a Chief Officer assigning a job to a young deckhand.

Don't just give him the job. Please explain why you need him to be extra careful and not make a mistake! Tell him why this job is essential and that a lot is riding on his performance today. It is a short two-minute conversation, and it does not cost money; it just gives them a sense of purpose. The output would show results.

Thought Popcorn:

Why do you think some companies have a higher retention rate? Do they necessarily pay more? Most seafarers can switch companies for a fatter paycheck, especially in the senior ranks. Yet, many stick to the same management for several years.

A simple gesture of being awarded an expensive watch for ten-year service life in a company matters more than we know. It is a token of appreciation, a display of thankfulness, and it appeals to the heart.

If an employer only has money on their side, they are not building loyalty. People do not associate the car, the mortgage, or their kid's education as coming from the employer. Financial incentives, have a binary advantage. They will always be humbled by someone down the line who can pay a little more. People do not feel for the cause; they are in it just for the money.

The solution

Imagine a high-performing senior Chief officer who has served on tough vessels for years. As his employer, talk to his heart, and you will make him feel connected to his organization. Award him publicly, and make a big deal of it.

Onboard, as a Master, monetary rewards are often impossible, think of simple gestures to motivate your crew and improve their performance. Consider this set of instructions:

"You need to sort this out today (Making them feel in charge). We have a schedule to keep. (Giving them a sense of purpose) Finish your job early and relax, but don't keep it pending. (making it job-based and not time-based). I know you can do it (empowering them with trust).

Ask your junior to take charge and take responsibility, even if it is not his job per se.

On one vessel, while signing off, I was asked to explain a single meal during a hotel stay after a hectic four months contract. Yes, the company decided to send me an email asking me to explain what I ate! After improving work standards and performance, running a hundred-million-dollar ship with zero downtime and high-performance levels, I had to explain a twenty-dollar meal. It happens across the world more often than not. In the people business, *care* is the main ingredient. If you care, loyalty just comes in without

even asking for it!

Challenge: If we challenge them to grow, most of the young millennial generation responds immediately with enthusiasm! With some exceptions, the older generation of



seafarers believes the way they do something is the only way to do it. The young millennial seafarer has no baggage like that. *Challenge* is both a rewarding and inspirational concept.

Leaders want to step up, not level out.

Consider telling your junior engineer:

Today you will be taking charge of the entire overhaul process (Meaning: I trust you). *You have*

not done it before, but I am sure you can (creating a Challenge). *We are here if you need us* (a supportive environment). *You will learn a lot today* (motivating them).

Unexpected monetary incentives:

Monetary incentives are beneficial when used in the right way. Make them unexpected and see miracles happen. If you have worked hard for something because you thought it was your job, without any expectation of remuneration, even a small reward comes as a pleasant surprise. It creates a jolt of motivation stronger than a predetermined amount.

Why do I need to motivate them?

"Why don't they just do their jobs?"

Motivation is an overused and highly misunderstood word. We just need to be thoughtful and considerate. When did that stop being relevant? If you are a manager now, you were an employee before. Remember drove you crazy. That's it. Think: How did your worst bosses behave? How did your favourite bosses behave? Did you work less for the people who inspired you? Definitely not. Act accordingly.

It goes both ways

I am sorry if all this sounded like it was only for the organization or the seniors on board to get juniors to find their true calling. Nothing happens one way. If you are a young seafarer reading this, this depends more on you than anyone else. Don't just make money; make sense! If you had a different job which pays as much as this one, would you still stick to this profession? There is a reason why you are here, and it must be more than

money; find it.

Brainstorm

Write a blog for us, and we will publish it

[Mail us: contact@navguidesolutions.com]



How to be Angry in the Workplace



Today, I will live in the moment.

Unless the moment is unpleasant, in which case, I will eat a cookie.

Conscious anger

You read it right. This chapter is not about – ‘*How to manage your anger*’;

it’s about ‘*how to be consciously angry*’.

No, I do not intend to promote anger or violence. But Anger *can* be very productive in the proper context! Unless you run a barn (and maybe even then), you *must push people at times* to motivate them. In doing so, you *may* display anger.

Now the question is:

Can we be angry and yet productive?

Chronic Anger

Some people are just angry by default! They have their ‘*Hulk mode*’ always on, ready to pounce on anyone with even the slightest nudge! For such people, the issue lies much deeper than we think. It might be rooted in their personality due to an experience, a suppressed emotion or a combination of several factors.

Many of us often do not know the real reason for our anger. If the sight of a particular employee gets us even before they speak up, the reason may lie with an experience that could not be vented out. Some of us stay irritated like nobody would do anything right unless they intervened. Such attitudes come from a deep-rooted pain or a desperate need for validation.

Such instances must be identified and dealt with seriously. They can irreversibly spoil every work relationship. In a millennial environment, where people may not always bow down to your authority, it is too risky to keep that anger unchecked. Chronic anger is a matter of psychological profiling and beyond the purview of this book.

Conscious anger in the workplace, on the other hand, is a management technique.

The Upside to anger

Rage is one of the most primitive emotions. The one who tries to deny or suppress it suffers as much as the one who deals with it ineffectively. Besides, if you are a manager, sometimes, it’s the *only thing* that can get the job done!

But there are effective ways to get angry and self-destructive ways.

One of them can give you the efficiency and productivity you desire, promote respect with your juniors, and make you extraordinarily successful in your professional life! The other can spoil relationships, create negative energy in the workplace and make you feel disgusted deep within! As many of us have felt, words spoken in rage it is often a biting



regret for years, knowing that you cannot take it back now.

The moment

Think of that moment in time. You are angry with someone who works for you.

You are boiling and outraged!! It's a crucial moment, a moment of truth! You can do *two highly productive things* now, and both will yield excellent

results. *Do anything else*, and it may destroy any chance you had to recover that person back in your team or the relationship with him.

The Amygdala hijack

A quick psychology lesson.

Amygdala is a part of our brain responsible for emotions, situated near its base. It evolved early on to protect us from dangers; it triggers involuntary actions when we sense fear – also called the fight or flight response. The **Prefrontal cortex**, on the other hand, is the logical part which developed later, the one helping you make sense of this book. This part enables you to evaluate the fear logically to form a rational response.

Anger usually starts with stress and fear of loss of control. The amygdala hijacks the brain and makes us react involuntarily by lashing out. Hormones of Cortisol and Adrenaline are released to prepare us for a fight or flight(run away). If we want to respond consciously, the logical brain needs to kick in at this point. But how do we stop this involuntary reaction? How do we make the Pre Frontal Cortex strong enough to sense and respond before the Amygdala hijack? Three solutions:

Physical exercise, Mindfulness and Breathing techniques.

