

## 2.7 Leadership and Teamwork

According to General Frank Percy Crozier, an unpopular British sergeant was killed in World War I when one of his men came up behind him and dropped an unpinned hand grenade down his trousers<sup>i</sup>. In America’s earlier 20th-century wars, fraggings<sup>ii</sup> and homicides by other means typically occurred during combat situations when officers who were deemed incompetent, would be killed by soldiers under their command<sup>iii</sup>. In war, it seems that there is an intolerance towards superiors who are leaders only by title, not deeds and actions.

In this chapter we shall explore leadership (and teamwork), by definition and by deed, in the context of being a crew or team member in aviation operations.

### Leadership

Leadership is a quality that is easy to recognize but difficult to define. When an individual exercises good leadership, others may follow for several reasons, which can be both rational and irrational.



Followers may choose a leader for many reasons, such as they believe the leader improves the chance for team success; or because they are inspired by the vision and goals set out by the leader. Ultimately, most motivations to follow a leader can be classified under four headings: trust, compassion, stability, and hope<sup>iv</sup>.



**Leadership:** The ability of an individual, group or organization to "lead", influence or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations.

Leadership is both an inherent personal quality and a learned set of skills. To achieve good leadership, a pilot must understand both the elements of effective leadership and the consequences of poor leadership<sup>v</sup>.

## New Leadership Roles

The roles and responsibilities of a leader have developed over the millennia. What was required of a neanderthal leader (physical strength and mating prowess) is quite different from the modern integrated business leader. The 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to leadership sets out 4 roles necessary:<sup>vi</sup>

- **Visionary:** Leaders who listen and understand their organization as a whole system. They integrate a shared mental model for the future direction and act as a lighthouse for this purpose for everyone. They lead the team to execute the plan, whilst adapting quickly to change, to achieve the goal and remain on track.

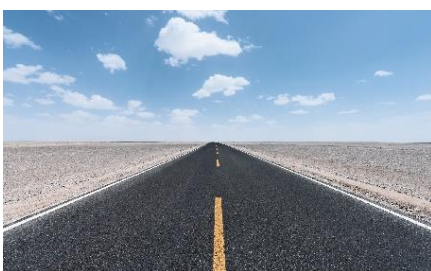


- **Architect:** Once the vision has been set, the leader orchestrates the team and empowers them to carry out the actions required. The architect leader encourages innovation and seeks input from their team. They are willing to change their mind on a course of action once receiving that input.

- **Coach:** Leaders coach and mentor knowledge and skills, fostering a learning culture throughout the organization. The coach values the development of their team, continuously seeking feedback on the mission progress to drive for increased effectiveness and efficiency. Involving team members in this manner helps to build respect and the individuals feel they are a valued and integral part of the team.




- **Catalyst:** Clearing the path for the team to succeed, the catalyst role of a lead can be grouped into 4 areas:



- 1) Removing barriers
- 2) Encouraging cross organization communication
- 3) Giving inspiration to all
- 4) Creating a psychologically safe environment for everyone to thrive. See chapter 3.5 for more.

**Leadership Skills**

In teaching leadership for these 4 modern roles, there are a range of skills that are well expressed by the IATA leadership and teamwork (LTW) observable behaviors:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LTW</b></p>  <p><b>Observable Behaviors<sup>vii</sup></b></p>	<b>LTW 1</b>	Encourages team participation and open communication
	<b>LTW 2</b>	Demonstrates initiative and provides direction when required
	<b>LTW 3</b>	Engages others in planning
	<b>LTW 4</b>	Considers inputs from others
	<b>LTW 5</b>	Gives and receives feedback constructively
	<b>LTW 6</b>	Addresses and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner
	<b>LTW 7</b>	Exercises decisive leadership when required
	<b>LTW 8</b>	Accepts responsibility for decisions and actions
	<b>LTW 9</b>	Carries out instructions when directed
	<b>LTW 10</b>	Applies effective intervention strategies to resolve identified deviations
	<b>LTW 11</b>	Manages cultural and language challenges, as applicable

Effective leaders possess certain skills and knowledge subdivided across four domains<sup>viii</sup>:

- **Interpersonal skills:** Effective leaders take the time to know their team. In an airline environment, a proficient captain will take the time during the pre-flight planning stages to get to know a new co-pilot and ask them questions about their life and experience. At airlines where a pre-flight briefing occurs between the flight deck crew and the cabin crew, this is a valuable opportunity for the flight crew to “set the tone” for the conduct of the upcoming flight. On large aircraft with many cabin crew, it is often not possible to personally meet each cabin crew member, but the flight crew can demonstrate leadership by assuring the cabin crew that they will be supported with any cabin issues encountered and that the line of communication to the flight crew is always open.
- **Conceptual skills:** The ability to understand and apply prescribed doctrine and procedures, as well as relevant theories and ideas to get the job done. Good leaders in the flight deck comply with SOPs and regulations. Consistent leadership behavior builds thrust and confidence in the team.
- **Technical skills:** Knowing and demonstrating how to use the available equipment effectively and safely is a subtle display of good leadership. People have confidence in people they see doing a good job and aspire to achieve the same level of competence.
- **Tactical skills:** The ability to make the right decisions concerning the use of resources including personnel and equipment is another effective marker of good leadership.

