Does your organisation's culture dictate the engagement of your seafarers?

An organisation's culture dictates how seafarers engage with their leaders on routine matters and leaders in the organisation have a significant impact on the organisational culture.

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The ability of seafarers to speak up to avoid an incident is a habit which is formed as a result of their leader's expectation during routine matters. These habits, formed over a period of time, prevail even when the crew member is performing a critical operation.

Several maritime incidents would have been avoided and lives saved if someone from the crew had spoken up about the clear and present danger in time. This repeated behaviour of subordinates, crew and officers is generally a reflection of how they view the leadership on board the vessel and in the company. Safe behaviour requires conscious efforts by leaders in the organisation to create a culture where subordinates are confident to express their views without the fear of adverse consequences.

Torkel Soma from Propel covers the impact of cultures on crew members' ability to engage on safety matters on board a ship or in an organisation in his article "Ship safety and high reliability organisation". The article considers different types of cultures in shipping organisations and how an organisation can transform itself to improve safety and operational performance.