Summary:
The subject of management on board like any other system requires a planned approach. There are various patterns which are used to manage a collection of people working in a group or in a company. For ship-board management; the ISM code is surely a good base to check and devise upon. The idea of the author apart from the formal management is the actual supervision and leadership that is needed to be practiced especially by the master on board. A practical approach is used to make up the following points so that possible solutions can be suggested.

It is important to note that although senior deck and engine officers are all involved in the management of the vessel; the master's role and responsibility in ship management is considered as the fundamental position for order and discipline on board hence the focus is mainly on that position.

A) Various aspects to be considered:

1. Cultural back-ground of personnel:

This may be the most important of all. If you have multinational crew; the approach is quite a challenge. I have explained the various problems with this in a different paper, but for the sake of managing them; we should bear in mind that a vital factor is the culture dominating on board. We should try to know the people and the sensitive areas of their culture. We may come back to the issue later on in different practices.

2. The length & period of sea-service on board:

For many of the ratings the length of time on board is much greater than the officers. For those who stay longer on board; the danger of becoming easy-going or rather complacent is more. So is the chance of getting absent-minded or even eccentric at times. If we want to have a relative sense of understanding and tolerance; we need to always have a point in mind about it.

3. The type of ship and the ergonometric considerations:

Various ships may require different approaches for managing the personnel on board. For a fast ship or a vessel carrying dangerous cargoes; we may have to consider more stringent rules. Length of each voyage is a basic factor while allocating jobs and various agenda for the personnel. A reprimand or punishment for someone who smoked on deck must be far graver on a tanker than a typical bulk carrier. The hardship to work on a specific trade must be considered as a management point.

The workmanship hindrances and ergonometric complications may aggravate the living conditions and hence adversely affect the vigilance levels; troubles arising from fatigue and workload. For a proper management all these must somehow be borne in mind and the various approaches adapted as necessary.

B) Various practices:

1. The military approach:

Some masters manage their ships in a navy-like manner. They expect strict discipline which may at times include wearing uniforms by the officers while at work and on watches. In difficult times a military approach may be useful but at other times with today's officers who like to live freely; it may end up to complications.

At sea as the living and working areas are mixed and people have to be there all the time together ; one must be more flexible than a navy vessel where the sole purpose of existence is readiness for defense or battles and keeping order.

The sea-condition and weather in which the ship sails can be hindrances to a very strict navy manner. It is true that in difficult times a good order can keep up the things together but many requirements which - in strict discipline - may be wanted are considered extra and matters bothering. So in bad weather one might think of disposing them of. On the other hand the number of ships running this way are very few and mostly with government companies. This can particularly be a problem with multinational crew where wearing shorts and shabby work-clothes are very common. Of-course a certain degree of discipline and order is necessary to run any organization but it may not be very practical to run merchant ships on naval courses.

2. Ruling through informers:

In order to be aware of the happenings on board and thus be able to have a proper control over various problems; there is a quite immoral way to have informers amongst the officers and rating who would bring news to the captain. These people may do so willingly or through expectation of some favours or allowances. Existence of this attitude is a cultural matter primarily, and secondly depends on individuals. In some cultures people do not want to confront the complaints and matters like that in a direct way and prefer to keep the things in a sort of covered/filtered way. Decisions can be made by having the information but if the manager does not really want to react to some of the problems; this way it would be kept untold because it is not registered and no one knows about it officially.

On board a ship there are some personnel who like to talk a lot and one can always find a lot of the required info inside. Management of the personnel on board is a very difficult task and varies in different situations. This attitude may not be very nice but surely exists on many ships. Creating an espionage atmosphere may at times be a "good" means to deter complaints as the fears of being informed about and fired consequently remain like an incubus on the minds of the subordinates.

In fact this can be further analyzed into some social disorders and may basically come from the inability to manage and command, indeed.

3. Giving orders by calling them "Office Orders or Instructions":
Some masters try to issue orders in such a way as if they have only conveyed the order and they may also share the idea that the work is too much but they have no way and this is from the head office!
This sort of management is usually because the person lacks confidence and tries to hide behind the bureaucracy laid up in the system. At times when a master is new in a company and is not very well aware of the regulations or internal procedures; running the ship with such orders may be okay but for a very short period and it should not involve the safety matters or the important responsibilities on board but only for some paper-work or financial dealings with the office and the routine bureaucracy.
In principle this is a weak way to manage and will soon be useless and lack authenticity. It may only be used to tranquilize the rages of the personnel momentarily by blaming the office and telling them that I am also a part of "you" or I am being exploited and used as well. Surely is not a way agreeable to reasonable management.