Mindfulness is a structured practice of bringing you back to the present moment.

Heart Coherence 365 technique by Dr David O'Hare⁹

It is a straightforward mechanism to alleviate stress by spending five minutes daily on yourself. As soon as you wake up (before **Cortisol**, the stress hormone, kicks in):

Inhale for 5 seconds; exhale for 5 seconds. Do this for 5 minutes.

You take six breaths per minute for 5 minutes. That's all.

This technique reduces stress, improves focus, helps deal with physical pain, and even satiates hunger! Repeat it whenever possible. Doing it even once a day will show you changes within a month.

Now, coming back, the following are the two options which will make a productive outcome of your anger.

Option One: A Controlled reaction – The four Steps

The concept behind the first approach is turning your anger into something far more powerful & productive using your intellect.

The conflict

Let's imagine you are the Chief officer on a tanker, and you are outraged! You have summoned the deck fitter in the control room, and he ran down as fast as possible.

Why did you have to dismantle this valve without my permission?

*"But I think You asked me to....." (**Shocked and realizing phase**)*

Don't you listen to me when I tell you to do something? Are you retarded or deaf?

*"Sorry, next time I will try not to...." (**Submissive and apologetic phase**)*

"I wonder why the company sends me useless people like you!"

*"Do not shout. I told you I was sorry." (**Defiance**)*

Sounds familiar? Now let us first realize one thing:

When you lose control and shout on someone, you often actually have a point.

But unfortunately, you also have a number of other useless statements clouding your

judgement. Your reptilian brain is at work! It is not your best side right now.

Let's break down the conversation above.

As you can see, the first sentence that you said conveyed a valid point, and the other person accepted it! The conversation could have turned out differently. You had a moment there when the deck fitter was genuinely sorry and had a little more interest in listening to you. Problem is, you did not stop there.

You went ahead and rubbed him the wrong way! He became inherently defensive in an instant! As soon as that happened, his judgement also got clouded. He is not apologetic anymore. In trying to defend his integrity and self-respect, he turned offensive.

As things became personal, it led to a counterproductive conflict.

The solution

Remember and follow the rules given below. Say everything you should, *just a bit differently*. Whether you think the rules are complex or simple, trust the process, and you will see the magic happen.

Step 1: Do not talk when you are angry

Hit the iron only when it is cold.

Anyone following this rule is leagues ahead of all other managers and hugely successful in motivating people. I know very few people who can do this; it takes practice. This is why they ask you to count from one to ten in anger management classes!

When you are angry with someone, please don't talk to them.

The best conversations take place in a relaxed mind.

You may be very assertive and want to show people exactly how you want things done. Do it. Just not at that time! Take as much time as you need to compose your thought and consolidate them. Clarify your position first before you speak up!

Plan it beforehand, at leisure.

Why not talk?

If we talk to a person when you are angry, we generally tend to become more personal.

We target *the person*, not *the problem*. We attack because it relieves us of our rage! Our jobs as managers is to *eliminate the problem, not the person*.

Self-respect and ego are central concepts to our psyche! If the ego is hurt, the battle is lost. Things you say when you are angry will not bring in respect and hence won't bring about a long-lasting change. The other person will get defensive and stand their ground, leading to a more heated argument or, at best, a cold reaction. Cool down. Then call him back and talk!

But what should you say? There comes rule 2.

Step 2: Write down pointers.

When angry, you have a flow of thoughts, many of which make sense. Do not waste it.

As the Master, I was very particular about Fire drills. When I found people responding to it unprofessionally, it infuriated me. If it was too slack, I restarted the exercise, but otherwise, my practice was to pick up a pen and paper; jot down my discussion points, but never to speak immediately.

Now, here's the fun part. When I looked back at the paper later, I found many silly things appeared on those lists. But, without exception, I did have some great insights every time as well!

Jot down a list of improvements on a pad or your phone, and edit it later. Do not blame a person; try to think of the broader management lapses.

Step 3: Reprimand

Scold, without shouting.

You are the mentor, not the boss. Stay composed while delivering strong remarks. With controlled body language and tone, others start respecting you for your composure. You instantly become an authority; almost anything will be accepted. The idea is not to become too preachy. When a junior loses control and fires back, all relationships end. It hurts the team spirit very severely.

Controlled outburst

A statement such as: "*I know you mean well, but I believe your memory does not*

support you. You have to find a way to remember things. Let me tell you how...."

[1. Highlighting the mistakes and not the person;

2. prefixing it with something positive camouflaged in the remark]

is much more useful than: *"You always forget stuff! You cannot give excuses for it all the time. You should have learnt how to memorize in school."*

It's just that the first one starts and ends in a positive note & has a positive connotation. This is even more important to realize when you deal with young millennials. They may take a scolding from a mentor, not a thrashing from a Boss.

Also, Never shout at anyone in front of their juniors.

This act destroys self-respect, and after that, you have little chance. Praise in public but criticize in private. It shows that you care and will foster change.

Step 4: Do not ever compromise on authority

Following only the first three steps can make you an excellent boss. But there is a point where any good Boss gets taken for granted. Off and on, you will find people trying to be over-smart, taking advantage of your politeness to lash back at you. That's when you must shake things up. Show them you are not aloof. Do not get worked up about it.

This is your turf. Do not accept insubordination.

Insubordination in any organization should not be tolerated; it breaks the spirit in which any institution runs. Imagine in school if all the children started shouting back at their teachers. Won't be very effective, would it?

Be stern while reacting, but not uncontrolled. Returning to our preamble, we must not deny our anger; we need to address it. We must speak up whenever necessary to maintain discipline, integrity or safety in the workplace.

That's just one way to use your anger effectively and create a complete Win-Win.

The second option is equally productive. I think that's even better!!

Option Two: The Un-Controlled anger – With a twist!

