



The Nautical Institute on Command

Third edition

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Foreword



By **Rear Admiral Nick Lambert**

CMarTech FIMarEST AFNI

Many, many congratulations. You've done it! Years of hard work, seagoing, academia and dedication have paid off and you're in command! No matter what lies ahead, no one and nothing can deprive you of this moment and of your achievement. You've joined the ranks of several centuries of illustrious forebears to confront the challenges of the seas and oceans in command of your ship. So, after a few justifiably self-congratulatory moments inspecting the Captain's suite, revelling in the sensation of the Captain's chair on the bridge and absorbing the scale of your responsibility, what next?

Firstly, be in no doubt that the ship is yours. She is of course owned by others but, while you are in command, she is for all intents and purposes yours. You set the style, the character, and the reputation of your ship, your people and your operations more so, I would argue, than in any other walk of life. Notwithstanding the relentless pace of technology, today's manned ships are geographically independent units confronting a notoriously unpredictable environment frequently beyond reach of shore support and often outside the comprehension of most people ashore – and you're in charge of one.

Secondly, the operation of your ship reflects your personal professionalism and that of your people. While shipping is often regarded as 'out of sight, out of mind' in reality that is rarely the case. Modern satellite and terrestrial networks enable almost constant communication such that agents, shipping operators and companies, ports, harbours, vessel traffic services and numerous other organisations abroad and at home (and of course families and friends) can interact with you and your team. The professionalism of your response will be assessed and interpreted far afield and conclusions about your ship, positive or otherwise, will be drawn. Equally your people will subliminally adopt and mirror your professional style.

Thirdly, when the chips are down, it's your sense of purpose and your commitment to your mission, your company and your people that will ensure that you with your team deliver your objectives – nobody else can or will. Responsible for a myriad of tasks, your leadership will ensure the availability of systems and equipment, the making of an ETA or ETD and the satisfaction of your company and clients. Your drive is what counts.

Finally (and by no means least), there's the people. It's no mistake that the word people appears throughout this introduction because, above all, the crew of your ship are your people. You set the tone for the quality of their life on board; you set the standards of behaviour and welcome; you are the arbiter of their lives at sea and they will subconsciously adopt your style. In fact you have a unique opportunity to influence the lives and careers of your juniors; people always remember Captains and how they led. It's an awesome but intensely gratifying responsibility and experience.

Now this is at first sight a daunting list, however, when you've had time to reflect, you'll realise that it's not insurmountable. After years of training you're prepared for this. At last you have the authority, freedom and joy of stamping your personality and professionalism on another generation of seafarers, you have a unique opportunity to make a personal contribution to the lives of those who work for you, to the company that employs you and, without being overly dramatic, to contribute to the efficient global ebb and flow of raw materials and products that underpin the world's economy. Enjoy every single second of your time, strive for the best and ensure that you and your people have fun. Good luck!!

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Introduction

By Captain Trevor Bailey, Technical Editor, *The Nautical Institute on Command*

The Nautical Institute aims to demonstrate and to represent the highest possible standards in the nautical profession and it is only right that the Institute should ensure that its advice to those in the highest positions of responsibility – those in command of sea-going ships – represents those highest standards. *The Nautical Institute on Command* has been, and should remain, our flagship publication.

In 1986, The Nautical Institute published the first edition of *Command* containing advice to those aspiring to command. Recognising the dynamic nature of our industry, this was revised in 2000.

Since then, our industry and our membership have continued to evolve and the time has come for another review – not least recognising that technology has significantly changed the way in which we work over the intervening period. We have also recognised that The Nautical Institute is a truly international membership organisation that covers many different areas of operation of our diverse industry across the globe, including an increase from the military maritime world. We must also not lose sight of the fact that the old traditions of a male-only society no longer prevail and that our female members have a lot to offer our industry.

In this third edition, we have followed the same format as before, providing essays on a wide variety of subjects that are relevant to the exercise of command and which may not have been fully covered during the training years. Our authors have volunteered from many of our branches, thus allowing us to present a global view on command. Each of them was given the same general brief – you have 15 minutes over a cup of coffee to spend with the new Master before they go off in the taxi to join their ship: how can you best distil your advice into that time frame?

The result is a volume of consolidated advice from experts in their field.

It would be unfair to single out any particular contributing author at the expense of the others but I would like to use just one quote from one of the articles:

It is a temptation for young Masters to continue to do their former job instead of the new one. You need to put some distance between the two roles.

This is probably one of the best pieces of advice in this book and one which I encourage you all to consider when you finally sit in the Master's chair. When I made a belated decision that maybe a career at sea would suit me and I had joined my first ship, I realised that the Master's job was one that I could aspire to. In the fullness of time, when I was the Master suddenly I realised the buck stopped with me! Where was the person to turn to, whose advice could I seek? Could I do the job? There were many questions going through my mind. I wish I had had that advice in my head at the time.

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I think it would be fair to say that, for a large number of The Nautical Institute's younger sea-going members, aspiration for command is a very strong driver in their career paths; command of a ship will represent a pinnacle of achievement and a tremendous sense of self-satisfaction. For me, command of a ship is an amalgamation of all the skills and knowledge that I acquired during my career; the professional and technical skills, added to the application of soft skills such as personnel management plus a degree of commercial awareness. Masters may not always be able to have a direct influence on the commercial success of the venture of taking ships from one port to another – but they will almost certainly have an indirect influence if they don't manage to command their ships effectively.

I am sure that all of our members will have sailed with Masters and Commanding Officers who were inspirational – “if I ever get that far I want to be like them”. Then there were those whom we would not wish to emulate – “surely, I won't be like them?” Then there were some who were totally forgettable. Whoever they were and whatever influence they had upon you, you will probably have learnt something from them. In this book we have tried to distil those learning experiences from many of our colleagues and to pass them on for your benefit.

In putting the book together, we have tried to develop our own voyage plan to lead readers through the basics of command, looking at legislation and how it will impact on the day job. From there, the day to day relationships with the many and varied players that Masters will have to deal with are explained by representatives of these various parties, including flag, class and port state inspectors.

The day to day operation of the ship is addressed in Sections 2, 3 and 4, starting with taking over of command and moving on to navigation and cargo management, surveys and inspections, before detailing some of the soft skills that new Masters will need.

We decided that Section 5 should have the working title What if? Emergency management should have been a part of all Masters' training throughout their careers but, unless you have experienced the real thing, training cannot always provide you with the information that you need to effectively manage what you may encounter.

Throughout we have attempted to collate relevant and experienced advice. It has been very interesting for me to have been a part of this process; although I have over 40 years' experience in our wonderful industry, I like to think that I am never too old to learn and in reading many of the submissions we received for publication, I was reminded of experiences and incidents that I had forgotten. Thus, this book is not just for the aspiring officer or for the new Master – it is just as relevant to the serving Master of several years standing.

Please remember that, since the last edition, The Nautical Institute has increased the range and quality of its publications: this is no longer a standalone publication but it should be read in conjunction with many of our other publications; we have tried to provide cross-references to those publications at the end of any articles where this is relevant.

To everyone who has contributed to this book, whether by writing an article or by peer review, by email contributions or with telephone advice, please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks. I am confident that we can say that we have met our goals and that this book distils the best of advice to the new Shipmaster.

I would also like to express my deepest admiration and thanks to the Publications Team at NIHQ – your patience, understanding and commitment to this project, along with your amazing interpersonal skills in dealing with all of us with such good grace and professionalism, are second to none and you can pride yourselves on a job well done. In Royal Navy speak Bravo Zulu!

Trevor Bailey

Ynys Môn

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