

PROFILE: Monika Lemajic

Captain Patrick Walsh AFNI, assistant secretary of the South East Australia Nautical Institute, speaks with project manager and former assistant dockmaster/dock technician Monika Lemajic

MONIKA LEMAJIC IS CURRENTLY working as a project manager and was previously an assistant dockmaster/dock technician. In addition to Monika's day job, she also has a Bachelor of Applied Science – Maritime Studies - University of Tasmania and recently completed an Executive MBA (The Blue MBA), Shipping & Logistics – Copenhagen Business School and was awarded a commendation by the Association of MBAs.

How and why did you first get into the maritime industry?

In my final year of high school, I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. So, I made an appointment with the school careers councillor, she gave me a book that outlined all the possible jobs in Australia. I started flicking the ends of the book, fanning the sheets, I closed my eyes and said out loud "I am going to be a...." I put my finger down into the book, opened my eyes and saw that my finger had landed on *naval architect*. So, the next day, I enrolled in Advanced Diploma in Naval Architecture at TAFE and haven't looked back since.

Which job roles have you found most fulfilling over your time in the industry?

My time as the dock naval architect/assistant dockmaster has been the most fulfilling. I really enjoyed the production environment and the hands-on aspects of the job. The job was quite varied; one day I could be doing stability calculations, the next day I could be dry docking a ship and the next day I could be with the ship's logistics team organising crane crews. I also always got a lot of satisfaction at undocking, if the ship was upright and in the calculated trim at floatation.

Can you explain your position as project manager?

I carry out standard project management – planning, monitoring, etc. In my role I do project management for strategic change. I

work closely with the operations director, as most of the strategic alignment in production tends to stem from operational improvements.

What do you enjoy most about this role?

I really enjoy the problem-solving portion of my role; I identify that there is opportunity for improvement, test it with analytics and then rely on my emotional intelligence and influencing skills to implement the change. I then re-test using analytics again. I like working on both sides of the equation - I like maths and I like talking to people, so it's a win-win for me.

What do you think is the biggest challenge for women entering the shipping industry?

I think the challenge is the same for both men and women - understanding what opportunities are actually out there. I had never heard of naval architecture until

the day my finger landed on the page in the jobs book.

How do you think diversity in the industry can be improved?

Once a woman has entered the workforce, provide them with support in order to retain them. In the past, I have gone to managers about someone behaving in a derogatory manner towards me, they tend to shy away from the problem. I am not sure if it is uncomfortable for them or too hard for them to deal with. So, my advice to everyone reading this is don't ignore a situation that may be uncomfortable for you, the other person is living it every single day, so imagine what it is like for them. If you overhear someone degrading someone else who is different stop it and say it won't be tolerated. Speaking up is the only way change can happen. While it may be uncomfortable, we can't ignore.

How can we promote maritime careers for women?

Give women a chance. Most of the time I think the barriers are because women are not necessarily given a chance. When I started working, there were 100 men in the engineering office and no women. When I started I was given a one-year contract, while the men had four-year contracts. This was in case I didn't "fit in" with the team. I have been with the same company for 13 years, so apparently, I do fit in after all. ■



Monika Lemajic, project manager and former assistant dockmaster/dock technician



Captain Patrick Walsh AFNI, assistant secretary, South East Australia Nautical Institute

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