



# Case study 1<sup>st</sup> Draft – the narrative part

## 1. Title

Communication and cooperation thrive when there is mutual trust

## 2. Executive Summary

A case study aims at highlighting the usefulness of communication and cooperation only when there is mutual trust. The Pilot is at the center of the incident who has to cooperate with a Captain so that the vessel enters port. The shortage of briefing of the Pilot by the Captain sparked a chain of problems that resulted in an impact with some material damages.

## 3. The narration

### 3.1. The scenery

---

Our narrator is Captain Iakovos Venieris, who is Pilot at the port of Piraeus, and the incident involved the approach of a vessel carrier to the port.

It was autumn in 2017. While it was a sunny day, the Beaufort force was 6. The winds were particularly strong and windward during the course to enter the port.



The vessel was of a big, well - known company. It was 200 meters long. The Captain, the officers and the crew well all Indians.

That particular vessel on that day faced some issues with the engine, which were also evident in the previous port during departure and arrival in Piraeus. The engines did not start immediately, thus sometimes she did not respond to bridge orders.

### 3.2. Introducing the people involved

---

#### **The Pilot**

Captain Iakovos is the narrator of this incident. He is about 45 years old and significantly experienced in vessels. He works as a Pilot at the port of Piraeus for the last 5 years. He is an analytic man, visionary, cooperative and with good communication skills. He knows his port well enough, and is successful at his job.

#### **The Captain**

The Captain of the vessel was a middle- aged Indian with a 10 -year -successful experience on vessels. He was a reclusive, insular person, with a high opinion of himself which he did not wish to be ruined. He was over confident and did not open up himself, nor trusted others. This resulted in him lacking control of his subordinates' actions. A lot of times he was distant even from his crew. When he had to work with the office or the authorities, he was more like "you do your job, and I'll do mine". He was very cautious with his image and wanted to be in full control so that his or the vessel's deficiencies were not apparent.



This resulted in him feeling the obligation to disclose these deficiencies so that the company and the coast guard did not find them out; such obligation was more important than the danger he underwent at that time.

### **The rest of the crew**

The rest of the crew were all of the same nationality, all were Indians. They had developed their own cultural code, acted as a family that tries to hide what is happening inside it. They were comfortable as if they were at home and during communication on the vessel spoke in their mother tongue.

### **3.3. The challenge**

---

The vessel was outside the port and contacted our office requesting a Pilot. I made the first contact with the Captain of the vessel and pointed out where he would stop so that I boarded her. The Captain's reply was that "My vessel is big, it is a 200 –meter vessel, and I cannot approach the port from very close.". At the tone of his voice I distinguished arrogance and a slight irony that offended me. I replied this: "In Piraeus we dock 400 – meter vessels, yours is not treated as a big one.", only to receive this abrupt answer without the possibility to counter act it: "The vessel is a big one, I cannot approach very close, I will stop here at three nautical miles.", and he stopped very far away.

Because on that day the weather was bad with strong crosswinds, I then asked him to turn the vessel so that there is a sheltered side where the waves are small so that we could approach and board her. He turned the vessel onto the weather, meaning onto the eye of the wind, resulting in big waves and I could not board safely. All those actions showed me that he meant to scare me, as if he was hazing me so that he would be have the upper hand after I had boarded. I felt from the first moment that the manoeuvre would not turn out well. There was no connection. I felt that. For that reasons, I ordered an extra tug boat for safety reasons, because I saw that, judging by his behaviour, that something was concealed, that something was wrong.

I boarded the vessel and headed towards the bridge. As I entered the bridge, instead of a salutation or some brief get-to-know chat, without him offering me a coffee, his first words were these: "Show me my position". Meaning, for me to show him the course on the map, a thing that a Pilot is obliged to do, it is among his duties. I replied this: "Mr Captain, this is our course, I plan to do this manoeuvre like this, I will enter from here, I will stop the vessel here". I felt that the Captain was, to say it in our own language, he was 'meowing', meaning he was not what he was supposed to be: cooperative. The moment he understood where he had to go, he ordered in his language to start the engine while that is my order. Instantly I realized what was crystal clear: he would do his stuff. I was certain he was hiding something from me...

During briefing between the Pilot and the Captain as to how to go and where all those involved in the process had to be informed and in fact there was a need to schedule a briefing so that opinions are exchanged on that matter; that is if the agreed process changed anyhow if something had to be changed, taking into consideration that all the factors had not been regarded. This does not mean that we two, the Pilot and the Captain, had considered everything. Perhaps something had skipped our minds. The fact that such briefing did not take place shows that he did not trust his crew. Also, it shows



un- responsibility and sloppiness in managing the approach, because he did not manage to set responsible the people who are in charge of the approach.

