

Navigating the hazards

The Nautical Institute's Jillian Carson-Jackson looks at change that has occurred and changes that need to occur

I want to tell you a story – three stories to be exact. The first involves a young woman who wants to be an engineering technical officer and writes entry exams for two reputable marine colleges. One of the marine colleges selects her for an interview. She presents for the interview, only to be told “What? You are a girl cadet? Sorry, didn’t notice that in your application – sorry, we don’t take girl cadets”.

The second story is of a female officer in the offshore industry who becomes pregnant and approaches the company for information on maternity leave policies, only to be told they don’t have any. She is forced to quit her job to have her baby.

The third story tells how newspaper clippings about how women should not be on ships are left on the bunk of a female cadet. Flowers sent to celebrate her birthday are thrown overboard, she is told repeatedly that it is bad luck to have women on a ship, and that the work is too difficult for a woman.

Okay, now a pop quiz – when did these incidents happen?

- a 100 or more years ago?
- b In the 1950s?
- c In the 1970s?
- d Since 2000?

What did you say? Frustratingly, these incidents are all too common today.

The third scenario happened to me when I was a cadet (about 30 years ago). I almost gave up on the maritime industry as a career, but I persisted. Unfortunately, while this happened when I was a cadet in the 1980s, women are continuing to receive the same comments today. And these comments are not only for shipside positions, women on the shore side are also facing bias – unconscious or not – which limits their employment and prospects of promotion.

Stories 1 and 2 were identified in the Women in Maritime 365 (WiM 365) challenge. In the first instance, the young woman applied to another college that accepted her for an interview. Still conscious of the last interview debacle, she confirmed with the college that they knew she was a woman, and was pleased to hear they encourage women to apply. In the second instance the woman re-applied for a job with the company after the birth of her baby, and is now working ashore for the company to develop policies and procedures to tackle the problem. The stories on WiM 365, show positive change, with indication of strong support for gender diversity in the maritime industry.

Did you know the International Maritime Organization’s *International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers 1978 (STCW) (as amended)* promotes women in maritime? In 1997, *Resolution 14 - Promotion of the Participation of Women in the Maritime Industry* was introduced. The text noted the IMO’s medium-term plan for the integration of women in the maritime sector, and invited governments to give

special consideration to securing equal access by men and women in all sectors of the maritime industry; and to highlight the role of women in the seafaring profession.

In 2010 the Manila Amendments to the STCW recognised the limited progress made in promoting the participation of women. The amendments strengthened the text of Resolution 14, including reference to the resolution adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 2006 concerning the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers.

Yet, there is still a significant gender divide in the maritime industry. This is an issue that the IMO is taking seriously. In addition to the #IamOnBoard theme of the International Day of the Seafarer and the World Maritime Day Theme ‘Empowering Women in Maritime’, the issue is being highlighted during IMO meetings. At the recent Technical Cooperation Committee 69 (TC69), held in June 2019, delegates at the IMO heard from a number of focus groups working to promote and empower women in maritime.

Some key points include (as referenced in IMO TC69/10):

- Provision of fellowships for officials to attend the training course on women in port management.
- Provision of fellowships for women to attend training on aids to navigation management (IALA AtoN Management Level 1 course).
- Fellowships for women to attend the port senior management programme at the Galilee International Management Institute in Israel.
- Nomination of a female candidate to the IMO fellowship at the World Maritime University in Sweden.

The IMO supports regional Women in Maritime Associations in their work to promote gender diversity both afloat and ashore. This work includes bridging the gender gap, addressing institutional barriers and breaking down cultural stigma.

As we near the date of World Maritime Day 2019, officially set for 26 September, I hope there is increased activity to raise awareness of the ongoing imbalance of gender diversity in our industry. I also hope we can start telling success stories, where real and tangible change is being achieved. This is our chance to take stock of how we are doing, consider scenarios that inhibit or actively deride a woman’s decision to work in the maritime industry, and promote an environment that celebrates gender diversity.

For now, though, I leave you with wise words of wisdom from some of the amazing women who have told their story on WiM 365:

“Every girl is having their own, hard story.”

“Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.” ■



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