

## Expert thinking on the gender perspective in leadership

For some, leadership is motivation, for others inspiration. Until recently, women were rarely seen in senior leadership positions as these positions have predominantly been held by men and men were therefore stereotyped to be more effective leaders.

**Q:** “Given the ongoing discussion for the role of women in shipping, do you think that we need more females in leadership roles or more leaders acting on a female mode and why?”



**Carleen Lyden Walker**  
Chief Evolution Officer,  
**SHIPPINGInsight**  
& **IMO Maritime Ambassador**

The maritime industry would derive great benefit from having a higher percentage of women in its ranks. It has been documented that having women on corporate boards contributes to a 26% increase in profitability for the organization. Women carry a different skill set that would be useful in today’s communications environment. The world is moving so fast, and information is delivered at lightening speeds, miscommunication and misunderstandings are rife. Women are more prone to “active listening” and understanding nuances, which enhances the opportunity for work to be successful. We are also in an “age of balance” where the next generations are looking for a work/life balance. While women are not necessarily good at that, they are excellent facilitators for others.



**Karin Orsel**  
CEO,  
**MF Shipping Group**

We need more women in leadership positions and not leaders acting on a female mode. Some leaders are born with natural leadership skills but it’s not what you’ve been given but what you do with it that matters. We have to create awareness and opportunities for young women to learn from role models. Women need role models and mentors to show them how it is done. Together we have to encourage the next generation of female leaders to push them forward. Leadership has many ways and forms; successful leadership in one area of the world does not automatically mean that the same type of leadership is successful in a different part of the world. I strongly believe that diversity and gender equality is essential in leadership and brings balance to an organization.



**Natasa Pilides**  
IMO Representative,  
Shipping Deputy Minister to the President,  
**Republic of Cyprus**

It is imperative for skilled and competent people to be provided with equal opportunities for career development regardless of sex or background. Today, we gladly witness the presence of many more women at the helm of shipping companies, and in other key positions both at sea and, of course, on land. It is indeed refreshing and encouraging to see an increasing number of women holding key positions in the shipping industry. As a leading maritime centre, we have the responsibility to lead the way in important matters such as the provision of equal opportunities to women and to all citizens. After all, better use of our human talent is not only an obligation, but an opportunity for the shipping industry and the economy in general.



**Lena Göthberg**  
Owner & CEO, **GIGS by Lena G**  
Host & Producer, **Shipping Podcast**

Even if they are not enough, there are female leaders in the maritime industry, they are just not as visible as the men. Give them more visibility and listen to what they have to say, share your knowledge and you will become a leader for the future. The maritime industry needs more visibility, we need to change the profile of the entire industry if we are going to attract the brightest minds, working with us to develop our industry to meet the demands of our customers in the future, and that’s where we need a diverse workforce to show up to the world. Who wants to work in an all-male industry, or an all-female industry?



**Jeanne M. Grasso**  
Partner,  
**Blank Rome**

As an industry, we need more females in leadership roles. We also need more male leaders to acknowledge the importance of diversity in the workplace. Diversity is key to the success of any business, as is being yourself and not trying to be someone you are not. Leadership comes in many forms and involves integrity, respect, professionalism, transparency, and trust, among other qualities that are gender neutral. That said, men and women are different. While women can bring the same professional skill set as men to our industry, women also bring different perspectives and viewpoints, which add value, oftentimes allowing a company to better understand and respond to customer and client needs. Research over the years has made clear that companies with diverse workforces perform better financially. That alone should be enough of an incentive to expand the role of women in the maritime industry.



**Sofia Fürstenberg Stott**  
Strategic Lead for Opening Oceans Conference, Business Development Manager,  
**Nor-Shipping**

The maritime industry is standing in front of unprecedented levels of complexity, but also in front of an ocean of opportunities. To ensure a sustainable future and sound business development, transformative change will be needed. This will require new ways of doing business, new technologies, innovative policies and regulations, and focused, smart, cross-industry collaboration. To do that, we will need the smartest heads and the most capable people. It is a serious threat to the development of international maritime activities, if we lose out on 50% of the available work force, just because we are stuck in a culture of gender bias. So yes, we need more females in leadership roles. We need to find the right candidate, ensuring the process is “gender-blind”, to successfully solve the task ahead.



**Cynthia Hudson**  
CEO,  
**HudsonAnalytix**

Experienced and qualified women in leadership positions can be considered to be a real value to our industry. Shipping is not traditionally an industry welcoming to women who aspire to senior management and executive positions, although there are slow changes observed. It should be recognized that women leaders may often deliver different strengths, viewpoints and perspectives, lending new insight and balance and serving to actually empower the senior management team - a benefit to the organization. In such roles, women assist to effect change and create readiness for a future that is inclusive of quality leaders, both women and men! And women in senior leadership roles serve as an inspiration for the next generation of talented professional young women who may wish to consider entering our the maritime industry.



**Debra DiCianna**  
Senior Compliance Engineer,  
Media and Communications Manager,  
**Choice Ballast Solutions, LLC**

Most of my career has been spent in the shipping sector. My experience has been very positive in that my knowledge and experience is appreciated and respected. BP, INTERTANKO, and the Chamber of Shipping of America have strong female leadership, but I believe that more female leadership roles are needed throughout shipping. I think many companies only understand women in the specific roles that they presently provide but do not see the potential of that knowledge and experience for other leadership areas. Women have the means to cover many topics and issues at one time. The ability for women to “multi-task” effectively is widely documented. This ability allows them to focus on the important issues but also be dedicated to the long-term goals for a company or institution to envision the future.

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