## Communication for Leadership and Teamwork

Effective communicators listen attentively to what others are saying. Listening closely enables leaders to learn more about their audience so they can modify their messages accordingly. Often in the confines of an aircraft cockpit a moment of silence is also a powerful necessity. After a high stress event has been resolved, a pilot may need some time to reflect on the actions taken and consider the next move. Communicating with their teammate that they would like a few quiet minutes and asking them to watch the plane during this time is a very effective way of gathering your thoughts and restoring your awareness to the required level. Silently monitoring the aircraft during this time is effective support to an overloaded crew member.



In most performance environments, whether in aviation, healthcare, maritime or other, much of your career will be spent as a member of a team. It is very important to learn and practice effective communication and coordination with your fellow team members. Support teams also play a vital role and should be treated as an extended team where these communication techniques can prove even more vital.

Communication is essential in the cockpit of a multi crew airplane where each crew member is required to function at a high level, in the manner that the manufacturer and/or company prescribes to ensure a safe result.

Crew combinations in actual operations may be transient. The tight, face-to-face flight deck, in which unacquainted crewmembers work together, requires competence in communication, leadership/teamwork, problem-solving/decision-making, and situational awareness<sup>ix</sup>.

## Building Leadership and Teamwork

When a group forms to work together as a team, the cohesion is not automatic nor immediate. It must be built. The figure below presents some “how to” strategies to build the LTW competency. <sup>x</sup>



- *Observe and Understand versus Make General Assumptions*  
Culture affects our perception of the world and others. Holding back from assumptions and stereotypes, especially negative ones, enables pilots to work with more ease and facilitate stronger leadership and teamwork outcomes. Consider asking yourself: “why is this person acting the way they are?” Observing to understand their underlying motivations is a powerful tool in team building.
- *Show an Interest in Others*  
Nurturing an interest in others enables appreciation, opens lines of communication. To fully understand any observation of another individual, the observer must have at least a basic comprehension of the individual. This is vital to correctly identify root causes of behavior and therefore enables leadership and teamwork to flourish.
- *Encourage Facilitation*  
Facilitation is the act of making a process easier. It involves encouragement of human factors competencies so that a flight deck can operate collaboratively and effectively. Core facilitation skills require:
  - A careful manner and positive approach
  - Asking questions
  - Listening actively
  - Collecting ideas
  - Providing summaries.



- *Clear Expectations and constructive feedback*

Effective crew co-operation requires team support and setting clear expectations suitable for experience level and position. Provide praise in proportion to crew member accomplishments and expect a high demonstration of competencies in the flight deck. If a crew member is not performing, then engage them positively and help guide them with some initial steps for competency development.

- *Standard Operating Procedures*

One way to overcome limitations and difficulties in communication between crew members is to encourage use of procedures and standard protocols. Use of SOPs can guard against confusion. Likewise, a commonality in language and phraseology is important, especially when interacting with those who have English as an additional language.

- *Mindful of Hierarchy Barriers.*

It is possible that flight deck authority can negatively affect communication. A steep hierarchy can cause some FOs to avoid sharing critical concerns even when such communication is essential for safety. Operators can reduce the impact of deferential communication in the flight deck by encouraging FOs to address captains by their first name, and by encouraging them to be more assertive and more comfortable with negative responses. They can also encourage captains to be less dominant and to mediate as facilitators rather than as superiors.

- *Promote an Open Culture.*

Some crew members stifle their own concerns due to a fear of anticipated consequences, even if the concern can affect safety. For example, crew members may be concerned about being considered a troublemaker, fearing that raising issues may draw undue attention. Also, they may fear they will look weak if they share that they have made a mistake. It is important to lead by example, declare your own errors and encourage crew members to share their views. Crew members may also fear they could get into trouble or lose their job if they make a mistake. In many parts of the world this fear is based in reality, and it impedes safety. Create and practice a cockpit environment where all are encouraged to express opinions and all opinions are heard and respected.

We all make mistakes. Pointing out mistakes that your crewmembers make does not encourage teamwork or support trust. Instead, compliment individuals by saying something like, "it was good you reminded me of that." If an error is made, do not start sentences with "you," instead, make a habit of critiquing the collective "we," for example: "we were supposed to change frequency at the last waypoint". Leadership does not require blame.

## Miracle on the Hudson

One example of leadership and teamwork in action that produced a safe outcome with no loss of life from a potential catastrophic airline accident was US Airways 1549.

