



Fractures In The Red Sea

"IT'S ONE OF OUR OLDER RIGS," THE VOICE SAID, A TOUCH STRAINED. "SHE'S HAD A MAJOR INCIDENT AND, TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE THE CREW'S UP TO IT. CAN YOU HELP?"



BY MARK THOMPSON
FOUNDER

The stricken vessel was a jackup rig belonging to a major drilling contractor; the voice belonged to their VP for Projects. He wasn't happy. Out in the Egyptian Red Sea, the rig's blocks had smashed together, shearing off and crashing onto the drill floor and drilling equipment, damaging the derrick and substructure as they went. Fortunately, no one was injured. We rapidly assembled our small multidisciplinary task force and mobilized to Cairo.

When we arrived, the rig lay alongside a cargo jetty just outside Port Suez. Despite appearances—the rig's cranelike legs and derrick rising into the sky—there were no actual cranes or any infrastructure to support such a large repair project. This serious problem was compounded by our client's desire to kill two birds by undertaking essential equipment maintenance while the rig was docked. The damage itself was covered by insurance, but we gained a boatload of paperwork that threatened to push us off job one—getting the rig 'drill ready' again.

Naturally, the Egyptian field operator was keen to get our client's rig back to service quick smart—two months, by their count. We saw things differently, however. The initial investigation had identified another fracture (a breakdown in the rig crew's cohesiveness) as a key reason for the dropped block. In an effort to rally the crew, the VP now wanted them to manage and deliver the project themselves, albeit with our support. Which presented one final hurdle; the crew had never handled a repair project on this scale.

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After outlining the scope of repair and developing a risk profile for the project, we knew that two months just wasn't feasible. Our report encouraged an earnings forecast adjustment based on a probable return to duty of three months. It was a hard pill to swallow, but the client trusted our expertise and the perspective we brought to the job. Now they knew where they stood and could plan accordingly. We set to work, knowing things would be tight even with four extra weeks. Given a realistic deadline, though, the crew perked up. With our mentoring, they proved themselves keen and capable.

Vessel and crew were back at sea within the planned three months.

So what?

Our client's rig returned to service with all due speed; the crew regained morale and cohesiveness through our leadership and support; forecast earnings were adjusted in line with our planning, preventing any additional surprise losses; the insurance claim was accepted and settled; and our client's regional reputation with their field operator client was restored. The drilling contractor has used our services every year since.

This was our first project back in November 2002, just days after incorporating. Since then, we've delivered over 200 others.