

**This Article was originally written for HE-Alert article
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'The Effect of Regulations'.

As an industry we have evolved a compliance culture, reacting to “what” we should do and “how” we should act, set out across prescriptive rules and regulations.

However, when the Safety, Security, and Environmental Management revolutions came along we needed to alter course and to follow the ‘management systems’ approach. Sadly many companies continued on the same old rhumb line and despite the fact that most had adequate ‘systems’ for years, many have totally misunderstood paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the ISM Code Preamble and have failed to grasp the twin concepts of “management systems” and “goal” setting.

Many companies are trapped in a vicious circle of over-reliance on rules and more rules, where they want regulations to tell them how they should comply. The pressure of complying then condemns them never to reach out and achieve more – they are trapped and have neither the time nor resources to reassess and move forward.

As a result companies turned to ISM Consultants, to produce whole libraries of “off the shelf” rules and regulations which they would call their “own” Safety Management System.

Such ‘off the shelf’ systems have not worked – they may persuade a flag State administration to issue a DOC and a SMC and may convince a PSC inspector – but in practice they are costing the ship operator money. Invariably, those on board view such systems as a major inconvenience - generating mountains of paper with no tangible benefit.

There are, thankfully, companies who have created a culture of continual improvement, using effective risk assessment and management, and proactive measures to manage safety through reporting, analysing and implementation.

They recognise that they need not wait for another major accident or incident and a new set of rules and regulations to guard against the same thing happening to them.