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## Walk the talk

Seafarers interpret safety based on what they see their leaders do and say.

## What does it mean for leaders to “walk the talk”?

The way crew work onboard, is very much reflective of the way leadership is in the company. “Safety First” may be the largest stencil on board all ships, but the essence of the message is not the size of the characters, but in the commitment of the top management ashore and also on board.

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SMS procedures and policies developed to ensure safety on board the ship can be all encompassing, but their proper implementation would be unlikely if there is a lack of commitment from the highest levels of management.

The ISM Code states in its preamble that *“The cornerstone of good safety management is commitment from the top. In matters of safety and pollution prevention it is the commitment, competence, attitudes and motivation of individuals at all levels that determines the end result”*.

Prof Phil Anderson covers “*leadership and management*” in his book *ISM Code: A Practical Guide*. According to him, demonstration of commitment from the top should be believed by everybody in the company, both ashore and on-board ships. Only then will the department heads, line managers, superintendents, masters, chief engineers, and all the crew be inspired to follow their leaders and commit to safety in their day-to-day work. “Walk the talk” is the leader’s ability to understand the consequences of their words, their actions or inactions, and their intentions.

### **More information**

Loss prevention poster: [Walk the talk](#)