A new year with new challenges

The year ahead offers both opportunities and challenges in bringing about change within the maritime sector

A STRONG WOMAN, HELEN KELLER, once said "Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy will form an invincible host against difficulties".

I'm reminded of her words as we head into a new decade, with the possibilities and new challenges that it brings.

Just over a year ago I asked you to imagine a vessel arriving at port and all the people involved in the safe and efficient movement of the vessel from port approaches to berth. I expect many of you imagined men in the roles of pilot boat coxswain, pilot, deck hand, navigation officer, master, VTS operator and shore side personnel.

Hopefully we managed to change that perception with a focus throughout 2019 on women in maritime, bringing greater awareness to their role globally.

TIPPING POINTS

Twenty-nineteen was amazing, full of stories of invincible women, told through articles such as the ones in this publication, as well as social media, including the Women in Maritime 365 Challenge on Facebook and Instagram. What did we learn? Well, that women in the maritime industry are reaching the 'tipping point' for social change. When I say tipping point I'm referring to Malcolm Gladwell's book that looks at sociological studies on the structure of change. He presents thoughts on the "magic moment when an idea, trend or social behaviour crosses a threshold, tips and spreads".

The tipping point doesn't have to be big, but can actually be about how small actions, taken at the right time, in the right place, through the right networks, with the right people, can move an idea into a trend. Consistent, compassionate, collective action, bringing about meaningful change.

There have been many studies on what that tipping point is. While initial studies, based on observation, speculated on ranges between 10% and 40%, a study posted in *Psychology Today* (May 2019, Damon Centola) proposed that 25% is the tipping point for social change. If you want to look further, check out Dr Centola's papers and articles, including *How Behavior Spreads* (Princeton University Press).

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

How do we reach a tipping point for women in maritime? What can be done to move beyond 2% to reach 25%, or more, for women working in seafaring and shore based maritime positions?

There are some ways we can work towards the tipping point - Piotr Sztompka presents some of these in his book *The Sociology of Social Change*. They include looking at:

- actions taken by a large number and variety of individuals;

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- collective organisation within social networks;
- roles undertaken by individuals;
- types of recruitment;
- context in which social change happens (location, political and economic climate).

EMPOWERING CHANGE

The work by local, national and international organisations to empower, support and encourage women in fields that may have been considered 'non-traditional' continues to support women in maritime.

As Captain Wendy Williams, the 2019 New Year's Eve post for the WiM 365 Challenge, said, "Always be vigilant and control the reins of your own destiny. Never compromise on what you believe in. Empowering Women in the Maritime Community means inclusion, gender equity, balance and education". ■

Post note: WiM Facebook and Instagram pages are continuing in 2020, under the guidance of So-yeong Lee from the Republic of Korea. Please continue to be active and support #womeninmaritime #balanceforbetter #IamOnboard and other related hashtags.

DRIVERS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

■ According to Malcolm Gladwell's book there are a few elements that drive social change:
- The law of the few – where a few people with specific skill sets promote the change: 'mavens' (individuals who can spread influence through friends and family); connectors (those who know a lot of people, are able to influence); and persuaders (those with a natural tendency to 'sell' an idea, charismatic and enthusiastic).
- The stickiness factor – some element, quality or aspect that causes the idea to 'stick' in the minds of the public and influence behaviour.
- The power of context – linking an activity or movement to the environment or historical moment in which it is introduced. The idea of being 'in the right place at the right time'.