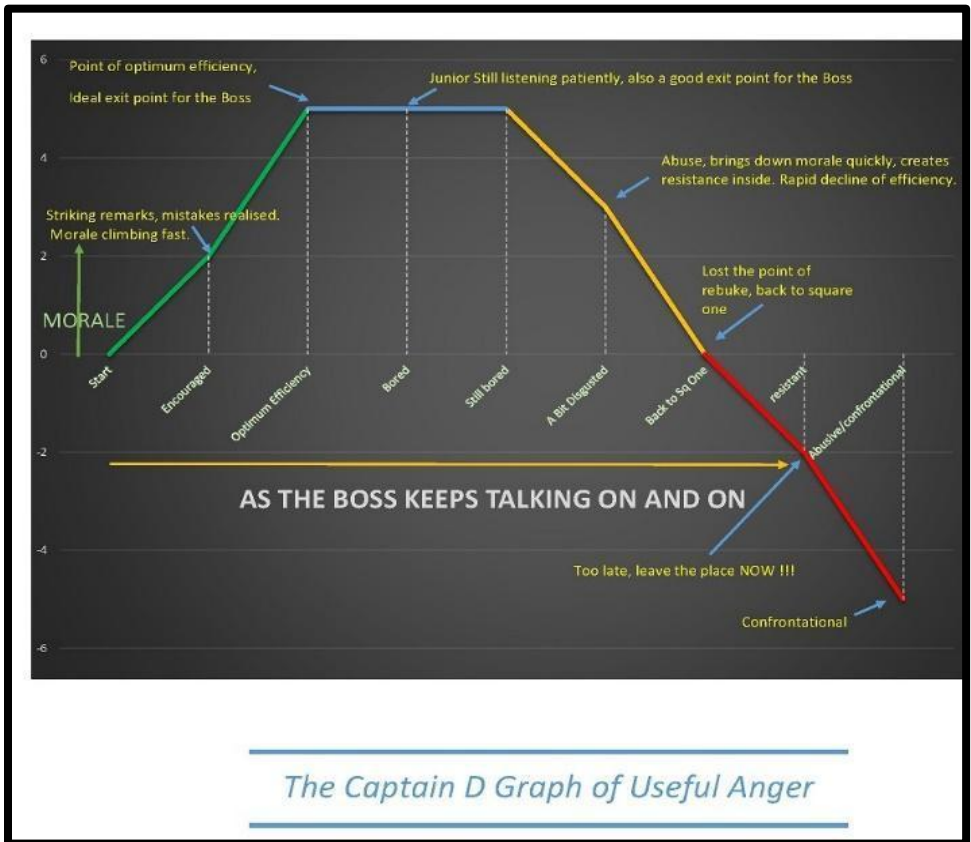
The situation in the wheelhouse is tense. The vessel is in the Singapore Straits, and you are picking up the Pilot soon. There is one vessel overtaking you and one right ahead

trying to cross. You expect your bridge team to be in a state of high alert! In the midst of all this, you find your duty officer hiding his mobile phone under the chart table and desperately looking for a signal! Is it time for you to peacefully ponder on the matter and tell him later? Absolutely not!

Emotions are the best servants but dangerous masters.

Control your emotions, and you control the world. If they are in control, you are finished! You feel like bursting out at times. Everyone does. Earlier, I asked you to divert that energy and make it productive. Now let us discuss how you *should* lash out to gain back control and bring forth balance over a situation which, left to itself, can get out of hand!

This way we can create a work environment that will allow us to lose control occasionally and yet be productive and respected. The graph below demonstrates the psychology beh



ind reprimanding a junior.

The exit point

While you reprimand, emotions change, and the effect elevates to a point where it then becomes steady. Take it too far, and it starts dropping.

Knowing when to stop is the greatest trick under your sleeve!

Eventually, it results in a confrontation. As evident from the graph, if there is one takeaway, it is to understand the correct and optimum Exit point – when to stop talking!

Rules which govern the above

Think of how you would deal with a child. The principles are pretty similar.

Rule 1: Care and respect must precede rebuke

A child who has never felt loved and does not respect you will not respond to your anger. They may be scared of a beating but would not realize your words. It is similar in your workplace. A junior must have enough respect for you before you decide to burst out. If not, your comments will not affect a change. They would just be scared of the consequences, making them briefly productive. It may not even work briefly for certain individuals where fear of consequences does not exist.

Respect must precede anger.

Rule 2: Ensure that you know the job yourself

It is pretty silly to ask someone to do something when you are unsure how to do it. As a manager, you often instruct people to do things you might not be an expert on. But in that case, there is absolutely no use for anger! If you are thrashing someone, you better be sure that you know that job! Otherwise, you might be interrupted by a fundamental question midway that makes you fumble and lose respect.

Rule 3: Be with your men in distress

If we treat the people we work with as brothers, if we support them in times of need, we will get a far better audience to listen to us when we push them. A boss who keeps throwing his weight around for no reason but does not stand by the people when in times of need would eventually get a snapback from their juniors.

Rule 4: Give Clear, concise and actionable instructions

When lashing out, you must be extremely clear in what you say.

Do not waste useless words and raise your blood pressure. Tell them precisely what is

wrong! Tell them what was expected, and tell them you will not tolerate it next time! Say actionable things, not something vague or situations beyond their capability. And how do you know they are actionable? Because you know the job yourself (Rule 2)!

Take the same example above:

Response 1: Vague and abusive

"Come here, you moron! Who the hell trained you to use your mobile on the bridge? Don't you understand what we are doing over here? Are you aware of where you are?"

It is a typical response; now we have wasted ten seconds of our lives that will never be back! We respond this way because it helps vent our anger. It did not change anything. And by the way, the conversation does not end there; it goes on and on!

Response 2: Clear and concise

[Stern voice] *"I do not want to see you with that phone in your hand on the bridge! I will not tolerate this next time. Come back and pay attention. Tell me the movement of that vessel behind us!"*

End of conversation! This time you have shaken things up and restored balance on your wheelhouse in a matter of ten seconds!

Remember the 1992 Hollywood classic "Scent of a Woman", starring Al Pacino? In the iconic role, he portrayed an extraordinarily irritable and touchy character, but also unequivocal and direct in his delegation. If it does not ring a bell, you can stream it tonight and see exactly what I mean.

Rule 5: Know how to use the pronoun "I"

I do not want to see you late ever again!

I want you to finish it today, however long it takes.

- When a leader puts down a verdict as *"I want"*, it means "this is how it will be on *my watch*", it is a strong statement. While it defines *'you are the Tiger in the room'*, it also creates slight defiance if the other person has a different opinion. "I" should be used sparingly. Once at most. Do not force people into doing things because 'you

want them; instead, try enforcing the culture of doing things the right way because that is how it should be!

However, this also has a cultural connotation. I have worked with people that need a defined command, and where *"I want it this way"* works wonderfully. In certain cultures, the emphatic use of "I" may bring in defiance, while in others, it commands respect. Be perceptive about the people you work with.

Rule 6: Respect the people around you.

Having inherent respect reflects in your comments. Something like: *"I had high hopes for you, but you are a disaster!"* is likely to create much less encouragement than a statement like *"I have high hopes for you!! Do not act like a disaster"*. They mean the same but have different effects. A negative remark creates maximum effect when camouflaged by a positive precursor.

I often used a phrase when angry with my officers: *"This is not how I want my officers to behave"*. It gives them the sense that they are better than others. I have seen significant changes in people when treated with respect before we show them their shortcomings. This, by the way, is also true for kids.

