



A SELECTION OF DIFFERENT EXAMPLES FROM THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF BOSKALIS

*René Stolk, Zeesluis IJmuiden project controller*

## "BY SEEING IT YOU UNDERSTAND IT."



"When I started as a Finance trainee in 2012, I had zero experience with technology or safety. On my first day, I underwent a NINA training course in which I learned that I had to spread the NINA philosophy. "That's nice," I thought, "but how?"

One of my first projects took me to Vietnam. When a medical clinic was set up there, first I just thought "crikey, that's expensive!", until I heard that the next small hospital was a three-hour drive away. Then you understand the need, and you see it differently.

In Brazil, I took a tour on a branch or ship every month with other office workers to assess the safety situation. At first I thought, "who am I to say anything about this?" It is difficult to get over this hesitation. It helped that I always received nuanced feedback

when I said something. That helps you grow your self-confidence. Now I never think "there must be a reason for that" if I have doubts about something. Just like I never think anymore "I guess he knows what he's doing," when a taxi driver drives with his eyes closed (he had seriously fallen asleep...).

So my question "but how?" has been answered. By seeing it you understand it. The open atmosphere with colleagues has helped me learn to speak up, for my safety and that of others. I regularly get out from behind my desk to do a little tour of the work. This not only helps me to get a better feel for whether my budget is a good fit with the reality, it also makes me feel engaged."

*Jaco Sluijmers is operations manager & salvage master in Houston. With almost forty years of work experience, he knows how important teamwork is for safety.*

## "WE ALL NEED EACH OTHER."



**SALVAGE**

"When you step on board a burning ship, standard safety instructions are meaningless. Your primal instinct comes to the surface and you work through your own list, but what we ALWAYS do is keep an eye on each other. That is why it is important for us to form a close-knit team where we work together regardless of ranks or positions."

### *How do you build a close-knit team?*

"I keep an eye on everyone: Is someone becoming isolated? Who are the loudmouths? Who are forming cliques? I keep it relaxed, because a good atmosphere comes first for me. In this way, I work on building my team and safety awareness. Most of the people in our teams are experienced. For them, half a word is enough. But we always take inexperienced guys with us too. For them, we say everything we are doing or going to do, which teaches them why we do things the way we do. That understanding is important, firstly for your own safety, and also for the bigger picture: good safety statistics are increasingly a condition for a project to be awarded."

### **CIRCLES**

Several parties are involved in every job: your own team, the office, the client. Jaco sees them as circles: "When they work separately from each other, project partners can grow apart. That is why I strive to have these circles

overlap. Only then you get the project to run smoothly.

### *What do you need in order to do this?*

"Interest: you have to be willing to get to know the other's (safety) culture. And communication: you always have to make sure that everyone is aware of what is happening and why. The atmosphere is also important for this: everyone has to feel free to have their say. Looking back, I don't think we always found the common ground in the time before NINA. This had repercussions for safety: I saw accidents that could not happen now, because now we make agreements about many more things. That's why I'm happy with the instruments that NINA has to support this, such as the Start-Up and safety toolbox meetings."

The 'stop the job' decision is not made lightly. For Ronny Guldentops, captain of the AHTS President Hubert, his team's safety took priority.

## "CAN I JUSTIFY THIS TO MY PEOPLE?"

On a pitch-black night in February, the President Hubert sails out, mobilised by Salvage. A ship is in trouble off the British coast; the crew is waiting for rescue. "It was already wind force nine when we set out, and the wind was supposed to pick up more," says Ronny Guldentops. When they arrive in daylight, they see how the ship is lurching back and forth like a toy on the waves. The crew immediately shoots a line over. It is the beginning of a rescue action that, after a series of setbacks, ends hours later with a heavy disappointment: the line is snapped by a monster wave. The men of the Hubert are back to where they started.

### What does it do to you?

Ronny: "First we had to process this disillusionment. And then I started to think: Do I want a repeat of this situation in the night? Can I justify this to my team? But what about my responsibility towards the other ship? That's when I called everyone together. We are a team and everyone's opinion has equal value. No one said they wanted to stop; the decision was up to me. Ultimately, I decided to suspend the operation until the

weather improved. Because the main thing is 'your own crew's safety first'." The Hubert stayed in the area to be able to provide assistance as necessary. The next day, the job was done in calmer weather.

### TRUST

Looking back, Ronny says: "You wouldn't wish such a dilemma on anyone." What helped is that he knew he was supported by his team, by the office and by the words of the other captain: "I've seen your ship, I've seen your crew, I've seen your manoeuvre, I've seen it all and I understand." According to first mate Geert Stenger, this support stems from the confidence in Ronny. "I know that he never pushes the limits."

### How do you build that confidence?

Ronny: "You have to earn trust. What I do is give the team responsibility. I try to teach the guys something by having them do it themselves. I give them room to make their own mistakes, but I am always there. Giving responsibility is not the same as giving up responsibility."



On the Markerwadden project (North Holland/Flevoland), project leader Bart van Asperen finds that his vision of teamwork is defined in part by his high safety awareness.

## "I WANT TO GET EVERYONE ON THE SAME SIDE."



"I feel responsible for the safety of the 'small' team, the Boskalis team, with which we are working on the project. This also extends to

the 'big team' of contractors and clients. And even to the visitors who will come bird watching here in the future," says Bart van Asperen.

### How do you mean?

"We are raising nature islands here with walking paths built around them. The client thinks visitors will also be able to walk on the islands themselves. However, we told them from the beginning that although a crust will form on the sludge, it will not be strong enough to walk on. There is a risk of getting stuck. I would take it very hard if I read in the paper a few years later that someone had died here. I don't want that on my conscience."

### OPENNESS

In this way, Bart experiences how deeply rooted the NINA philosophy has become. "I want to get everyone on the same side,

because when you agree about the risks you can work together to take good control measures."

### How do you go about achieving that?

"Within the 'small' team, we discuss safety in our weekly meetings and hold toolbox meetings. I want to create openness so that people come to me when there is an issue. And if they do, I make sure that something comes of it. That's how you create trust. That is the basis in your own team, and also in the relationship with the client and any other parties. We have to gain the client's trust in our expertise and sincerity. That takes time. And you do need a bit of 'luck': for instance, during an exercise rescue workers got stuck in the sludge themselves. Now the client understands our concern better. We are now thinking proactively about the possible ways to inform visitors about the dangers."