



THE BROADER CONTEXT OF TRAINING

Remarks by

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INTRODUCTION

I think it is very appropriate that this last session of the Congress is focused on pilot training. As we end a very interesting week of discussions on many topics related to marine transportation, it makes good sense to return to the basics of pilotage and remind ourselves what is really necessary to continue providing the best service possible.

Of course, what we need is ongoing training. Or, as it is now commonly described across a wide range of disciplines: continuous learning. It is probably safe to assume that everyone agrees with this statement and that all pilots accept the idea that ongoing training is essential for continuing to do their job well.

After all, human error remains the biggest single cause of marine accidents and one of the best ways to avoid human error is to make sure everyone involved in marine navigation is superbly trained.

What might be less well-accepted is how broad the concept of “pilot training” needs to be, and what might be less well-understood is how far-reaching the impact can be.

TRAINING AS A BROADER CONCEPT

Mike Burgess spoke to us earlier about some of the technical training pilots receive in order to stay current and maintain their proficiency. Much of this training involves the use of simulators and, as many of you know, I am certainly a strong believer in, and a strong advocate for this tool for formal training.

But we would be making a big mistake if we stopped there – if we thought that training which kept us abreast of the latest technology and navigational practices was all that we needed.

To succeed in our job, and for our profession to remain successful, we have to think of training in a much broader context.

THE PURPOSE OF TRAINING

If the only purpose of training was to help pilots successfully navigate vessels from one point to another, technical training would be sufficient. But the purpose must be larger than that. Our paramount goal is to help ensure safety. But this does not mean that we do not also have as objectives contributing to efficiency in a competitive marine transportation system, and ensuring that the role of pilots is understood and well appreciated.

Given these larger purposes, the training pilots receive must not only help make sure they are well-equipped to undertake any given specific pilotage assignment, but also to understand the nature and requirements of the marine transportation business itself, in which we are an important partner.

The training should also equip pilots with the knowledge and tools they need to ensure that, in everything that they do, the good reputation of pilotage and pilots is maintained.

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

There are three areas, other than those covered by technical training, about which pilots should be well-informed and should have the skills and understanding necessary to maximize their effectiveness. These three areas have a common denominator; each of them is about how we relate to others.

The first is in respect of our colleagues and of other maritime professionals with whom we work in the discharge of our duties.

The second is in regard to those who manage and own the shipping lines that constitute the foundation of the marine industry itself.

The third relates to all of those involved in public policy affecting marine transportation in general and pilotage in particular. This includes government and a whole range of stakeholders.

I don't think I have to make the case to anyone here as to why it is important that pilots have constructive relationships with their colleagues, with other members of the marine community and with those who influence public policies that affect us.

But I would like to make the case that relationships in all these areas can be made more productive by continuous learning, by which I do not mean technical, or even necessarily formal training.

COLLEAGUES AND OTHER MARITIME PROFESSIONALS

In the first area I mentioned – colleagues and people we work with while piloting – great importance is placed on the quality of our personal interactions. The codes of conduct that pilot groups have formulated, including the new CMPA Code of Conduct, are important reference points in this regard.

We will be looking at the CMPA code in some detail tomorrow. It stresses the values of professionalism, collegiality and collaboration.

We would all be well-served from time to time by reflecting on these matters, discussing them together and identifying specific ways by which we can improve the quality of our interactions with others.

Again, I know this is not usually what comes to mind when we speak about training, but I think we need to consider training, or continuous learning, or professional development, in this broader context.

SHIPPING INDUSTRY

The second area where I think this broader concept of training applies is in respect of the shipping industry. We play a crucial role in its success, and we should have a solid understanding of what drives it, what its economics are, and the challenges it faces.

We should probably know more about maritime insurance and liability. And we should certainly know more about what the industry's plans are, especially in terms of service delivery and responses to competition from other modes.

There are many ways by which such knowledge can be acquired – participation in forums such as this Congress is certainly a good example. So is attendance at industry conferences, and so would more direct discussions and information sessions between ship owners and pilot groups.

PUBLIC POLICY

After the experience Canadian marine pilots have had over the last two years in respect of possible changes to federal policy concerning pilotage, none of us would argue against the importance of having a very good understanding about how policy is developed and decisions are made by the Canadian government. This includes the role that interest groups play in the process.

Again, I am not thinking about formal training in this regard, but there are other ways to learn how the system works and how we can maximize our effectiveness.

THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

At one level, the areas I have been discussing impact on each other in a circular fashion. We operate in a closed universe. The way we behave with our colleagues, the strength of our relationships with other maritime professionals, and the level of understanding we have of the shipping industry's requirements and concerns all have a direct bearing on government policy. Thus, we can see that it is sometimes our own behaviour that determines the circumstances we find ourselves in as a profession.

In a way, the "training" I have been talking about is really learning what is important in terms of how we behave and what we do in areas that are not, strictly speaking, directly connected to the job of piloting itself. These areas do, however, impact on our profession and if we understand them well, we will have taken a big step to ensuring that the impact is positive.

NEVER SAY “NO” TO TRAINING

One of the purposes of my remarks this afternoon was to raise awareness about the need for, and the benefit of what one could call unconventional training.

Of course, I remain a strong believer in formal, technical training as well. As I indicated earlier, it is still one of the most effective ways to prevent accidents.

There are six states of mind that can contribute to accidents.

1. Routinization – “I have done it so often before”
2. Familiarity – “I know it all”
3. Invulnerability – “It won’t happen to me”
4. Predictability – “I know what will happen”
5. Impulsiveness – “I know what I am doing”
6. Complacency – “I can’t be bothered”

All of these states of mind have one thing in common: they can easily result in bad practices; in rogue behaviour.

Training – all training - is a great antidote to such behaviour because it instills and reinforces professionalism.

Training has made us great pilots, and for us to remain great pilots training must continue throughout our professional lives.

Of course, such training provides us with new information and upgrades our skills, but before that it does something else that is both interesting and important. It helps us to know what we don’t know.

There are few experiences more sobering for a veteran pilot than experiencing trouble with the vessel he is navigating on a simulator, such as running aground or having a near-miss. It certainly makes you want to know what went wrong, and how you can make sure it does not happen when you are piloting a real vessel.

In the broader context that I have talked about this afternoon, training can have even a wider and a more positive impact in respect of our standing both in the marine community and with the government.

Remember this: we must not fail. Not only are we strictly accountable for the manner in which we discharge our responsibilities as pilots, but how we behave can have a profound impact on the future of pilotage and our profession. That is why training – all kinds of training – is so important.