Rule 7: Do not be judgemental

Do not be judgemental when angry. Hit the system; try not to hit the person. Leave room for improvement at the end of the conversation. A hard-hitting and abusive statement can lower the morale of a person. I have made that mistake myself at times. If you expect people to perform, they usually do. We all have felt encouraged, inspired at certain times, and useless and demotivated at others. We were the same people, just with different managers!

Sooner or later, they will make us proud if given the right motivation.

Rule 8: Do not abuse

People often use verbal abuse to create an impact. The embedded thought is: "Oh, I have given them a piece of my mind!!" It temporarily relieves our urge to vent out.

If you wish to lead, do not lower your class before others. Our statements can be

strong enough; we do not need abuses to create an impact. Under no circumstances should you, as a leader, be forced to use abuses, no matter how angry you feel! It may make even the most loyal of your employees lose respect for you.

Rule 9: Do not push it

A short burst of anger is perfectly okay to have your people pull up their socks. But remember, every second you spend giving that moral lecture (as it might seem after a while), you are pushing a person towards the brim where his inherent resistance will take over and make him lose control.

Rule 10: Know the room

We go back to the Anger graph here again!

Watching expressions give a rough representation of what goes on in a person's mind when they are reprimanded. As we discussed, know **the Exit point**. Do not let your emotions take over and drive you nuts. I have encountered some exceptional individuals with immense knowledge who never got noticed, respected or appreciated because they did not know when to stop.

Even at your worst, believe in your team. **Expect excellence, settle for nothing less, and you will get it!!**



**We only had the
sextant and
Charts.**

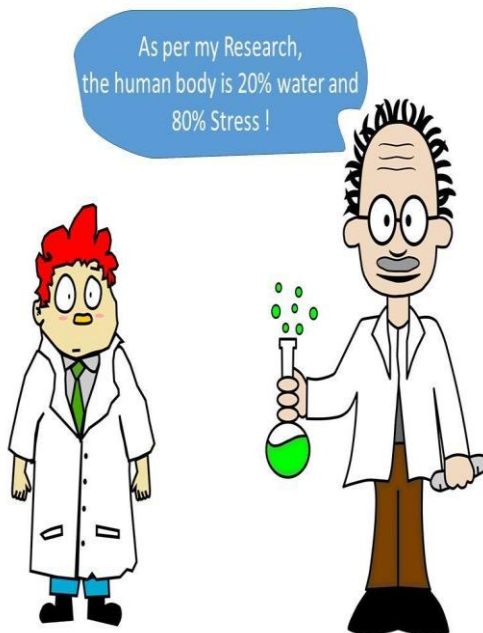


**We had LORAN,
then GPS then
ECDIS**



**I have all that
plus the PW to
your Wifi!**

Stress, Mental health and Suicides



A Cacophony of Cortisol

Fish are remarkable. They sense the presence of food, predators or potential mates from miles away. They are perceptive at various levels. Yet, there is one thing they are not aware of at all.

They are not aware of the fact that they are in the water.

Some of us are pretty similar. Our brilliant cognitive abilities are involved in a rush to prove ourselves, keep a job, maintain a work-life balance and explain why we could not call our wives or bosses. In all this, we often ignore the stress surrounding our colleagues and us. We are swimming in a sea of cortisol, the stress hormone, every day, and we do not even know it! Even when we see stress, we try to normalize it.

Why are you stressed? *"I have a huge amount of responsibility."*

"Oh, I have to manage so many things at once!";

and the mother of all: *"But everyone is stressed out! What can I do?"*

A violent attack

It was a fifteen-year-old Aframax Tanker, a stressful ship. Traffic in the East China Sea was heavy. It was late evening, and the deckhand on day work had to be called in for a watch at 8-PM. He came on the bridge but stood quietly in one corner, his elbow on the bridge front, staring into the night.

At around 10-PM, while the 3rd Officer was plotting a position on the chart table, he approached from behind, picked up a divider from the table and tried to stab him violently. The 3rd officer was caught utterly off guard but somehow escaped the attack. The cadet held him back as he kept screaming and swearing frantically. He was stone-drunk and mad. The situation was controlled. The Master kept him isolated and signed him off in the next port. Of course, they did not rehire him.

The symptom was removed from the system. But was the disease cured?

Suicides and alcohol-related misbehaviour have turned many heads in the recent past. Unfortunate as they are, they are also costly for a company to explain and investigate. It is not surprising hence that mental health is the talk of the town.

For most of this book, we spoke about how to bring out the full potential of the young seafarer. We talked about the benefits of conscious action. But what about the cost of inaction? You may believe things will remain the same even if you don't do anything.

Well, not necessarily.

A few statistics

On average, about 727,000 people take their own life worldwide each year— roughly one every 43 seconds. For every such case, there are hundreds of suicidal thoughts, and contemplations, causing chronic depression and loss of jobs. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year-old females, third for males. A UK P&I Club study¹³ put suicide at 9% of crew fatalities — but 75% of those who died were under 41, and most cases occurred within the first three months of contract. Among cadets specifically, an earlier UK P&I review found 40% of cadet deaths over a decade were suicides — a figure that has not been published as updated.

Mere statistics do not do justice. There was the Pumpman found missing after two days. No one noticed his absence during the weekend. This cadet jumped into the propeller, unable to handle the pressure. There was this second officer whose body was floating at the anchorage when the Chief officer came at four o'clock to relieve him.

The slow poison

We all get pushed to do more and more with less and less.

When working ashore, work follows you at home. At sea, it follows you to your cabin. You wake up at 2-AM for a glass of water and worry about work. You speak on the phone before you speak to your family in the morning. You cannot skip checking your emails, even on weekends.

Out at sea, you do not have to be attacked by pirates to be stressed out by piracy. At the peak of the COVID-19 crew change crisis in mid-2020, over 400,000 seafarers were stranded on vessels — many for over a year — and roughly the same number were stuck ashore unable to relieve them. Heavy workloads, fatigue, and continuously shifting targets threaten your job security every day. People feel overworked and underappreciated. With strict shore leave restrictions, you are on a floating object for months on end!

These are considered part of our profession.

Now think of the young seafarer. The challenge is far more pronounced in some cases if you factor social isolation and social media into this mix. While everyone around seems to be spending time with their kids, the fact that you cannot hug your newborn every day pinches even more. You are due for relief, but somehow the company could not arrange for your reliever and that vacation with your family got cancelled! You could not reach out to your parents when they needed you; you were miles away.