In that specific case, from what I understood, an officer did not go to the bow, only the boatswain was there. One always has to have an officer on the bow, but even if that is the case, the boatswain should have been briefed on his duties. Otherwise, a person might think: "I was told to have both anchors ready, why would they want both, one is fine. Let's not make this a big deal". Having thought this, it is unlikely that he went to check them, to get them ready, to do this and that, because he might had thought that "this may not be needed. Oh, man!". This is because he was unaware of the whole situation, nor did the Captain tell him to mind the bow because their engine was not operational. At least from the inside the problem could have been made known and for them they could have been ready. The Captain did not even do that!

The vessel started and approached the entrance port. There was a strong crosswind at the entrance port and for me to face it until approach I had to order a certain speed so that I am in command of it. As I started to make the move for slow ahead, which is the second highest engine order, I saw him worried and told me: "Mr. Pilot, you have great speed.". His manners showed fear, as if he wanted to show that he was there on his duty, he was the one who warned that it would not be his fault if the vessel would not stop. He felt that there was an issue and he would not share it with me from the beginning. He did not trust me enough to tell me "You know what? There is a situation here, when you exceed a speed of 5 knots she will not stop.". I would rather he had trusted me than what happened next...

When we entered the port I ordered the engine to 'Hold' and the opposite 'Reverse' so that she reduces speed. However, the vessel did not respond. The engine was dead and, as a result, she continued on at the same speed inside the port. Then, realizing the danger, I ordered to drop both anchors so that the she stopped. I heard the Captain on the radio speaking in their language, I don't know what they said, perhaps communication with the bow to drop the anchors.

He spoke in his language though prohibited. Because each vessel does not only carry one nationality, she may have a Ukrainian Captain and crew of two nationalities Filipinos and Indians, it is clearly stated in the ISM of the company's vessel that English is the working language. When a Pilot boards, it is a necessary precondition that all conversations are in English. Yet, there were times when the first Officer and the Captain together with another apprentice officer on the bridge spoke in their language and I did not understand what they said.

The anchors dropped on time. I looked at him and saw fear in his eyes, he froze because he was seeing what was coming. The moment he said the anchors were not dropped, I heard people banging them with a hammer. An emergency situation happens once every fifty approaches, it does not happen daily, these vessels are not usually anchored in the port, only at berth, when they are on stand - by to enter. The bad maintenance of the anchor gear the moment I requested to drop the anchors resulted in their breaks being stuck. Perhaps he himself was not aware of it because one had not informed him. That maintenance was the First Officer's duty. No one informed anybody. However, the result was that at difficult moments the anchors were not dropped. This particular matter may not have been concealed, he may have also been ignorant about it; still, he did conceal the engine matter.



The result was that the vessel did not stop on time, there was impact between the bow and the dock and there were damages on both. Luckily, thanks to the tug boats, and particularly the extra one I had ordered, the vessel was held back and the damages were small.

There was lack of briefing of the Pilot by the Captain, and from that point it becomes clear that a chain of problems was created. As a result, there was an impact –and to some extent material damages.

### 3.4. The dilemma

---

On that day this particular vessel faced some engine issues which were evident at the previous port, too; these issues were evident both during departure from the port of Piraeus and entrance into it. Some times the engine may not have been operational, a fact that is crucial when a vessel approaches a port, the Pilot wants to know that the engine is fully operational and disposable. Otherwise, meaning if he does know that the engine is not always operational, he will act differently.

The Captain's dilemma was this: on the one hand to reveal the vessel's deficiency as well as his in management not only to the authorities at the port but also to the company, and, thus damage his image, and on the other hand to be able to cover it all up successfully in the same way he had done it up to that moment. The Captain concealed too much and took a huge risk so as not to reveal any of the vessel's deficiencies which eventually were shown. I guess it was such a huge stress on him that he did not regard the consequences.

### 3.5. The resolution

---

The outcome was that there was an impact between the vessel's bow and the dock and there were damages to both the vessel and the dock. Thanks to the tug boats, the vessel was held back and the damages were small. The vessel was delayed one week at the port of Piraeus so that the damages would be restored. Naturally, there was a court on this case but the Captain was released due to doubts. Still, he did not continue on with the same company, and this was a blot in his resume.

The significance of the human factor determined this particular incident. A Captain who does not wish to damage his image, does not trust or brief his partners and allows them to act with knowledge shortage. There was lack of briefing of the Pilot by the Captain, and a chain of problems was created. As a result, there was an impact –and to some extent material damages.

## Case Study Questions

Please carefully read the case study and discuss with your partners the answers to the following questions. Be prepared to present your answers.

- Who are the primary characters? Briefly describe the problem from the perspective of each, and what (believes, values, culture) drives the behavior of each character. Explain how the behaviors of the characters shape the series of facts that lead to the case outcome.
- What issues are raised by this case? Why are they important to consider?
- If you consider that there is an alternative path of action, what would it be? please specify a plan of such an action