



By Gemma Fottles

The underrepresentation of women in any industry has been somewhat of a hot topic for quite some time. Questions such as why are there substantially less women in positions of power, why are women paid less for doing the same job as their male counterpart, and why are women not offered the same opportunities for progression in their professional and personal lives as men - have been asked, scoffed at, and argued about for a number of years.

It's a topic that can immediately get under one's skin, and what is lacking in a lot of the rhetoric surrounding the issue is - in many cases - a fair and unbiased assessment of the situation in hand from people who can back up what they're saying with personal experience. People will speak about the situation of women at the top with little actual evidence to back up their theories, whilst for one living and working in a western environment surrounded by equally paid and respected female colleagues, it can be easy to dismiss this aforementioned 'situation at hand' as any kind of situation at all. Everyone they know is happy enough, and, besides, women are less inclined to work in industries such as yachting because, well, yachting is a man's pastime, right?

Well, no. The answer is not so black and white to either side of the argument. Of course, everyone is at least a little biased in a topic that immediately sparks debate such as this, and the answer to why there are substantially fewer females working in this industry than males is all but impossible to be entirely neutral within. So, we decided to get in touch with prominent women in yachting from a breadth of differing sectors, and ask them - what are their thoughts and experiences as a woman in the male-dominated world of yachting? Is it an impenetrable industry in which women are actively and consciously shut out? Is it harder for a woman to excel due to gender bias? Is it really the case that women are just not that attracted to careers in yachting that go further than

a stewardess, charter broker, or interior designer? Here we have their take on the relationship between women and the industry. Though their responses are different, one theme runs true for all four: the journey to the top has certainly not been an easy one.

OWNER

Sabina Nasser, 43m Bina

For us, yachting is a family passion, and we all take active roles in the building and

that the majority of female crew members are still in interior positions, with limited possibilities for career advancement. The yachting industry is rich and multifaceted - there are plenty of opportunities for women to thrive and shine. It would be wonderful to see more of us take that chance!

I have worked in several male-dominated fields and it has sometimes been challenging to overcome gender bias. We should highlight the achievements of women in the industry because by shining a spotlight we encourage other women to enter and succeed in this field, but we must also treat the success of

particularly in technical disciplines. In regards to my own journey into the world of yachting, I'm part of the family business, the third generation of the Damen family business ownership. I have a background in finance and an international career whilst at the same time having been a non-executive board member of the Damen group.

When it comes to yachting and women, yachting itself appeals to many women, just as it does to many men, and for many different reasons. A number of women are Amels superyacht owners in their own right, but regardless of the name on the contract, often everyone in the owner's family gets involved in the project.

I think the real question here is, what is our industry missing out on? Our industry should reflect the growing diversity among UHNWIs. That means not just women, but also diversity in all senses. How much would the superyacht market open up if we had more diversity within the industry? As more women become prominent in the industry, I hope we can encourage younger women to take a look at technical career possibilities in yachting. It's a fascinating and rewarding industry on many levels.

“We must treat the success of women in yachting with a degree of normalcy, because success and achievements are worthy of recognition, whether by men or women”

running of our yachts. My mother and I share a passion for art and interior design and were responsible for all the interior aspects of Bina's eight-month refit. My father and brother share a passion for technology and engineering and took it upon themselves to update all of the ship's dated systems. I think our family's experience shows that this industry can serve people of a variety of interests, skill-sets, and backgrounds, regardless of gender.

This being said, I think there is a definite disparity in the number of women vs. men in so many aspects of this industry - from crew to owners. Some of this may come from the antiquated idea that a boat is a man's toy, or that the physical work of pulling ropes is only suitable for men. And it remains the norm

women in yachting with a degree of normalcy, because success and achievements are worthy of recognition, whether by men or women.

Truthfully, what's served me well in navigating tricky situations was the confidence that my skills and experience were always more important than my gender. A little woman's touch of grace and charm never hurt either!

BUILDER

Rose Damen,
Commercial Director,
Amels & Damen Shipyards

I don't think there is a lack of women in yachting, but it's under-represented -



Rose Damen



Having worked in two male-dominated industries; yachting and previously finance in London - I have always focused on my strengths and I think this is what really helped me. Our business is about people and relationships: it's what makes me tick. I hope other women in our industry will be more confident and ambitious and never allow themselves to be held-back by any self-doubt.

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DESIGNER

Pascale Reymond,
Co-Founder & Managing
Director, Reymond Langton

There are a lot of women in the yachting industry, but unfortunately a lot of them are working in the background and not always recognised for their effort, talent and leadership. Lack of enthusiasm is certainly not the reason. I came by accident in the yachting industry in 1989 and was so excited by all the challenges and future prospects that this industry could bring me. I have not

been disappointed. I do not see yachting as a man's world.

This subject interests me as 75% of my design studio are women, including several of my top designers. I'm always looking for new talents and I employ a lot of women because of their talent - not their gender. My stance on this is that this is how we encourage normalcy when it comes to women in the industry, but it's important to recognise gender should not even come into it.

Personally, my first couple of years in the yachting industry in the 90s were the hardest. My ambition to become a yacht designer was not very well received at the beginning by my colleagues. I had to learn fast to get where I am today. Unfortunately, as a woman you

have to be better than your male colleagues to get recognised - it's very much a cliché but unfortunately true.

As soon as I became a senior designer in 1992, I never felt that my gender was a problem and it never stopped me professionally. My best advice to all is, never pretend to be somebody you are not, never shy away from learning, be hungry for knowledge and stay strong and honest and passionate. That will take you to the stars.

CAPTAIN

Casey Burrows, 43m Ruya

I myself had never dreamed that one day I wanted to be a captain. It was purely by

chance that I got a seasonal job on a Whale watching boat in Australia and I had a female captain who owned and operated the business. I remember thinking as soon as I met her that this would be a job I would love to do. After then being more involved in the Marine industry back in Australia, I heard about superyachts and met friends that had worked on superyachts, this is where I started researching what I had to do to get into the industry.

Women in yachting a topic that is brought to my attention regularly as most people are surprised to see a young female captain. It does interest a lot people and I do get asked very often about how I got to this position. I think people are only interest because it is unusual. It's the same if I walk onto a commercial flight a see or hear a female pilot, I am always surprised, and curious. I have only seen a couple of female yacht captains and I also still have that same curiosity.

My only personal example of my gender creating a problem in terms of my career is when I first came into yachting. I was basically told I had to be a stewardess as I didn't have the right experience - even though I had been a deckie/captain in Australia on commercial boats for two years prior to yachting. I did start my yachting career as a stewardess, and was lucky enough to work with a captain that could see I would be more useful to him outside.

I have always worked with really supportive captains and officers that have always encouraged me to work towards my goals. I think it is the same for all young people in the industry, and when I was chief officer and now captain, you see the potential in the ones that really want to progress and work hard - regardless of gender. This should be normal.



Pascale Reymond

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