

Women in Maritime Lab

What did it tell us?

In late 2020, Hafnia, together with BW Group and Shell ran an open innovation competition called the “Women in Maritime Lab.” The objective was to identify innovative digital ideas that could be tested, developed, and deployed to create impact as quickly as possible.

Now, ahead of the second edition, launched later this year, we have decided to look back at the 2020 event and discuss what it revealed about gender diversity in our industry.

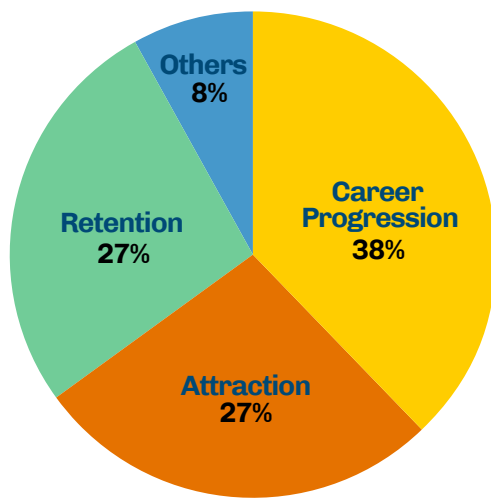


Revealing the Common Threads

The Women in Maritime Lab program was open to anyone, and in its inaugural year, over 50 submissions were received from a variety of individuals, businesses and institutions from around the globe.



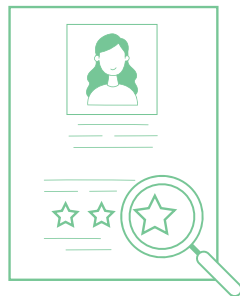
The entries fell into three themes: attracting women to maritime, retaining women in the industry and helping women to progress to senior positions. Received submissions fell between:



Career Progression - an Overwhelming Response

This category centred on the implementation of role model or mentorship programs and improving networking.

The importance of individuals sharing their experiences was underlined as a powerful driver for change and many ideas referenced high profile female leaders (for example those listed in the All About Shipping Top 100 Women).



However, the fact that so many suggestions were received indicates that, whilst inspirational stories exist, they are not being read as widely as they deserve. Several entries focused on the more innovative use of social media platforms to improve reach and this does appear to be an opportunity for improvement.

Beyond mentorship, submissions focussed on improving networking within the sector. Whilst many companies are already doing great work, there would appear to be a benefit in sharing between organisations. One of the concepts, Kaleidoscope, came second in the competition. Kaleidoscope was a platform designed to facilitate best practice sharing between companies with the vision of becoming the go to resource for any individual or organisation who wanted to set up and manage their own D&I program.

Encouraging Women to join the Industry

A question which maritime needs to address, is how to compete with other industries for top talent: how to ensure that school children, graduates, and career changers, consider a career in maritime. In this category we received some great concepts relating to outreach, using social media and more. One of these, Femfit, made it to the final. Femfit Maritime was designed as a video game allowing students and school children to choose an avatar and experience almost first-hand, what a career in shipping could be like.



Other entries in this category focused on bias with ideas ranging from anonymising CVs to testing and training within companies for unconscious bias. Whilst important, none of the ideas addressed maritime problems specifically.

Retention, how do we keep Female Talent?

Some of the most innovative entries centred on concepts which addressed retention. They loosely grouped into career flexibility, individual support and, what we classified as basic needs.



Career flexibility was raised in many submissions as balancing a career in maritime alongside caring responsibilities and parenthood remains a challenge. Whilst none of these included an obvious digital solution, the people and culture teams within Hafnia are able to utilize the information learnt and assess opportunities to address these.

Clearly there needs to be a strong call to action around companies' family planning, whilst there were some great ideas about facilitating careers between onshore and offshore.

Three ideas were taken to the final from the individual support category.

To start with, particularly at sea, women sometimes face challenges which directly or indirectly impact their wellbeing. Harassment, discrimination, and bullying seem to affect many - and the opportunities to report such behaviours are limited or compromised. Two ideas sought to tackle issues of harassment directly and these were merged to become Seacode the eventual winner. A different concept - The Jungle - aimed to offer real time tactics to an individual who has just been on the receiving end of discriminatory language or micro-aggression.

The final category tackled basic needs which are often discussed but remain to be addressed. These relate to challenges around correctly fitting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), confidence around being a woman on-board, and personal hygiene effects.

From these insights, Hafnia has been able to evolve measures, providing enhanced sizing options for women in regard to PPE on board and re-assess safety measures not only from a practical living quarters perspective, but heighten measures regarding the route of the issue with more training and stricter policies.

On any voyage where a female seafarer is present, there are now at-least two women on board. Additionally, Hafnia asked female seafarers to provide a list of personal hygiene effects needed throughout their stays onboard. These items are now onboard as a standard to all Hafnia vessels.

The Other Category

A small number of submissions fell into the “other” category primarily relating to transparency, reporting and benchmarking. A common theme in the maritime industry is a lack of data - the often quoted 3% (the percentage of women at sea) is now a few years out of date.

