



Ulrika Quist

General Manager of SeaTec Repairs, V.Group



What role do you play in the gas-fuelled shipping sector?

V.Group is a leader in ship management and marine services. It operates globally with more than 60 offices and an international pool of 44,000 seafarers. V.Group is committed to championing liquefied natural gas as a viable transition fuel believing that no other fuel has the maturity built up by LNG shipping during the past 20 years.

My role at V.Group is general manager of SeaTec Repairs. I provide support and assistance with critical logistics and am responsible for manpower repairs and installations on board vessels.

How did you arrive at this role? Was it your intention to join this industry?

I've had a long and varied career in the maritime industry. My first role was a Tour Escort in hospitality in 1994 on board the Costa Romantica. I then progressed to tour manager, covering all shore excursions, flights and other travel arrangements. I was also a port lecturer, specialising in Scandinavian ports as I knew those areas well. It was the best time of my working life!

I then moved to new builds for Prestige (Costa Crociere), working closely with the technical director and superintendents. I went on to Silversea Cruises where I worked for the owner as an executive and personal assistant for nearly 10 years. Finally, in 2010, I joined SeaTec Repairs, working alongside people I already knew.

What value do you see in the WiGS initiative? What would you like to see from the WiGS initiative to help progress females in the industry? What do you think can we do to help?

It's fantastic that there are now so many initiatives aimed at helping women progress in the industry. It's so important to celebrate positive female role models and create opportunities for discussion and collaboration. Providing opportunities for women to hear about the full range of roles available in the sector will help greatly.

We're certainly seeing more women graduates coming in through the V.Group graduate scheme and I think the initiatives and support available have certainly encouraged more women to apply.

How do you feel this sector has embraced the talent and value of women?

The sector has come a long way and there are now many more opportunities for women and certainly more women in leadership roles. It is true that it is still a male dominated sector, but the balance is being addressed in many ways.

I recently spoke at the Women In Shipping Summit which focused on supporting professional growth and career development and took a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion in shipping. It was a fantastic opportunity to come together with women from across the globe to share our

experiences. Forums such as this are essential in creating a more diverse workforce and I hope they encourage more women to consider a role in the maritime sector.

What excites you or interests you most about this industry and how does this motivate you?

I have had some fantastic experiences over the years. What I love about the industry are the close team relationships that we have. We can all rely on each other and there's a huge amount of trust. In previous roles, I have been responsible for creating team building programmes to strengthen relationships. Everyone knows what their role is and there's always the desire to do your best for the sake of your team. This is hugely motivating.

Over the course of my career, I've also been lucky enough to travel the globe and have visited some really interesting places. This is a real benefit of having a career in the maritime sector.

Please share something personal about you / your personal experience / achievements / challenges overcome that the reader may find interesting or inspire the future generation coming into the industry.

I think anyone embarking on a career today should feel inspired by the vital part they are playing in the world economy. Over the past 18 months, despite the most challenging climate we have ever seen, our seafarers and onshore teams have kept going through

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everything, finding innovative ways of working and keeping world trade moving. This is so inspiring for future generations.

Something personal to me is my love of playing table tennis. It's important to keep fit and active when you're on board a vessel and over the years I've challenged many people to a game. I've found it a great way to make friends all over the world and my paddle is always with me in my bag whenever travelling.

Was there a significant moment when you felt that being a woman put you at a disadvantage during your career? If so, can you share this?

Personally, I have never felt it a disadvantage. I've always worked extremely hard to do the best job I can and have never felt any career limitations due to being a woman. I've been lucky to work with some fantastic teams where all our roles have been valued.

How have you overcome any negative experiences you have encountered during your career? What would be your advice to others?

I have seen the hierarchy on board vessels, under which in some cases the higher "classed" have abused the "lower class". Thirty years ago, it was not dealt with or reported, as communication was not as sophisticated as it is today. I would advise all women (but not only women) to act and report. Abuse of any kind shouldn't go unnoticed and people doing this should be convicted.

The industry is making an effort overall to be more diverse but do you feel that being a female in the industry has offered you any advantages?

In my case it has been an advantage being a foreign female often in an Italian environment. Clients have in many cases wanted to deal directly with me instead of my male colleagues due to language constraints. I have often been treated very well and the positivity of being a woman coming on board in a technical environment is often welcomed.

Any words of wisdom and advice for anyone looking to pursue a career in the sector?

I'd tell people to do their research – speak to as many people as you can about their roles and responsibilities to gain a better understanding of the job that might best suit you. There are so many networking events and maritime associations that hold excellent webinars and information on all aspects of a life at sea. The great thing about the sector is that there is a clear career path once you enter the profession. Work hard, support your team and there will be a wealth of opportunities open to you.

What would be your top three reasons/selling points to encourage other women to join the maritime world?

I like the phrase from Christopher Robin to Pooh: "You are braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

What would you like to see the industry do more of to encourage females to seek careers in the marine gas?

Show more women in panels and interview the females that are in work positions in order to create more curiosity, instead of having men doing this.

Who was or is your role model and why?

Leadership is not wielding authority – it is empowering people! Leadership has nothing to do with having power over someone; it's about using your influence to inspire and empower your people to achieve the impossible. This perception that leadership is about leading by force or fear is dead, and if you still have this thinking, you will not attract the best people in your business, and the few that stay will be average at best. Our workforce has changed, and as such, our thinking about work and leadership must change to give our organization any chance of survival in this very competitive world. When you understand that leadership is all about people and using your influence to inspire, empower, and motivate your team to become the very best version of themselves, your organization will become one of the best in the world.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Surround yourself with people that push you to do better. No drama or negativity. Just higher goals and higher motivation. Good times and positive energy. No jealousy or hate. Simply bringing out the absolute best in each other. Treat others as they want to be treated and at the same time take care of yourself. 