

Communication Ethics and a Command Decision

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Captain Crozier faced an ethical decision of whether to risk his career, skip protocol, wait for the chain of command, and risk his soldiers' health and well-being. Captain Crozier also faced the ethical decision of sending the message to senior navy officials to spur immediate action to prevent further spread of COVID-19 and the potential loss of life. The captain faced the ethical dilemma of sending the message that was later leaked to the public, which raised questions about maintaining confidentiality while being transparent about the severity of the situation. Crozier took personal responsibility for the health and safety of his crew, which ultimately led to his dismissal, reflecting the ethical dilemma of individual accountability versus systemic response and the complex balance between the duty to protect one's subordinates and the obligation to adhere to hierarchical protocols in a military setting.

Crozier faced the moral decision of whether to send an unsecured email. The captain was responsible for safeguarding his sailors' health and lives amid the COVID-19 outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt. He had to choose between following standard military protocols for communication and the urgent need to secure the safety of his crew. By sending an email that was subsequently leaked, he risked public disclosure of the ship's crisis, which could be seen as bypassing the chain of command. Captain Crozier was aware that his actions might have severe implications for his career but prioritized the well-being of his sailors over personal considerations. (Szoldra, P & Schogol, J. 2020)

The primary failures of Crozier's communication strategy concerning how the letter was distributed were that Crozier admits he could have communicated more clearly about the gravity of the situation from the beginning, the captain's email, intended for his superiors, was leaked, leading to unintended media scrutiny and public exposure. The primary success of Crozier's communication strategy concerning how the letter was distributed was that despite the risks, the captain prioritized his sailors' safety over his career, demonstrating a solid moral compass. The email successfully accelerated assistance and broke through bureaucratic logjams, ultimately getting the help needed for the sailors. The captain was prepared for the consequences of his actions, showing a high level of responsibility and leadership. (CBS 8 San Diego, 2023)

The primary failure of the captain's communication strategy concerning his possible intent are lack of initial clarity. Captain Crozier admits that he could have been more transparent about the gravity of the situation and owns that aspect of the communication failure. The second primary failure of the captain's communication strategy was his choice of method, which led to public scrutiny and the loss of his career. The primary success is that despite the risks, the captain emailed his superiors with the clear intent to protect his crew. The second primary success is that the captain received a supportive response from the superiors he emailed, indicating that his direct approach was effective in mobilizing assistance. (CBS 8 San Diego, 2023)

One primary failure of the captain's communication strategy concerning the letter's content was a lack of discretion; the letter was leaked and published, indicating a failure to maintain confidentiality in communication. A second failure is bypassing the chain of command; Crozier sent the letter without consulting his immediate superior, which goes against military protocol. The primary success of the captain's communication strategy regarding the letter's content was urgency and advocacy. The captain effectively communicated the urgent need for

decisive action to protect the health and safety of his sailors, emphasizing that sailors' lives were at risk and that immediate action was necessary. (Szoldra, P. & Schogol, J. 2020)

The outcomes might have been different in the private sector because Military organizations prioritize discipline, hierarchy, and adherence to orders. In the private sector, organizational culture varies widely. Some companies emphasize innovation, while others focus on stability and risk aversion. A private company might have more flexibility in decision-making and adaptability, potentially leading to different outcomes. Military personnel often have a strong loyalty to their unit and mission. In the private sector, employees are motivated by various factors (salary, career growth, company values). In a crisis, loyalty and motivation play a significant role. Private sector employees might respond differently based on their incentives.

An example of Captain Crozier's case in the private sector is in the case of Sharron Watkins' 2001 memos alerting Enron's Chairman, Arthur Andersen, of financial fraud that was found and made public via an investigation. (Lucas, N., & Koerwer, V. S. 2004). Captain Crozier's email was made public via a leak. In the end, Watkins left the company on her own accord. Unlike Sharron Watkins, Captain Crozier was terminated for his communication strategy. Although Sharron realized continued success in her career, the label "whistleblower" has put her under scrutiny from skeptics questioning her motives and actions. Specifically, the fact that she "blew her whistle" within company walls instead of publicly. Conversely, though Captain Crozier was terminated, he is considered a hero for his selfless actions. The contrasting aftermaths of these two individuals' actions highlight the complexities of whistleblowing and the different perceptions surrounding it. (Lucas, N., & Koerwer, V. S.2004; KPRC 2 Click 2 Houston, 2021)

Dear Public Affairs Officer,

I am sending this correspondence via secure email for privacy, confidentiality, compliance, and peace of mind while communicating this sensitive information. I want to share insights from examining the events surrounding Captain Crozier of the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Captain Crozier faced an ethical dilemma during the COVID-19 outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt. He chose between following military protocol and ensuring his crew's safety. His actions led to many successes and failures in communication strategy and had significant personal and professional repercussions. Captain Crozier had to decide between risking his career by bypassing protocol or endangering his soldiers' health by waiting for the chain of command to act during the COVID-19 outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt. The primary failures of Crozier's communication strategy included a lack of initial clarity about the gravity of the situation and the choice of method, which led to unintended public scrutiny and his career loss. Despite the risks, Crozier's email effectively prioritized his sailors' safety, accelerated assistance, and demonstrated his strong moral compass and leadership. The content of Crozier's letter showed a lack of discretion as it was leaked and published, and he bypassed the chain of command by not consulting his immediate superior. The letter successfully communicated the urgency and need for decisive action to protect the sailors' health, emphasizing the immediate risk to their lives. The outcomes might have differed in the private sector due to varying organizational cultures and motivations, as shown by the example of Sharron Watkins at Enron, who faced different repercussions for her whistleblowing actions.

In conclusion, the captain's ethical decision involved balancing honesty, transparency, empathy, and effective leadership. His choice impacted the crew's survival and perception of him as their leader. The captain succeeded in urgency and transparency but failed to provide practical guidance. Effective crisis communication requires a delicate balance of information and

emotional appeal. While some principles of crisis communication apply universally, the context, culture, and incentives in the private sector would likely lead to distinct outcomes.

Best regards,

US Navy Captain Ella Rae

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