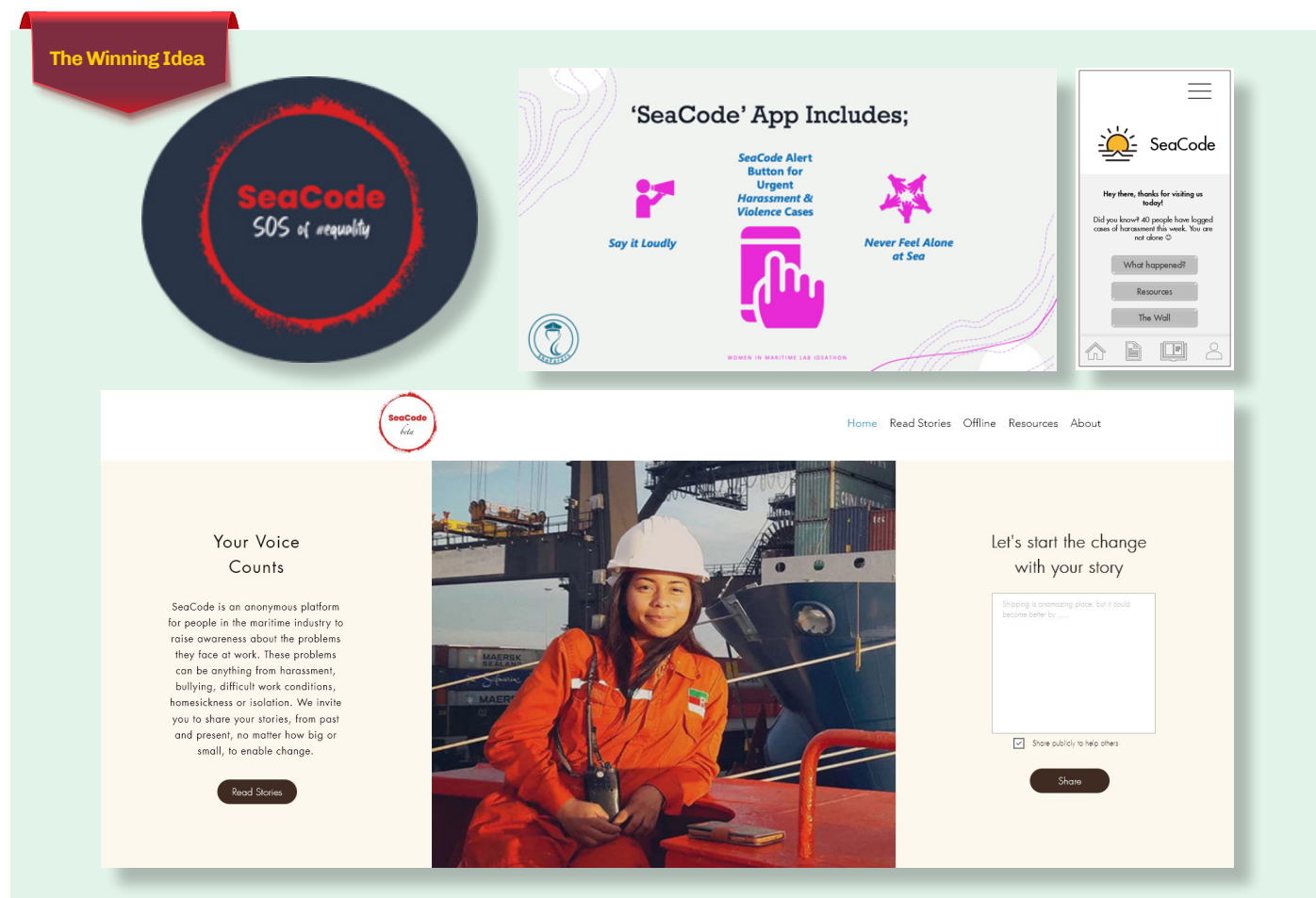
One concept - WOM=IN - imagined a cross-sector platform to share D&I KPIs and statistics with specific change targets for both onshore and offshore. Most importantly, the platform would be public.

And The Winner was - Seacode

The winning idea Seacode, had an excellent and clearly articulated objective to support seafarers who experience harassment whilst collecting data used to drive change. The team presented a credible and compelling case which included additional user insight and a realistic roadmap to test the concept.



Seacode won the support of the judges for several reasons. It envisaged a platform which could be used to both support women through peer-to-peer sharing, and to offer access to a broader set of resources. Secondly, by codifying these interactions Seacode would collect statistical data which can be used to inform and drive structural change across the sector.



(Above) About SeaCode, a platform that supports women through peer-to-peer sharing and provides access to related support resources.

Key Takeaways

Many of the topics raised will be familiar to anybody who has looked at D&I in maritime and there are many initiatives underway for networking, role models and mentoring. However, it does appear that there is a gap in awareness and reach.

At sea, hygiene factors, such as the correct PPE is often raised and yet does not seem to be universally solved.

Encouraging inclusiveness at sea remains a challenge and it is to be hoped that Seacode will not only support individuals when they need it but will also, through data, raise broader awareness of issues which are very real and yet often remain invisible.

Finally, the question remains about new talent. The submissions suggest, and this is not new news, that the sector faces issues in attracting the best and the brightest. This is a major challenge to everyone involved since the industry faces an unprecedented level of change and will only survive and flourish if it can attract and retain the best people. ■