Not everyone is carved out of the same stone. Some of us got thrown into this system and adapted ourselves. ***It is essential to understand that some could not.***

The Starlink Double-edge

In 2020, the question was: how does a young 3rd Officer cope with months of isolation? In 2026, the question has flipped. With Starlink or other affordable internet options rolled out across major fleets, your young officer is now permanently connected — to family, yes, but also to TikTok, to Tinder matches who don't reply, to cyberbullying, and to the relentless visible happiness of everyone he scrolls past. The Mission to Seafarers Happiness Index Q1–Q3 2025 lists connectivity as the highest-scoring welfare category (7.4–7.8). ISWAN's helpline contacts on mental-health issues, in the same period, tripled — from 5% of all contacts in H1 2023, to 7% in H1 2024, to 15.5% in H1 2025. Better connectivity has not lowered the mental-health load. It has shifted its shape.

The key indicators

When things go out of hand, self-harming, suicidal thoughts, alcohol abuse, and other unfortunate events occur.

Statistically, for every 600 near misses, there is one major accident. Accounting for near misses helps detect a pattern and avoidance of that accident. Similarly, every suicide and every stress-related incident comes with early indicators.

Here are a few common indicators of people with poor mental health:

- ✓ Difficulty in concentrating.
- ✓ Lack of informal interaction [hard to communicate outside work]
- ✓ Constantly feeling tired without much activity
- ✓ Compulsive scrolling — losing 2+ hours after watch to short-form video they can't recall.
- ✓ Mental block
- ✓ Performance of happiness — polished posts, constant social-media visibility while withdrawing from real-world peer contact.
- ✓ Stress eating; leads to Obesity
- ✓ Lack of motivation
- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Insomnia or oversleeping
- ✓ Poor immune system



- ✓ Psychological disorders, and so on.

What can we do about it?

Leaders must discuss the mental health of their subordinates and take action. Very few seafarers are talking about stress or trying to understand it. Today, it is more important to address that than anything else.

Personal management

A busy life is a good life, and it gives you a sense of purpose. We can handle much more pressure than what life throws at us, with a little practice. Seafarers must identify exceeding stress levels in their system and take action before it goes out of hand. Just as we know how to lift a heavy box without breaking our backs with the correct posture, with the proper technique we may lift a heavy mental stress burden.

Here are a few personal management techniques¹⁴:

- ✓ Regular exercise
- ✓ Some form of meditation, yoga or breath control. There are many breathing techniques to reduce stress levels; you just have to *want to* do it. [Refer to the Heart Coherence 365 technique by Dr David O'Hare in the previous chapter.]
- ✓ A proper healthy diet. Avoiding excessive smoking or overeating.
- ✓ Interaction with colleagues; informal chats.
- ✓ Stay away from work-related thoughts for at least a part of your day. It boosts creativity and makes you more productive.
- ✓ Reduce overspending.
- ✓ Mindfulness: The human mind wanders off 47% of the time. Mindfulness is a proven concentration technique. Focus on your breath and bring your focus back to it every time it wanders off.
- ✓ Speak about your mental health to others before it becomes unmanageable.

What can you do as a manager?

Henry's mom died. He was granted a few days of compassionate leave. When he came back to work, he was still not okay. He tried to organize his job; work more for a few days to get a few days off later. But his manager refused, saying: *"I can't allow that. Everyone will want it!"* Henry, a brilliant worker, eventually left.

Sarah, a champion performer, lost his brother. When she returned to the office, his manager called for a meeting. He asked her colleagues to shoulder her responsibility for a few more days so that she could take some time off. She still works for this firm and advocates the firm strongly.

Do you see the difference between the two management styles?

Employees are often treated like pawns on a chessboard. They are frontline runners, a row of gunmen on a battlefield, to be used as and when needed, and thrown away when not. Productivity shoots up if you can provide a culture of utmost discipline only when people are treated like human beings, not pawns. This is especially true for the young millennials; they would give you their best when treated with some respect and understanding.

Six steps to a stressless environment

Here are some practical steps Masters may follow to make the ship's work environment less stressful without compromising quality.

1. **Set precise, achievable tasks.** Work-related confusions cause stress. Try to give clear instructions and ensure everyone is on the same page.
 - a. *Today we will overhaul the motor. You will change these components inside, whether wasted or not! Make sure to note the direction of movement before you start the job. Take your precautions.... Etc. Your input, please?*
 - b. *We shall launch the lifeboat today. Ensure all tests are done before we start the operation. Fasten painters. Lower it to the water level and lift it back. Then we enter the boat; Bosun will be on the brake. On instructions from the Master, we proceed by pulling on the remote release wire.... Etc. Any doubts?*

The Chief officer on one of my vessels was always stressed out with the crew. When he saw someone doing it differently, he went ballistic. When he started giving precise guidance on how he wanted critical things to be done, it brought about a massive change; he was calmer and crew morale improved.

2. Encourage **personal management techniques:** Encourage your juniors to maintain emotional well-being, and develop stress resistance organically.
3. Maintain a **positive work environment:** Flexible work environments and work schedules relieve tension without compromising quality. Allow them to complete their job and relax—Foster positive employee recognition. Ensure harmony.
4. Maintain an **Open line of communication:** Keep your door open. If someone genuinely needs guidance and help, offer your advice. However, never offer unsolicited service.

5. **Smile** and let others smile too: One of the leading causes of stress at sea today is utmost isolation due to cell phone addiction. Encourage group activities. Throw in an occasional get-together with good food; wish a birthday or organize a potluck. Consider a quiz contest or a best-demonstration competition.
6. **Act as a buffer:** Pressure flows from senior management ashore right down to the bottom-most link. No one in is prepared to act as a buffer; so we have an entire row of stressed-out people from top to bottom. Act as the buffer in it. Hold on to the flow of pressure coming from the senior levels. Do not transmit it downwards. Break the chain.

Life management

Stop saying 'stress-management'. It's Life-management. Stress needs to leave!

Each of us is capable of managing our inner life in such a way that no matter what the external circumstances are, we remain worry-free. Creating a supportive work culture can help, but it depends on the individual more than on anyone else.

Brainstorm

Let us know of any other activity that you feel will boost morale and reduce work stress.

A Revolution we started

The young millennial generation remains the most underutilized generation in the seafaring world, while a vast majority of the senior staff on board keeps complaining endlessly about work pressure. Yet, those kids are our future leaders! A growing urge to do something about that took shape in 2019 and has continued ever since.

Guide2Inspections™

In 2019 we founded a process called Guide2Inspections™, under the banner of Navguide Solutions LLP. This process is targeted to prepare vessels for possible inspections (SIRE, Port state, AMSA, USCG, etc.) in a comprehensive manner without increasing the burden on seafarers. We work with owners and Pre Vetting companies to organically improve inspection results & performance in a relatively short time!



