**Recruiting women into the maritime workplace**

**Why is gender diversity important?**

The business case for gender diversity has long been established with research showing that gender diverse companies outperform their less diverse peers. As an island nation, it is essential to our future success to draw from the full talent pool when promoting the sector and recruiting.

On a basic level, this is about showing women that your company is a place where they are welcome to work, will feel comfortable and included and can progress through the company to reach senior levels.

Drawing on behavioural insights this toolkit offers some practical tips on how to improve the levels of women in the maritime workforce.

**Create a talent pipeline**

Building a strong female talent pipeline is essential to increasing the number of women at all levels in a traditionally male dominated sector such as maritime. The first step is inspiring young women and girls to consider careers in maritime. [e.g. ports - around which communities are built are not always seen or recognised as a valid career option] Mentoring, outreach programmes and making women role models visible are areas where companies can take positive action.

* **Engage with schools** – the maritime sector remains largely unknown in schools and more needs to be done to encourage young girls to consider [maritime careers](https://www.maritimeuk.org/careers/). School visits to ports and maritime companies will use available resources such as visits from [industry ambassadors](https://www.maritimeuk.org/careers/outreach-teaching/).
* **Offer work experience** – work experience programmes are an alternative entry route into the sector, helping girls gain new skills and experience as well as improving their confidence and team-working skills.
* **Careers advice** – participate in careers fairs and college open days. It is important to reach girls at a time when they are making choices about their future careers. Informing careers advisors will help spread the maritime message.
* **T Levels and Apprenticeships** – many jobs in the maritime sector require a mix of practical learning and study. Get involved where applicable and make sure that the training developed meets your company needs.
* **Mentoring** - mentoring schemes can boost confidence and encourage women into more senior roles.
* **Sponsorship** - sponsors actively advocate for women, ensuring that they are visible to managers at the next level, building on mentoring and other initiatives.
* **Consider how you present your company and the job**. Does it have social value? Can you demonstrate a broader impact than just profit margin which will appeal to younger people?

**Recruitment process**

The first part of the process is the **pool**. This is where you attract candidates from and determine which skills and requirements are needed.

The second part of the recruitment process is attraction or **how the job is advertised**, where it is posted and what language is used.

The final part of the process is **selection**. This part includes how candidates are interviewed evaluated, and decided upon.

The sections below outline some simple steps you can take to encourage more women to apply for jobs in your company.

**Imaging and language**

The imaging that companies use in recruitment campaigns and on their website, gives an impression of the company and the industry that can either engage women or discourage them from applying for jobs. Imaging should show women as well as men working in a variety of roles, including at senior levels. This will more effectively engage women and show them that your company is a place they are likely to feel welcome, included and with the potential to progress.

A useful way of showing potential female employees that there are progression opportunities within your company is to have a senior female member of staff write a blog on their job and how they got there. You could also use this as a way of showing women that they are welcome in the company at all levels, by having women in different and male dominated roles write blogs about their jobs, why they do them and what they enjoy about them.

We all use language that is subtly ‘gender-coded’. There is evidence that certain words in job descriptions that are regarded as being more masculine could deter women from applying for positions. You can’t appoint the best person if she doesn‘t apply! Before advertising, it is worth checking your job adverts for ‘danger’ words by using available resources such as a [gender decoder](http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/about).

**The job requirements and role profiles**

Women will typically apply for a job when they meet almost 100% of the criteria, while men will apply if they meet about 60% of it. Reviewing the job profile and the skills needed to carry out the job is advisable so they are focussed on ability and not limited to previous experience or roles. This will help remove unnecessary details from role profiles and job adverts that could lead women to ‘self-select’ themselves from applying. Consider areas such as ‘desirable criteria’ and whether roles are specific to seafarers only for example. Questioning the skills that are needed and valuing capability over experience can open up your recruitment pool.

**Advertising your job**

1. Review job requirements to ensure no unintended discriminatory specific requirements.
2. Use gender-neutral language.
3. Consider the type of person you are looking for when writing your job advert rather than just what you want them to do.
4. Advertise in a wide range of places and not just the usual suspects, when looking to increase the number of women. Consider advertising where women might be looking.
5. Have a woman as the contact for more information about the job.
6. Include women in the imaging around the recruitment campaign and consider having role models accessible for women to see that they can progress in your company.
7. When looking to recruit younger people use their own communication channels (not just Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) to market a story, just like any brand would do for prospective customers.
8. Emphasise training, mentorship and company/team culture as important selling points. Advertise your commitment to an inclusive and diverse workplace to prospective female employees.

**Sifting and interviewing**

Unconscious gender bias is defined as unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience.

Men are assertive.

Women are caring.

These are common examples of gendered statements or automatic associations that unconsciously feed into decision-making, and one of the invisible barriers that can hold women back at the recruitment stage. Ensure there is no unconscious bias in the recruitment and selection processes by having all those involved undertake unconscious bias training.

Another practical step to avoid bias and demonstrate consistent application regardless of gender is removing names from CVs when assessing a role: name-blind recruitment.

The first opportunity for female applicants to get a real feel for the workplace culture is at interview. It is important to have at least one woman on the interview panel to help address unconscious bias and send a signal to the candidate that women are respected and understood in this business – someone they can aspire to be. For those that have difficulty including a woman on their interview panel, the [Interview Pool](https://www.maritimeuk.org/programmes/people/women-maritime/interview-pool/) is a free resource where you can access other women in the sector to help with your recruitment.

**Presentation and perception**

For women, the idea that their working life is doing more than simply adding to somebody’s profit margin is attractive. In this context, it is worth thinking about how you sell your company and the wider maritime industry to potential staff. The maritime industry serves the greater good in two key ways: shipping enables trade, which in turn enables people to take advantage of international trade opportunities, boosting economies and supporting local communities with jobs and economic benefits. The sector also supports and enables parts of the renewable energy sector, particularly offshore wind, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and allowing low/no carbon energy to flow into the power network. All this contributes towards reducing global warming and preserving the planet for future generations. Bringing out this kind of message is helpful when attracting women into the industry.

About one-third of the current workforce is either Gen Y or millennial, and predicted to rise over the next decade. Companies targeting the Gen Y and millennial groups need to rethink the rulebook when it comes to attraction and retention of staff. Typically, those in their 20s and early 30s are looking for more non-financial reward and recognition than previous generations. Training, up-to-date technology and flexibility are all factors for young recruits who will want to feel valued.