

“You don’t get good results leading by fist or mouth. You have to lead by example.”

— Brian Mose

More than words

By Corey Van't Haaff

Fishing industry leader **Brian Mose**, co-owner of Frosti Fishing, says “over-communicating” and leading by example are the best ways to get the safety message across.

Name: Brian Mose
 Company: Frosti Fishing
 Workforce: Nine on board
 Operations: Year-round harvester of ground fish on the B.C. coast
 Equipment: Sheltered-deck, fresh-freezer stern trawler
 Main hazards: Injuries to hands, feet, and heads due to unstable environment, severe weather, and heavy equipment like wires and trawl gear moving in and out

WorkSafe Magazine (WSM): What is your personal safety philosophy and leadership style?

Brian Mose (BM): I guess I’d have to say that by definition an accident is an unforeseen event. Hindsight educates us to a degree though; often, we can look back and it was not unforeseeable. I am looking for those things that are foreseeable. Fishermen can’t let personal experience stand in the way of examining potential foreseen events. If I stand on the dock talking to a 30-year veteran, he may look at a particular

vessel and say he wouldn't set foot on it. I can talk to that vessel's owner who says it's a good boat. Here are two extremely experienced people with a profound understanding of what they do, yet their views are contradictory. Who do you believe? I go through an educational process with them, asking how they know something beyond a gut feel. Beyond instinct and experience, what supports this wisdom they have?

WSM: What are the challenges you face?

BM: People feel safe when they have life-saving equipment on a boat, yet experience shows that many have no idea how to use it when the time comes. They have to practise and do drills; not just know where the suits are but actually don a suit. When they've done it a hundred times, I'm confident they know how to put that suit on without thinking. The principle is the same for all safety drills.

WSM: How do you change the safety culture?

BM: You don't just communicate, you over-communicate, because crews change

all the time. Each person on board should understand exactly how things are done. There's no ego in safety. No one is immune from getting cold. You don't get good results leading by fist or mouth. You have to lead by example. People will get it.

WSM: How successful have you been?

BM: I believe we are on the verge of breaking through. It's the most difficult phase. There is an added complexity: the industry is going through an economic struggle with the strengthening dollar and rising costs, and this has resulted in a transition from experienced long-term crews to a rotation of many new crew members with less experience.


Still, more and more people are hearing about the Fish Safe stability education program. A year-and-a-half ago, few had heard about it, and it didn't come without some of the normal rebellion. In the fishing industry, there are business people of varying complexity and means. There's a learning curve. Five percent adopt change right away. Fifteen percent will fight until the end. We are probably at

the middle of the curve now. The fact that there is a learning curve tells me there was a problem, but that change is happening.

WSM: What suggestions do you have for senior managers?

BM: My first suggestion is to always participate. Those engaging in a dialogue are the first to adopt change. People who won't – can't – take time to participate in a discussion, a meeting, a dialogue, a public forum, in most cases, are the most critical part of the program.

WSM: Why is senior management support so vital?

BM: It's important to have people at the top. Safety doesn't have a chance if the vessel or license owner and captain aren't willing to buy in to the change. Provide clear instructions, education, and practice, then over-communicate it on a regular basis. This is how the biggest influence takes shape and the new procedures become the norm. The students will then become the teachers. 



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