We developed a fast yet straightforward, innovative way to explain the essentials to millennial seafarers through handy devices. Among other things, we use short guidance microlearning videos, three to eight minutes long to impact change. Our style is not traditional; we work with what the millennials want and mould ourselves to their needs!

This simple, straightforward process works miracles! We took time to develop the content and make it bulletproof. With our short videos and interactive material, it takes a short time for the young seafarers to be thorough in their jobs. All this without involving any external trainer or senior management.

The Navguide Blogs

The Navguide blogs talk about concepts relevant to today's date. Go ahead, and check out our posts here: <https://navguidesolutions.com/coffee-time/>

If you wish to contribute to our blog, Write to us at contact@navguidesolutions.com

Augmenting Checklists



At Navguide, we created inspection videos with years of research. Each short video covers one zone on a ship (e.g. What to check in a Lifeboat or the Steering flat), with a study of the SIRE 2.0, RISQ 3.2, CDI, SOLAS, MARPOL and other relevant regulations. We reviewed over 100,000 Port State, USCG, Flag state and SIRE observations worldwide. It included the study of different company SMSs and amalgamated them into one platform. We involved senior inspectors while creating them, and they gave us the *true vision of an inspector*.

Each video ranges from 3 to 8 minutes, with a range of videos covering the entire ship. Years of experience are packed up into the few minutes you see.

Now, for the other advantages of the videos:

1. Apart from telling you what to do, a video can show you how to do it, like explaining to a five-year-old! A checklist would ask you to ensure the *Lifebuoy grab line is in good condition*, but a video can demonstrate that you need to pick the grab line in your hands, twist it and check if it is frailing out.
2. Showing you a four-minute inspection round of a particular area, instead of a 35-point checklist, sets a pattern in your mind and helps you take that round in just a few minutes as a senior inspector does.
3. Since it is audio-visual, it is way more acceptable, it takes you on a virtual round, making you get a feel of the place, which a paper checklist cannot, and it hits the mindset of the millennial seafarer.

You may visit our YouTube channel and check out a few example videos:

Clearly visible marking for hooks being in locked position?
There is an indication on the hooks to confirm this.

LSA - Lifeboats



YES NO PASS RESTART

Are External lifeboat fittings in good condition?

LSA - Lifeboats



YES NO PASS RESTART

Scupper/drains well maintained?



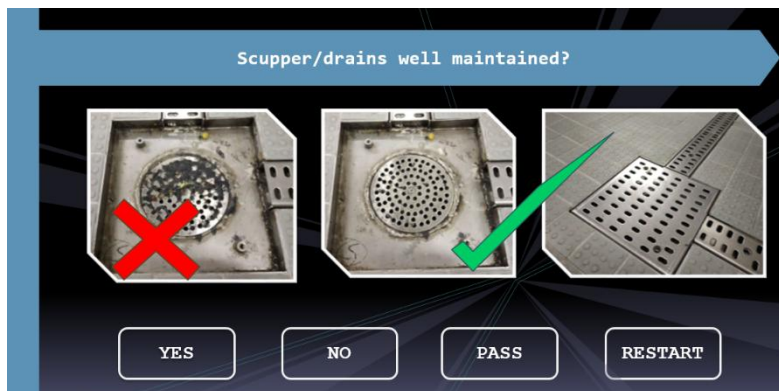
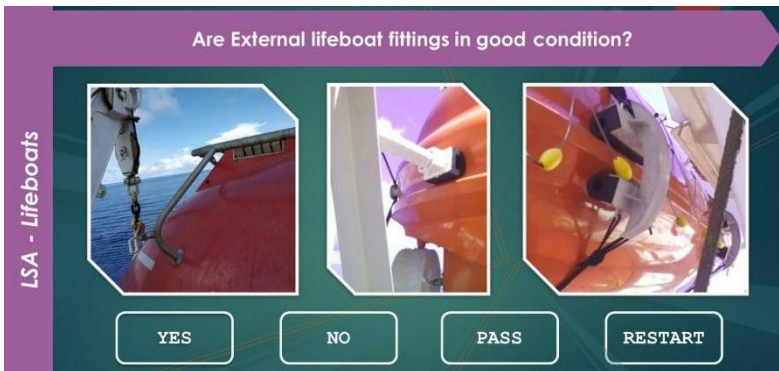
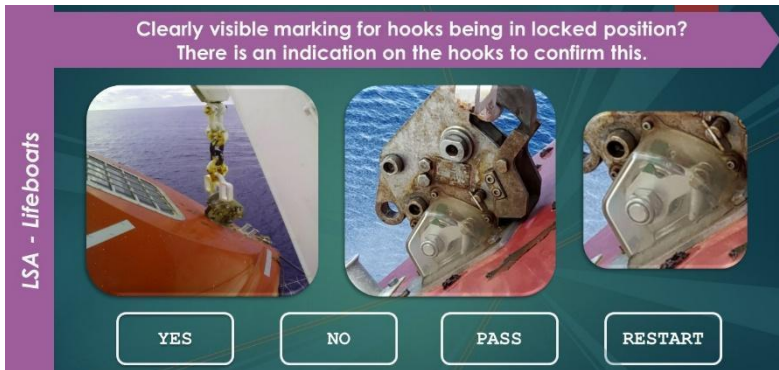
YES NO PASS RESTART

Why this matters more in 2026 than in 2020: SIRE 2.0's Performance Influencing Factors or RightShip's RISQ 3.2 are not a checklist — they are human-element measures inspectors actively score. The mariners who can have a real conversation with an inspector about why they do what they do are sustainable.



Join us:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsqLjXlInfmPyomCITeMKobA?sub_confirmation=1