On January 15, 2009, US Airways flight 1549<sup>xi</sup>, an Airbus A320-214, experienced an almost complete loss of thrust in both engines after encountering a flock of birds and was subsequently ditched on the Hudson River. The flight was en route to Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Charlotte, North Carolina. The 150 passengers, including a lap-held child, and 5 crewmembers evacuated the airplane via



the forward and overwing exits. One flight attendant and four passengers were seriously injured, and the airplane was substantially damaged. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. **Contributing to the survivability of the accident (amongst others) was the decision-making of the flight crewmembers and their crew resource management during the accident sequence.**

This now famous incident is a magnificent example of leadership and teamwork. In less than four minutes the flight deck crew encountered an entirely unexpected and catastrophic systems failure. They remained calm and worked as a team to produce a successful result from an aircraft hull loss, which is never an easy task. Let us look at how they did it:

**LTW 1:** The Captain continually communicated with the FO, ATC and finally (once time permitted) with the cabin crew and passengers.

**LTW 2:** In an attempt to help, ATC continuously offered alternative runways and airports. This must have been a tempting option, but the Captain kept open the option of landing in the Hudson River as the safest plan. The FO continued to read the checklist and keep the Captain informed of their progress and the status of the engines and electrical system as the Captain talked with ATC and managed the overall event.

**LTW 3:** In an extremely high workload environment, the captain asked the FO at the first opportunity “got any ideas?”

**LTW 4:** The captain considered each possible runway and airport that was offered by ATC.

**LTW 5:** Under extreme pressure the Captain offered an explanation to ATC why each of their suggestions was not acceptable.

**LTW 7:** Throughout the event the captain remained calm and decisive giving clear direction the FO.

**LTW 8:** “We’re unable. We may end up in the Hudson [River].” 90 seconds into the emergency the Captain was advising that his considerations of the circumstances were forcing him to consider that they may not be able to make a successful landing at an airport.

**LTW 9:** Appreciating the gravity of the situation and the lack of time available the FO continued to work methodically the way that he had been trained to do. Read and action the checklists. Do not distract the captain with suggestions or bright ideas or opinions, keep working to try and get power back into the engines.

**LTW 10:** An off-airport landing is about as significant a deviation as any pilot is likely to encounter. This crew had less than four minutes to evaluate the problem, consider their options and plan a landing on water. Outstanding leadership and teamwork came together in this cockpit to produce a successful result where no one lost their lives and only 5 people suffered significant injuries.

This success of this event was not due to luck. In a moment in their lives that neither would have ever wished for, two ordinary humans fell back on the training that they received throughout their careers to produce a successful outcome from a potentially catastrophic event. With no time to discuss or plan, each pilot assumed responsibility for a portion of the work that needed to be done, **they worked as a team.**

In three short minutes, this team displayed almost all of the observable behaviors devised to describe *leadership and teamwork*. The Captain directed the operation and communicated with the only people that could help them – ATC. The FO worked feverishly in trying to restore engine power. Few words were spoken between them, but every word said, counted. When it became clear that neither of their objectives was achievable, with very little time remaining, they prepared an airliner filled with passengers and crew for a landing on water. And together they pulled it off!



## Summary

- Leadership is defined as the ability of an individual, group or organization to "lead", influence or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations.
- The 21st century approach to leadership sets out 4 roles as the visionary, architect, coach, and catalyst.
- Leadership skills can be summarized into interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical skills.
- Effective communication is one of the most important skills for a leader and a good team player.
- Leadership and teamwork are not automatic or immediate on the creation of a group. It must be built with respect and cooperation.

## References

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i Regan, G. Backfire: A History of Friendly Fire from Ancient Warfare to the Present Day, Robson Books, p. 233. 2002.

ii Fragging is the deliberate killing or attempted killing of a soldier by a fellow soldier, usually a superior officer or non-commissioned officer (NCO). The word was coined by U.S. military personnel during the Vietnam War, when such killings were most often attempted with a fragmentation grenade.

iii <https://The Hard Truth About Fragging | HistoryNet>

iv Rath, Tom, and Clifton, Donald O.. How Full is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life. United Kingdom, Gallup Press, 2005.

v <https://skybrary.aero/articles/leadership-oghfa-bn>

vi The-New Roles of Leaders In 21st Century Organizations. Blog available at <https://www.mckinsey.com>.

vii IATA GM: Competency Assessment and Evaluation for Pilots Instructors and Evaluators.

viii <https://skybrary.aero/articles/leadership-oghfa-bn>

ix <https://skybrary.aero/articles/leadership-oghfa-bn>

x Boeing: Building Resilience: A Framework for Pilot Competency-Based Training and Assessment, 2020.

xi Accident Report NTSB/AAR-10/03 PB2010-910403.