

# LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONALISM

As an officer you will be responsible for your actions and the actions of those working beneath you. In a position of authority barking orders is the smallest part of your job. You need to be a competent teacher, mediator, motivator and leader, and each of these duties require skills that take practice. This lecture is designed as an introduction to the roles that you will be filling as an officer at TBI, and you should take away an understanding of what you need to focus on to be a successful PO.

**Your Responsibility to the Program:** TBI has been delivering a world-class training and adventure program to youth for nearly 5 decades, and this has only been possible with everybody involved being on the same page, especially when it comes to how our program is delivered to the trainees. The grade standards that are offered are a good guideline to what should be taught to trainees, but the program cannot survive if it isn't any fun. As a PO you will be a liaison between the more senior officers and the trainees. Often it will be very difficult, but you need to be able to translate what orders are given to things that the trainees will understand, because if they can't understand what they are doing they will not have fun, and the teaching will have been pointless. As a PO you will be responsible for making sure that the amazing experience we advertise on our brochures is the one that gets delivered.

## **Trainees are individuals and require an individual approach**

You will have all types of people in your watches, so you can't treat them all the same when it comes to teaching them and motivating them. You will have slow learners, shy and culture shocked kids, jerks, egomaniacs, know-it-alls, etc) and some times the best way to deal with everyone is to keep them busy working together. Find a job that the slow learner can do well, get the know-it-all to teach everyone the lines, have the shy kid calling a Dutchman.

## **Being Professional**

Often your trainees will be the same age as you or even older, so it is important establish your authority at the beginning and maintain a professional attitude throughout the course. Using last names distinguishes Officers from trainees. Most of your trainees will respect you just because you know a lot more than they do, it doesn't mean you have to go around yelling at everyone to show you know more. You have had a whole winter of training which amounts to a lot more knowledge than your trainees, so use this to your advantage. You should be leading by example. If you want your trainees to wear their harnesses properly you should wear yours properly. You are the face of TBI, and when your trainees leave at the end of your course, they will remember their PO the most. So make a good impression, the success of the program depends on our reputation and integrity.

## **What to do when you don't know the answer or don't know how to do something**

When someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer. Tell them you don't know. If you start making things up your trainees will lose respect for you. Tell them "I don't know, but I will find out for you".

If you WO asks you to do something but you don't know how to do it, tell them. There is nothing worse than telling someone you know how to do something and then doing it wrong. This makes you look like a fool. Even if you have done it before, double check to confirm you are doing it right. If you are tacking the boat and you are on the helm and you aren't quite sure when to call things tell them how you think they should be done and ask them if you are correct. "I don't remember exactly when to yell tack the jib. I think

it is when the squares back, is that correct?" Now you WO knows that you are thinking about things and making an effort to do things correctly. They also know that you are willing to ask questions when you are unsure, and this will make them more comfortable working with you.

### **What to do when you make a mistake or break something**

Make sure that you tell someone when you have made a mistake or you have broken something. Everybody makes mistakes, and the only way to deal with them is to admit it and fix whatever problems have been caused. Most things can be easily repaired if we know they are broken. It can be a serious safety hazard if something gets broken and no one knows about it.

**Teaching:** It's a popular fact that people have individual learning styles, but it also follows that most people have individual teaching styles. If you think of a teacher that you hated, it was probably because of their teaching style. It's important to be aware of this, and recognize that if somebody doesn't understand something, it's probably because you're not teaching it in a way that's relevant to them. And just like if the watch officer on watch can't navigate it's the fault of whoever should have been teaching them, it's your responsibility to make sure that your trainees have a basic understanding of their duties (tidiness, maneuvering stations, etc.)

There are three general methods of teaching

1. Verbally explain how to do something – To make a reef knot you take two ends of a line and tie the left over right and under, and then tie right over left and under
2. Verbally explain while demonstrating how to do something – Tie a reef knot while explaining how to do it
3. Coach someone along as they do the steps – The trainee has the line and you explain how to do tie the reef knot

Everyone has different learning styles but most people learn best when they are doing something hands-on

### **Correcting People's Mistakes**

As a PO you will often be correcting people's mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes, but nobody likes to be told that they have made a mistake. Think about how you would like to be told about your mistakes. Do you like to be yelled at, probably not. So don't go around yelling at people.

First, make a point of telling them what they did correctly. For example if you see one of the trainees has made a sloppy coil and it is dragging on the deck, point out to them the coils are great because they are not twisted. But then you can tell them that they are too long. Don't forget to explain "Why" we don't want long coils (tripping hazard, get wet, foul easier). This is a bit of a simplistic example, but you get the picture. You probably aren't going to go to this extent for every correction you have to make. But keep it in mind and try and turn negatives, into positives.

The bigger the mistake someone makes the more carefully you have to think about how you are going to correct them so that they stay positive.

## Who, What, When, Where, Why, How

When we are sailing we often focus on the Who, What, When, Where and How, but we forget about the WHY

For Example

“Hey Billy, go take up on the Jib Sheet, NOW!!!

But the “Why” is just as important!

