

Women take to the helm in the cruise industry

In a highly competitive industry, why rely on just 50% of the population to stay one step ahead?

LONDON, UK, April 25, 2019
/EINPresswire.com/ -- Gender balance is important and the latest Workforce Management solutions can help close the gap.

When Lisa Lutoff-Perlo took the helm of Celebrity Cruises, she became the first woman in charge of a cruise line publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange through association with Celebrity's parent company Royal Caribbean International (RCL). It had

taken her three decades to land the top job after rising through the ranks from a position in sales at RCL. Despite her own success, Lisa acknowledges that women are "under-represented in positions of power and influence" and is determined to "create a balance that has never been achieved before".[i] It's a balance she believes is extremely important because, quite simply,

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Using WFM to maximize the talent of your male and female workforce gives different perspectives and experiences that impact positively on problem-solving and longer-term organizational success.”

*Lee Clarke, General Manager,
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harnessing the strengths of both sexes brings more diverse conversations and solutions to business issues that ultimately lead to greater profitability.

As CEO, Lisa is a trailblazer in pushing the boundaries of gender equality and the results speak for themselves. At Celebrity, she brought the male/female ratio on the bridge of their ships from 3% to 21% in just two years. Furthermore, she is inspiring other women to start meaningful careers in the industry. One of Lisa's highlights is developing a partnership with the Regional Maritime University in Ghana to create the Celebrity Cadet Program, which helps West African women gain employment as bridge officers in the cruise industry.[ii]

It's a tough world out there

Along with closing the gender gap, competition is a huge challenge in the cruise industry. On the one hand, small cruise lines are battling to capitalize on the exponential demand for transformational and expedition cruising, from a new set of travellers. On the other hand, large cruise companies are facing increased levels of competition. While this is excellent news for passengers who now enjoy a far greater choice of brands and services, it's a major headache for cruise organizations looking to hire highly skilled staff. The sector is notorious for severe staff shortages with industry watchers estimating the need for an additional 147,500 officers by 2025 to service the world cruise fleet.[iii]

So, just how can today's cruise ships, large and small, attract more women? How do they empower and then keep them from straying to the competition? These are questions that can



apply to all employees, regardless of gender.

Combining the best of both worlds

Men and women have different skillsets that make for a winning combination. To address a dearth of untapped female talent in your organization, consider changing your approach inside and out:

- Kickstart a cultural step-change – by introducing an organizational model that is committed to diversity and actively sponsors ambitious women. Then build this new philosophy into company values and mission statements.
- Start from within – your own employees know your culture, understand how your company works and are loyal. Why waste time and money on outside recruiters when you might already have the best candidates aboard ship?
- Know how to pitch your job vacancies – pay particular attention to areas that appeal to women for example, flexible working practices, transparent pay structures, opportunities for sabbaticals, maternity leave and excellent career paths.
- Introduce female-friendly working conditions - create a more inclusive work environment by phasing out shared bathroom facilities on older vessels during re-fits and upgrades and ensure there is adequate provision for basic items such as sanitary protection and other female specific health services.

Close the gap using WFM

Next, deploy the latest workforce management (WFM) solutions to identify and nurture your talent.

- Establish a gender profile – begin by understanding the current state of diversity across your organization then introduce clear goals to benchmark your progress towards greater gender equality and diversity. Modern integrated WFM systems link seamlessly with critical HR databases to capture real-time details relating to all crew members including gender, age, career and pay history. This makes it easy to build up an accurate gender profile and then match specific skills at different management levels to the roles available.
- Find mentors – build confidence in a male-dominated work environment by using data held in your WFM system to identify experienced female staff who can become mentors to new female joiners. Or set up an online support and networking forum and invite all staff, male and female, to participate? Involving all colleagues in sessions will foster a greater understanding and better collaboration between the sexes.
- Work on crew wellbeing and family life – build flexibility into shifts so that women have the time and space to connect with their families when they are away from home for long periods at sea. Help your female crew self-serve and feel in control of their working lives by giving them access to WFM systems via mobile applications on their mobile devices. In an instant, they know in advance their shifts, travel and career options and have the ability to request time-off themselves. They can even participate in tailored e-training programs at a time and place to suit them – all empowering elements that enhance overall wellbeing.
- Turn information into insight – use WFM as a powerful workforce planning tool to conduct ‘what if’ scenarios such as time for maternity and paternity leave and the flexibility to accommodate career breaks or role changes for working parents.

Use WFM to get the best of both worlds by maximizing the talent of your male and female workforce. You’ll be rewarded with different perspectives and experiences that impact positively on creative problem-solving and longer-term organizational success.

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