4. Management by combining two or more of the above:
It is often observed that many ships are being run by using various ways according to the situations on board. The military way may be too much if done continuously, hence by taking it easy at times or not reacting as before or expected; a harsh confrontation can be avoided. On the other hand it may look too political but changing systems will buy time in critical situations until the whole scenario has changed and evolved by just letting some time pass.
It is true that having a rigid one-way management will not be practical but the changes in the variations are also very temporary and are like minor remedies.

5. Management through knowledge of people and human elements:
So far it seems that most ships are run by the ways explained above but I believe there is another way which is more human-element focused and can be utilized in a scientific structure serving both the system as well as the people involved in.
This may be one of the most advisable ways of management on board. A master should primarily try to know the personnel. This should necessarily be extended to all individuals and surely as per their position on board. At first it may seem a bit too perfectionist but it is possible. Every person on board has a rank/sect-attributable pattern as per the position and it can be understood through the experience and observation by the master. Then what remains is the particular personal behaviour and likes or dislikes. Surely it is not possible nor is necessary to try to know the personnel in deep but only as far as you can and need to know to manage and help them carry out their duties. We may subdivide the matter into different points:

5.1 Their eating habits and general Customs :
Having different nationalities; the personnel have various tastes and choices of food. By the knowledge that food plays a very important role on the human bahaviour and work systems; making a relatively good balance can help the ship atmosphere a lot. Even amongst the same nationalities or ethnic groups on board, you may find different priorities on food. By knowing these, a lot of the problems can be solved and an easy atmosphere may be made. The knowledge about the general customs of different nationalities on board can help the manager to understand them better.

5.2 The work patterns:

People on board may have quite different ways to work. We must try to look at the result mostly under the International Safety Management code. So far as the job is done in the way of procedures and the result is acceptable, it is okay to have different approaches. When we know that for instance an engineer likes to work alone or a rating is a smoker and may leave the job once or twice to have a shag in a designated area; would be acceptable if not hampering the safety and the jobs are done and accomplished.

5.3 Issuing orders and use of communication skills:

There are many simple matters that a master should bear in mind while issuing orders.

Some do not like to be ordered directly. You can always use other ways. Instead of "Bring me a cup of coffee, please" you can say: "A cup of coffee would be very nice; what do you think" to the steward. It might really help!

Many senior engineers may not like to get orders directly from master. There are always alternatives to get the same result by some other phrases.

Some officers or rating do not like any orders. If we say do this or that; they feel offended. We may instead say: I wanted to see if we can have the paint-work finished before the bad weather starts!

Or: I wonder if the spare parts will be enough for the overhauling of the genny! And phrases of that sort.

The amount of consideration and flexibility depends upon your experience and knowledge of the subordinates as well as the importance and necessity of the subject. There are surely occasions that your leniency may be taken as lack of managerial assets or self-confidence and the people may take advantage of that.

The language barriers are always there. Even with good command of English; the choice of words may create ambiguous conceptions and by knowing the problematic areas; you may be able to avoid, at least some of them.

The primary idea is to get the ship running and if this is being done somehow a bit different than your idea; it might be okay at most occasions.

5.4 Respecting the personnel and their capabilities:

It is a human element value that every person in a society should respect the others around. This may be extended from their colour or race to the food they eat or beliefs they have. If you are their boss; they would expect more consideration and understanding.

Every human being has at least one good asset if not many. On board a ship the assets found, may not in fact match the required level of workmanship or competence expected but most of the time you cannot do much about it and must keep them on board and in their designated position. For general ratings; after understanding in what area every individual is good; then the jobs can so be allocated. But for officers; it is not as easy, as everyone has a set of specific responsibilities which cannot be waived off or given to someone else.

When people notice that you "see" them and observe or approve of their capabilities; then they mostly try harder and rather gain a feeling of satisfaction.

Conclusion:

After all mentioned in this paper we may suggest that the last concept & practice is the most scientific and human-element-based of all. In accident investigations it is often said that most accidents are due to human errors, hence an understanding of these elements will help running a ship in a better way and avoid many mishaps, consequently the management will be happier at different levels; shore-based systems & on board command.

Everyone has a particular way to approach the matter but considering the safety aspects and specially ISM code; it does not matter which of the above ways or combination of them we choose; it is important to run the vessel in the safest and the most efficient way possible. Hence as far as regulations are abided by and we keep humane ways; the task is satisfactorily fulfilled. One must remember that having happy & smooth relations in a "work + living" atmosphere is good for us all.