
Shipping industry 'needs to change' to attract women, IMO tells GlobalData

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The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) is working to make shipping a more attractive workplace for women, as well as encouraging them to pursue senior roles.

In an interview with GlobalData's Shipping Technology the IMO's Senior Legal Officer said more needs to be done to encourage women to work in the maritime sector.

She told Shipping Technology: "For sustainability and success in the modern world, shipping needs diversity in the workforce and women helping to drive the decision-making processes. Women in the maritime world today are strong, powerful and constantly challenging old-fashioned perceptions. Experience and research tell us that diversity is better; it's better for teamwork, better for leadership - and better for commercial performance.

"Exciting and rewarding career opportunities are opening up for women. And a new generation of strong and talented women are responding. They are proving that in today's world the maritime industries are for everyone. It's not about your gender, it's about what you can do.

"Barriers to women working in the sector are being addressed, although much more needs to be done, for example, some shipping companies are introducing flexible working arrangements to make their companies more attractive to parents.

"The industry should also make a career in maritime appealing. There is a need for more role models. Job advertising needs to appeal to all, and to build an image of the modern, innovative workplace that shipping strives to be, so we can attract the best talent of the next generation.

"With regard to how the sector is doing on attracting more women into the workplace, the shipping industry needs to change, not only through adopting technological advances such as digitalisation, but also ensuring that the gender balance improves.

"For women to be able to reach their full potential in a career in maritime, the industry needs to work to ensure that the challenges that women currently face in the sector are overcome. The drive towards the use of more automation, plus the

shrinking pool of people with seafaring experience to come ashore and take jobs in shipping companies, means that women can benefit. However, women working in maritime face issues like developing leadership confidence and having to overcome unconscious bias, as well as having to contend with a lack of prominent role models within the field.

“We are seeing change, albeit slowly, and there are many opportunities to be capitalised on. The sector needs to adapt to the modern world, and business models need to be agile and progressive enough to attract and retain women. There is some way to go in the shipping, seafaring and broader maritime sector – but IMO will continue to promote the empowerment of women in the maritime community.”

(Global Data)