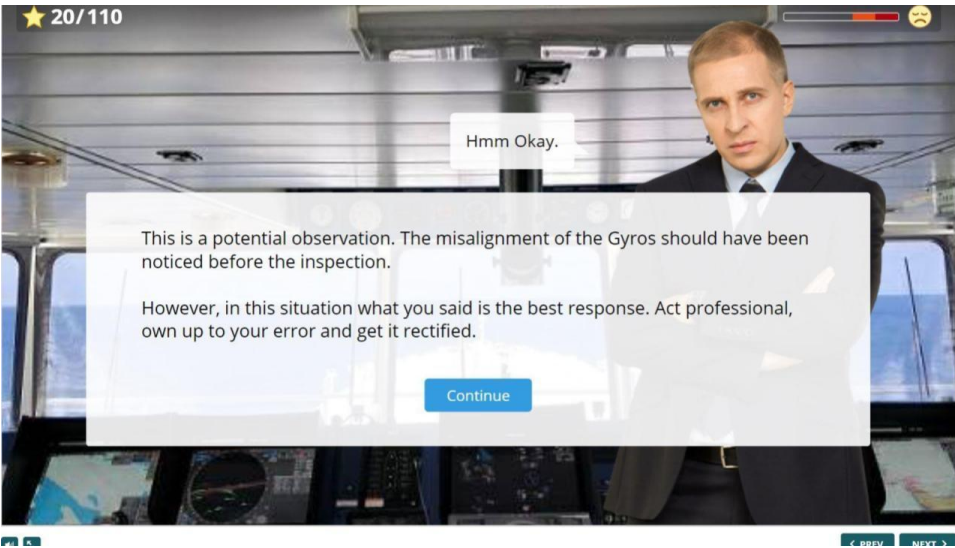
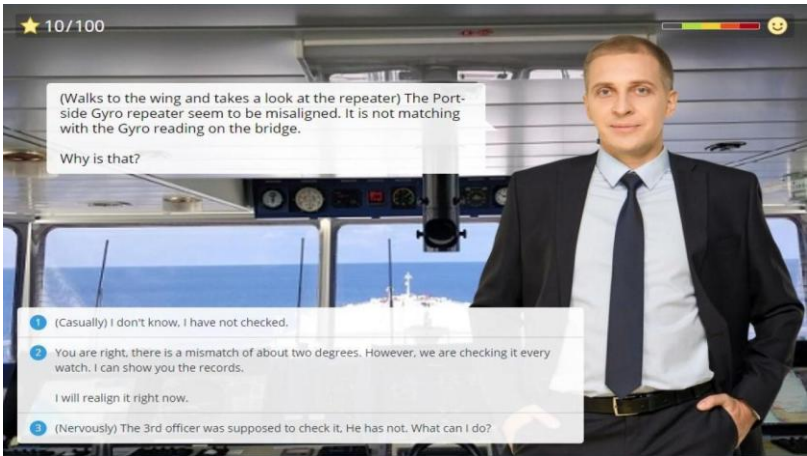


We didn't reverse-engineer our system for SIRE or Rightship; The industry retrofitted itself onto what we'd been arguing for since 2019.

Gamification

We also built an ecosystem of Scenario-based games to deal with the Human factor on board. We often become preachy in *explaining the right attitude* to the seafarer and end up saying things like *"You need to be Polite"* or *"You need to be professional."*

What does that behaviour look like? The games we created simulate real-life scenarios of two people interacting, giving a clear direction of the expected attitude. This prepares the ship staff for any such situation.



Our achievements

We are now a Singapore based entity, working with some of the world's top operators, helping them effectively manage their vessels and train their crew. We prepare them for evolved regimes such as SIRE2.0, CDI or RISQ, reducing detentions, claims, facilitating promotions, building capabilities while reducing the workload on seafarers. Guide2Inspections, our flagship platform, is now deployed on hundreds of vessels, built on a research base of over 100K Port State, USCG, Flag State and SIRE observations. Our work has been presented at the IMO's HTW Sub-Committee in 2024 and 2025, at BIMCO, INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO, the Indian Ocean MoU, the Nautical Institute and the World Maritime University, and featured in Safety4Sea, DNV, Sailor Today and Sea & Beyond. Our Paper "*Gamification in Maritime Training*" got published in the International Journal of Science and Technology in 2020. Our Microlearning videos are used on board several vessels as Rightship, Port State or SIRE guidance tools.

However, our most exceptional testimonial comes from the young seafarers!

We get to hear how our work engaged them, transformed their entire concept, improved their jobs, and made them more confident professionals.

Navguide Solutions LLP

The above are just a few things in our portfolio; there are many more. If you are working and dealing with young millennial mariners or making decisions for the upliftment and management of vessels, get in touch with us. You'll be glad you did!

[Mail us at contact@navguidesolutions.com]



Watch our presentation for Intercargo in Athens, Nov 2025

A few thousand years old Wisdom



Extraordinary Results from Ordinary people¹²

We are all managers.

Come adolescence, we take things under our control. We make decisions and control events in our lives and, by extension, in the lives of others! Whether we realize it or not, that is when we start being a manager. Whether you're managing your kids, employees, teammates or a large organization, certain proven techniques are universal.

As we wrap up today, I wish to introduce five-thousand-year-old wisdom, which speaks about the four possible management styles ever used.

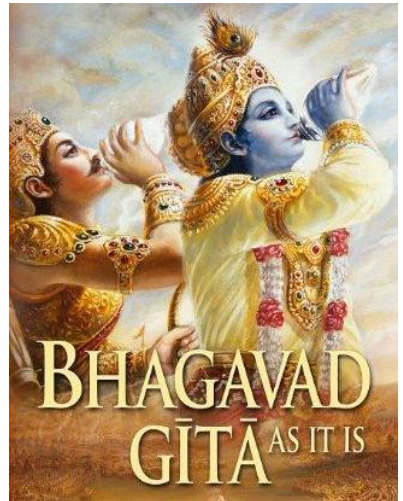
These four management styles were articulated thousands of years back as four keys to the human psyche!! As we go through this chapter, you will realize that all that we discussed before, all that you have ever done to manage people, falls under one or more of these elements! It applies across every sphere of life, all ages and sexes, and virtually to every field of our existence.

The Bhagavad Gita

The concept dates back to ancient times.

The [*Bhagavad Gita*](#), believed to have been written between roughly 200 BC and 200 AD as part of the Mahabharata epic in the Indian subcontinent, is one of the most ancient pieces of literature. It was originally written in Sanskrit, the oldest known language ever born, and mother to many.

Legend says it is a conversation between two of the greatest minds at the time, Krishna and Arjuna, when Arjuna was torn in having to choose between morality and responsibility in a battlefield.



The fundamental principles of management

The Bhagavad Gita says: there are primarily four motivators which drive us.

Simply put, you can get people to do something in four ways. Which one works depends on the person and the situation; sometimes, a combination of more than one method may be needed. As you read, think of what you know about management; about dealing with your friends, family, subordinates and employees. This will help you relate.

The **four management principles** are: **Saam, Daam, Dand, and Bhed.**

Saam

Saam, in Sanskrit, translates to "Equality".

It's the style of management which says: *"I am there right by your side!"*

When you use this principle, you become equal to the person you are dealing with. You ask for their opinions and work side by side, and there is a sense of genuine equality. For this moment, you stop being a senior or junior.

In your work life, you would come across people who would not take high-handed orders well but would respond to a suggestion when they know that their opinions matter. They expect validation. It works if you trust that person's judgement in the matter and if you think they have enough experience to provide you with good ideas. This is how you deal with your teenage son in your personal life!

The core idea is even if you can, you don't dictate your terms. It works miracles on those who can think independently and are smart but are also friendly and open to talk to. Such people have their creative juices triggered in such an environment.