So you can say something like “Hey Billy the wind has shifted. Notice how the sail is luffing, the wind is backfilling the sail. To get the most speed and power out of the sails we should pull in the sheet until the sail stops luffing”

Now Billy knows that you are not just yelling at him because you like to yell. He also knows why the jib was sheeted in. So the next time the sails start luffing he will be thinking about it and may even come up to you and ask you if he should sheet the jib in. **And this makes your life easier.**

This approach is not always practical. If you are the middle of a drill, emergency or things generally have to be done quickly you shouldn't be afraid to just yell things out. But you should take a few minutes after things have calmed down to explain why things were done the way they were, and why they had to be done quickly. The same approach should be taken if trainees ask you questions at inappropriate times, just tell them “that's an excellent question, I will answer it when we are done here”.

Any extra time and energy that you put in explaining things to the trainees will pay off in the long run, even if sometimes it feels like a waste of time. They will feel more included, they will be able to anticipate what you want (making your life easier) and they will enjoy the experience more.

**Initiative:** If you ever wonder whether or not you need to ask before you do something, you need to ask. Initiative doesn't mean monkeying around with things you're not supposed to. Most of the time initiative just means keeping busy and making sure you're always helping. POs do not generally sail the entire summer because the job is EXHAUSTING. You are constantly on your feet, and you need to be able to help out with anything at a moment's notice. Once you get into the rhythm, it's a very fun job and you get to do some cool stuff, but you need to be always looking around for things that should be getting done. There's a saying that in a true partnership, the work isn't divided 50/50, it's more like 60/60 with each person constantly trying to do MORE than their “fair” share. That way, you never run into a situation where neither person feels that something is their responsibility, and therefore something is left half-done or not done at all. On a boat if something doesn't get done or gets done poorly, it often jeopardizes the entire ship. This means that you need to be always willing to do slightly more than what you may think is your “fair” share.

Our Ships Are “training ships” – not only are you always teaching but also trying to be open to training for yourself, trying to get to the next level (watch officer). On the other hand, make sure you know your job back to front before trying to learn the next level. A PO that can navigate is no use to us if they can't run a clean-up properly.

### **Problem Solving:**

Detective Rob Misko arrived on the scene to find a crowd gathered around the victim. Mr. Louis Copeland's lifeless body lay on the sidewalk in front of his twelve-story building.

"His name is Louis Copeland," answered the patrolman on duty. "He's the owner of the building."

"Did he fall off the roof?" asked Detective Misko.

"No," he answered definitively. "The door to the roof is locked from the inside and only Mr. Copeland had the key. His keys were found on his body."

"Any witnesses?"

"Only one," answered the patrolman as he walked Detective Misko to an older woman sitting in the lobby of the building. "This is Phyllis Waters. She lives on the tenth floor. Poor woman saw the man drop past her front window just a few minutes ago."

Detective Misko escorted Mrs. Waters back to her apartment and took her story in detail.

"I was hanging my new drapes when I heard an awful scream," claimed Mrs. Waters. "And then he just fell past my window like a sack of potatoes." She sat in a rocking chair next to the very window she was speaking of. Detective Misko observed the room. It was very bare. In addition to the rocking chair and new drapes there was an old sofa on the other side of the room and a tiny black and white television set.

"What did you do after you saw the body, Mrs. Waters?" asked Detective Misko.

"I immediately called the police," she answered. "And then I took the elevator down to the lobby."

Detective Misko then walked up one flight to the eleventh floor and interviewed Stan Cantone who lived directly above Mrs. Waters.

"I didn't see anything," claimed Stan. "My wife was at work all day. I had my hands full with the kids." Detective Misko crossed to the front window and tried to open it. "Sorry. Can't open that window. I nailed it shut a while back. Can't be too careful with children around." The tall French door style window was nailed shut and dried paint covered the nails.

"Did you know the victim very well?" asked the Detective.

"I hate to speak ill of the dead," answered Mr. Cantone. "But Mr. Copeland was a no good crook. This used to be a pretty crummy neighborhood. Now that it's been revitalized, people are dying to get into this place. Suddenly, that no good landlord ups the rent to almost twice what we were paying. Some people have been living in this building for years now. How can they afford to pay that kind of rent?"

Finally, Detective Misko ventured up one more flight to interview the occupant of the twelfth floor apartment, Grace Copeland, the victim's wife.

"I last saw Louis an hour before the horrible accident," cried the grieving widow. "He said he had a couple of odd jobs to take care of and then he would come back for lunch."

"What kind of odd jobs?" asked Detective Misko.

"He wasn't specific," Mrs. Copeland answered as she watered fresh roses in her front window box. "He was always very attentive to the tenants needs. He was such a good man."

"Did anyone else have a key to the roof?" Detective Misko asked.

"No, just my husband," Mrs. Copeland replied. "Why do you ask?"

"I'm just ruling out all the possibilities," the detective answered. "And the way I see it, there is really only one."

## **Whom did Detective Misko suspect?**

### **Teaching Leadership and Teamwork**

Teaching leadership and teamwork skills is a hard thing to do. It is not something that you can study for or learn from a book, especially when you yourself are still perfecting your teamwork and leadership skills. The best way to encourage leadership and teamwork development is to put the trainees in a situation where they can practice this. Some will be naturals at this whereas other may never have had the opportunity to practice these skills.