

## CHASING INFLUENCE

### TEAMWORK: THE PIRATE CODE

*"The problem is not the problem; the problem is your attitude about the problem." -Captain Jack Sparrow*

Bartholomew Roberts and Edward Teach, better known as Black Bart and Blackbeard, respectively, were two infamous pirates from the Golden Age of piracy in the 17th and 18th centuries. While pirates are often associated with violence and plundering, we can learn several valuable lessons from them regarding team dynamics and collaboration. Despite their unsavory reputation, pirates had some admirable traits that made them successful as a team. For one, they were democratic. Since they captured their ships, they owned them and could call for a leadership change by taking a vote. This democratic approach also applied to other decisions, such as which ship to loot, how to do it, and what to do with any prisoners. Booty was shared equally, regardless of rank or seniority, fostering a sense of fairness and equity among the crew. Pirates were also inclusive, which was remarkable considering the era in which they lived. Regardless of race, disability, religion, or nationality, everyone on a pirate ship was treated with mandatory goodwill. Blackbeard's ship, *Queen Ann's Revenge*, had a crew of 300 from all walks of life. On a pirate ship, your effort, contributions, and commitment to the team mattered more than your background. Pirates also adhered to a strong moral code that defined acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. This code kept the crew disciplined, and when team members agree to shared values, they can work more effectively and hold each other accountable. Moreover, pirates had a strong moral code that defined acceptable behavior and maintained discipline on the crew. For example, Article VII of the pirate code mandated death or marooning for deserting the ship or quarters in battle. Shared team values help team members work together better by agreeing on what behaviors they can expect from each other and holding each other accountable. Finally, pirates recognized the importance of having a common mission and goals. They knew they needed individuals with different skill sets to work together for a mutual objective. Similarly, goals provide teams with focus and direction, keeping them pointed in the same direction and acting as a glue that binds them together. While Bartholomew Roberts and Edward Teach may be infamous for their piracy, we can learn from their positive attributes as teammates. Their democratic approach, inclusivity, robust moral code, and shared goals are qualities that modern teams can adopt to work more effectively together.

*"It's a blessing for a person to have a hand in determining their own fate." -Blackbeard*

#### Connecting this quote to the story

Pirates had a democratic approach to decision-making, allowing every crew member to have a say in how the ship was run, what targets to pursue, and how to share the booty. The ability to have a say in one's destiny and work collaboratively toward common goals is a valuable gift and we can learn from pirates to apply to modern-day teamwork.

#### Reflection Questions

**1. What values are essential for our team to uphold? How can we establish a clear code of conduct that helps us work together more effectively?**

**2. What are our team goals, and how can we work collaboratively toward achieving them? How can we ensure everyone contributes their unique skills and strengths toward our shared mission?**

**3. How can we apply the democratic approach of pirates to our team's decision-making process? How can we ensure that everyone's voice is heard and valued?**

**4. What would the wisdom of “mandatory goodwill to teammates” mean for our program?**

**5. How can we promote inclusivity and diversity within our team? What steps can we take to ensure every team member feels included and appreciated, regardless of background?**