The alphabet of **effective communication**

**Alarm System Management**
Alarms can be distracting, can cause confusion and be ignored by those who are not aware of their sources and implications. Careful design and management of alarm systems is required.

**Effective communication**
The successful transmission of information through a common system of symbols, signs, behaviour, speech, writing, or signals, by physical, mechanical or electronic means.

**Journals, Newsletters and Bulletins**
Professional journals, company newsletters and noticeboard bulletins inform the crew of important issues that have an effect on their professional life, health, safety and welfare.

**Keeping in touch**
Telephone communications, and email and internet facilities enable crew to keep in touch with their families.

**Feedback**
Exchanges of ideas, information and knowledge between crew and management ashore.

**Gossip, grapevine**
An unofficial means of communication, which is normally founded on speculation and rumour; indicates a lack of effective communication.

**Handbooks and operating instructions**
Ensure that documents that explain how to use, maintain and operate the ship and its equipment are written in the native language of the reader, are not technically complicated, and are easy to understand.

**Illustrations**
Use imagery, photos, drawings and cartoons to inform and illustrate, in order to reach out to non-native English speakers - ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’.

**Language barriers**
Some seafarers may be unwilling to admit their difficulty in understanding and communicating because the commonly used language onboard is not their native language.

**Management seminars**
A means of bringing together seafarers from different ships and shore management, to exchange ideas, information and knowledge.

**Questionnaires & checklists**
Usability and quality assurance questions that require a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Checklists, if properly used, can be of assistance to ensure that nothing has been forgotten when carrying out a procedure. Can lead to a 'tick in the box' culture that in turn can breed complacency.

**Orders, instructions & procedures**
The 'what to do' and 'how to do it' of safe ship operations. All should be clearly defined, easy to understand and in a working language or languages understood by the ship’s personnel.

**Paperwork**
An abundance of correspondence (both paper and electronic), statistical reports, bills, safety notices, company bulletins, newsletters and noticeboard bulletins inform the crew of important issues that have an effect on their professional life, health, safety and welfare.

**Rule of the Road**
The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. A form of silent communication requiring vessels to take positive action to avoid the risk of collision, by standing on, altering course or adjusting speed, backed up by sound and light signals.

**Visual signals**
The use of flags, signs, symbols, hand signals and gestures to inform, direct and communicate especially to those who have difficulty in understanding and communicating because the commonly used language onboard is not their native language.

**Telephony**
Active management policies should be put in place to ensure telephones (especially mobile telephones) are not used to call the master or crew at inappropriate times, eg when navigating in busy or confined waters or when resting and in a substantially different time zone from that of the caller.

**User feedback**
Seeking the input of those who live and work aboard ship in order to improve the design of the ship and its systems, in terms of its habitability, maintainability, workability, controllability, manoeuvrability and survivability.

**Working language**
English shall be used on the bridge as the working language for bridge-to-bridge and bridge-to-shore safety communications as well as for communications on board between the pilot and bridge watchkeeping personnel unless those directly involved in the communications speak a common language other than English.