Instead of: *"Do it as I tell you!"* or *"Just go do your job."* Ask: *"How do you think we should approach this? Do you have a suggestion?"* Or *"I understand, but what if we did it like this...? Do you think this will be a better approach?"* Be that friend to them, and you will find talent pouring out.

Daam

The next management style is Daam.

Its' rough translation in Sanskrit comes to "Price". It's basic. Incentivize! This is when you say: *"Do this, and you can walk away with _____!"*

You pay a person as needed to get the job done. Money may be the most direct and obvious remuneration, but sometimes it is not in your hands to pay money. The good news is that incentives do not have to be money, and there are far more satisfying ways to remunerate. It can be an overdue holiday approval or a token of appreciation for a job well done! It can also be as simple as ice cream!

While specific incentives are universally appealing, personalized ones are often far more effective. Personalize your gratuities if you can. Just say – Thank you.

Dand

Dand, one which comes next, translates to 'Punishment'.

It's when the message reads: "You would not dare to disobey, else _____!"

Fear is a big motivator. The fear of consequences vastly draws people. It is the inherent fear that drives most people to excel in their jobs. Fear of being laid off, fear of a bad appraisal and fear of losing that next salary hike, are all ingrained in the Millennial generation. The recession of 2008 embedded it even deeper within us when people around the world saw that keeping a job is more challenging than getting it.

For some people, this may be the only motivator. Most people would not move an inch if not for fear of losing something dear. Any time you have given an ultimatum, you have used "Dand". You declared disobedience would not be forgiven, hence instilling fear.

I can ask my crew on the ship politely to keep the laundry room clean all the time (that's Saam), but if that does not work, I will have to tell them that the next time I find the place dirty, I will call everyone involved to clean it, even if it is the middle of the night! That would be Dand.

Bhed

Bhed is one of the most beautiful and ancient methods practised by rulers and is highly effective. "Bhed" translates to 'Division'.

The sense here is: *"This is what you need to do. I am here if you need me."*

And then you distance yourself unless called for.

For certain people, you need to stop over-supervising. It may sound like the first principle of 'Equality' or 'Saam', but it's not.

You are not treating them as an equal; you are leaving them alone!

Here's what you do if you want to use the principle of *Bhed*:

- ✓ Assert your requirements, and tell them clearly what you need.
- ✓ Make them realize that they are responsible for their failures.
- ✓ Set a target date and time.
- ✓ Let them work freely. Don't micromanage.
- ✓ Be there for support if (*and only if*) you are called.

Certain independent-minded people work best when left alone. These intelligent people know their jobs, take full responsibility for the outcome and cannot perform well under pressure to prove themselves at every step. Most Masters and Chief Engineers fall under this category. It usually works well for senior ranks, but at times for juniors too.

Just remember, as a manager, just because you are not interfering does not mean you don't know what is going on! It is your job to know that.

Conclusion

Young Millennials and Gen Z, have *been* grossly misunderstood for who they are. They are more like their predecessors than we care to admit, but they do live in their own ways. In 2026, Gen Z and millennials together are roughly three-quarters of the global maritime workforce; Gen Z alone is on track to be 30%+ by 2030. You're not managing them as a minority anymore — you're managing them as the room. You cannot afford *not to know* them. A few twists and turns in management styles would bring out the best!



The concepts discussed in this book are primarily universal, although the ways to implement them vary. If you are in a position to influence management decisions, you must decide which principle would work for you.

I have been a mariner all my life. I have seen great minds in this profession, those who could have impacted many lives with their knowledge, experience and wisdom. But they never did. The problem is, many of us have stopped caring enough to plan management styles. Most of us have a few personal tools in our bags of wisdom, and we use the same tools no matter who is in front of us. That is like adding the same fertilizer to all the plants and expecting all of them to blossom.

We do not need a fancy classroom course or a management degree to learn how to work with people! We just need to care enough. Know them, and you will achieve extraordinary results from ordinary people.

Captain Debashis Basu

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this book without the constant support and involvement of my wife, Dr Ishani Mitra, who kept nagging until I corrected everything from concept misalignments to minor errors and typos; and the mentorship of my dad, Mr Arun Kr Basu, who inspired me all the way. A special shout out to Dr Debanjan Pan, renowned Psychiatrist and the busiest man on the planet, for being patient enough to read through my work several times and suggesting massive improvements.

To my close friends Shubhodeep Dhar and Somosree Sengupta, thanks a ton for studying the content, reviewing the book carefully and hitting me with your specific insights. Even though you are miles away from seafaring, and I know I bored you with sea stuff, your unique points of view helped!

Finally, sincere thanks to several acquaintances from the marine industry, some of whom are extremely busy in their respective ship and shore fields. You guys showed me some great perspectives!

Internet resources

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Connectivity & regulation

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About the Author

Capt. Debashis Basu is the Founder and Managing Partner of **Navguide Solutions**, an ABS-certified maritime competency-management company based in India and Singapore. An ex-VLCC Master, he created

Guide2Inspections — a microlearning and self-inspection platform deployed across hundreds of vessels. He has **presented at the IMO in London twice** — at the HTW Sub-Committee in 2024 (CIRM) and 2025 (ITF, HTW 11/INF.5) — and has spoken at BIMCO, INTERTANKO, the Indian Ocean MoU's 25-year conference in Tanzania, the Hong Kong Shipowners' Association, FOSMA, Intercargo, the Nautical Institute and the World



Maritime University. His paper "**Gamification in Maritime Training**" was published in the International Journal of Advanced Research in Science and Technology. He received the CMMI Founders' Innovation Award in 2025 and has been acknowledged by India's Director General of Shipping. He is a Member of the Nautical Institute (AFNI), CMMI and IMEI.

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Navguide Solutions



The UK P&I Club podcast

THE PULSE OF A YOUNG SEAFARER



Watch: <https://www.ukpandi.com/news-and-resources/safety-advice-training/article/ask-an-expert-the-pulse-of-a-young-seafarer/>

Decoding the Young Millennial Mariner (and Gen Zs)



Millennials. The biggest workforce in today's world!

Millions spent on training material, courses and management brainstorming would never have the desired effect on the young generation of mariners unless we speak to their minds!

This book is an attempt to do just that.

It will help you:



- Destroy myths surrounding the Young Millennial Seafarer today.
- Understand how technology affected all of us over the last decade, but how it changed some of the basic concepts for the youngsters!
- Discover innovative ways to turn your juniors into next-gen leaders.
- Keep work stress, suicides and alcohol abuse in check.
- Explore ways to make their raw, untamed enthusiasm work for you!

...and much much more!

The aim of this book is not to preach, it is to invoke thought!