



AT WORK

A SELECTION OF DIFFERENT EXAMPLES FROM THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF BOSKALIS

WORKING WITH SUBCONTRACTORS

We work with subcontractors for a variety of work on virtually every project. Welders and divers come on board, lorry drivers and crane operators appear on site. Some companies meet our safety requirements.

But sometimes you have no choice but to take the plunge with a subcontractor that does not meet these standards. Three employees share their experiences.

Bart Meijering, (SMIT Salvage) salvage master, on selecting a subcontractor:

“I WANT TO GET A FEEL FOR A COMPANY. THAT’S WHY I ALWAYS GO THERE.”

“When I’m looking for a subcontractor, I always go there myself: How does the company look? What kind of people work there? I speak with the management; ask about their track record, quality system, risk assessments. This quickly gives you a sense of whether you’re dealing with competent people. Or, if they are less competent, where the risks lie and whether we can resolve this. You develop that sense with experience. And if I lack that experience, I look for someone within the organisation who can support me. I always ask about a subcontractor’s safety system and I introduce them to NINA. But I won’t impose anything on them. It is about good, safe collaboration in an open atmosphere.”

“I MAKE ADJUSTMENTS FOR A SUBCONTRACTOR BASED ON FEEDBACK FROM OUR PEOPLE. IN EXTREME CASES, I SEND THEM AWAY. I HAVE DONE THAT BEFORE: IF PEOPLE IN FLIP-FLOPS COME WITH DAMAGED WELDING CABLES, THAT’S A BRIDGE TOO FAR.”

What is your experience with the safety consciousness of subcontractors?

“I rarely find that a subcontractor has our level of safety consciousness. I did in the United Kingdom, where I’ve just finished a job. We found good divers and welders there, and that was one big thing less to worry about. But in Angola for example, it is virtually impossible to find good subcontractors. I’d be lying if I said it didn’t keep me up at night. Because my experience is that if it goes wrong, it often goes wrong in that area. It’s our job to assess and minimise risks. Unfortuna-



SALVAGE

tely, working with subcontractors often means making compromises with regard to safety.”

How far do you go then?

“As far as is acceptable. Look, I can provide good PPE, guidance on site, and training. Whether that is enough is shown in practice. It’s up to the people on site to make the call. They give me feedback I can use to make adjustments, for example by providing more guidance or

reducing the scope of the subcontractor’s work. In extreme cases, you send someone away. But then you have to have an alternative, because the work still needs to get done. That is the dilemma you’re faced with. Because in the same way as you expect the ambulance to come if you call 112, the client expects us to get the job done when they call us. Because we are the last ones they can call.”

Luke Dicks, (Offshore Energy) Senior SHE-Q Engineer at Subsea, about working together:

“THE NINA SESSIONS HELP PEOPLE SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE.”



together with five or six different companies that all had their own ways of operating. The NINA training sessions made them see the bigger picture: they started sharing ideas to sort out problems together. In Ivory Coast I also saw that NINA was a good steppingstone. There were some health and safety issues on board one of our client’s vessels that we had to use for the project. The client called an ‘all stop’ and asked us to give a NINA course on board. Huge discussions always come out of these sessions, which is a good thing because it gives insight into what is really going on. During the sessions, I saw people opening up. Getting together, regrouping and refocusing got the team back on the same page.”

“When working with different parties, everyone involved should remember they have one common goal: to get the job done safely together. In practice, there can be many barriers along the way. NINA is an arrow in your quiver to change this. During the NINA training sessions I have facilitated, I have experienced that NINA can motivate people to look at things differently. For example, in the Gulf of Thailand we had to work

So NINA is an ice breaker?

“Yes, indeed. However: words alone are not enough. You need consistent actions to go with them to make sure NINA is more than just a poster on the wall. In Ivory Coast for instance, the vessels were fumigated, upgraded with wifi, and communication was made more transparent. The result was that people became motivated to do their jobs again, because they felt they were

heard, they felt they mattered. That’s what NINA does. Or more precise: that is what we do, with NINA being a tool in our toolbox.”

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You sound really enthusiastic!

“Yes, sorry for that [laughs], but I am. I love seeing how NINA can motivate people. I love it when they first sigh, mumbling something about ‘another bloody safety training session’, and then seeing them change during the session. Sometimes they even become an ambassador for NINA, and Boskalis. Because that is what we hope to achieve in the end: people feeling that they are Boskalis people and starting to share the NINA message with others.”

Tako de Veth, (D&I) project manager for Area Middle East, on differences in culture and understanding of safety:

“OUR GREATEST CONCERN WAS THAT PEOPLE DIDN'T SEE THE DANGER.”

“I’ve worked with subcontractors in different countries, but I found one of the greatest challenges in South Korea because I came up against a number of things that were incomprehensible to me. For example the water boundary: safety on land was reasonably well developed, but on the water everything fell away. We saw a ‘wild west’ situation on every local boat or A-frame: zero requirements, zero rules. On land a crane has to be certified, but not on the water. But what I found the hardest to understand was that the people don’t see the danger. If we hear a loud noise during a task, we automatically start back, but the South Koreans don’t, they just keep working. This was our greatest concern.”

What did you do about those concerns?

“Two things: we implemented as many checks in the operation as possible, and at the same time we trained people for safety awareness. We put experienced Dutch employees at all the important positions. They were given instructions to pay close attention to safety and to respond immedi-

tely if anything happened. Our Dutch sandfill masters held a ‘time out for safety’ many times. As an extra check moment, we introduced JHAs for the simplest tasks. We also put a lot of time and effort into training: teaching people what the dangers are and most of all why, and how they need to act. We showed videos and constantly repeated that they should not stand in the ‘line of fire’. It took a very long time before all this started to sink in. Our people came to me: ‘I’ve already explained it ten times, but it’s been done wrong again.’ ‘Then we just have to explain it one more time,’ I would say. It was frustrating, but that’s just the way it is: we are responsible for their safety.”

“EXPLAINING EVERYTHING TEN TIMES WAS FRUSTRATING, BUT THAT’S JUST THE WAY IT IS: WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR SAFETY.”



Are you satisfied with the result?

“Ultimately I was, yes. One of the successes was a competition we introduced to activate people: whoever addressed others about their behaviour or signalled a hazard the most received a prize and a certificate. This caught on, and was also adopted by the client (Daewoo). All in all, the result was that we ran a safe project: no accidents occurred due to thoughtlessness. So our patience paid off!”