

# FIT FOR FLEET



**Women at the helm:  
Making a mark in the maritime industry**

IN COLLABORATION WITH *HER WORLD* AUGUST 2018

**THE MARITIME INDUSTRY IS DYNAMIC AND EVOLVING EVERY DAY, THANKS TO ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY.**

More than scrubbing dirt and grease on vessels, or living in cramped quarters while sailing the rough seas, many different career paths are possible in this industry. Jobs run the gamut from policy writing and port operations to crewing, broking and more.

With Singapore connected to 600 ports in more than 120 countries, and 5,000 maritime companies employing at least 170,000 people here, we have a thriving maritime industry. Talent is always in demand, but one thing is clear: This is no longer a man's domain. Women today play a vital part in maintaining the country's position as an industry leader amid fierce competition.

Rather than brawn, good ol' hard work, a go-getting attitude and people skills are the keys to success. These attributes are also how the women featured here have managed to scale the ladder in their field, some of them into the highest echelons.

Read, and be inspired.

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# SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL INTERESTS

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) keeps our ports competitive and attractive.

Various departments in MPA lead, plan and facilitate port operations and growth. Every team member works to advance and safeguard Singapore's strategic maritime interests, a task that requires walking the ground and listening to feedback from seafarers, companies and industry partners.

## SERVING WITH PRIDE

*Lynn Tan, Manager,  
Operations Policy Unit, MPA*

"I like to think that we pave the way to make things feasible," says Lynn. She and her colleagues craft new maritime policies and review existing ones to ensure that they remain relevant to port operations.

Lynn and her team spend a lot of time talking to port operators to improve efficiency of operations while upholding safety standards. The feather in her cap was the positive feedback received from industry partners after a successful outreach workshop this year.

"MPA has given me opportunities to be involved in many initiatives that are set to lead and transform port operations in Singapore. I relish the thought that I am part of this exciting change," she says.

Lynn believes that succeeding in her role requires a good understanding of ground operations, pragmatism, a meticulous mind and teamwork. "The trick is to learn to piece the relevant information together."

“The process of policymaking has instilled in me the discipline to analyse situations holistically and systematically.”



# A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

As the maritime industry has such a big impact on Singapore's economy, it is important that it is well represented on the global stage.

Singapore has actively served in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council since 1993, and chaired the IMO Council from 2001 to 2003. More than extensive experience and resources, it takes a combination of soft skills and industry know-how to represent the country and successfully champion safe, sustainable and efficient shipping practices.

## MEET THE TRAILBLAZER

*Mary Seet-Cheng, MPA Special Adviser and IMO Maritime Ambassador for Singapore*

Long before it was commonplace to see women in the maritime trade, Ambassador Mary Seet-Cheng was already playing an active part in the industry. She joined MPA as a director in 1997, after an illustrious career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Interacting with and learning about the experiences of shipowners and former seafarers was what I found most rewarding," she says.

Since 2016, she has been the IMO Maritime Ambassador for Singapore, a role in which she works to attract more young people to the industry. She participates in dialogue events and visits youth groups and schools for face time with budding talents. One misconception she wants to dispel is that maritime jobs are "dirty and greasy". She explains that today's ships are high-tech machines that need to be manned by people with brains rather than brawn. And yes, women can thrive just as easily here as in other sectors. The challenge, she says, is to convince ship managers to take on women as members of their crew.



Blazer, **Germain**. Blouse and pinstripe pants, **m.d.m.s.** Earrings, **Swarovski**.

# PORTS OF CALL

**Taking care of customers and employees is as crucial as handling the cargo.**

Singapore's commercial port operators handle several tens of millions of containers and other diverse cargoes every year. But increasing their efficiency and competitiveness requires more than hardware – it also needs “heartware”, such as fostering good customer relations and improving staff engagement.

## GOING THE EXTRA MILE

**Wendy Teo (NEAR RIGHT),  
Vice-President, Human Resources,  
Jurong Port**

Wendy has been a human resource practitioner in the automotive and retail industries, but the maritime sector captured her heart – she has been with Jurong Port since 2006.

While the learning curve was admittedly steep at first, Wendy is now a whizz with the ins and outs of the business, and manages a team of nine staff. The dynamic nature of the industry keeps the petite woman on her toes, and often calls for her to develop practical and creative manpower solutions. This was most evident in 2016, when a business-model change required Jurong Port to take in 250 port workers from various companies at short notice.

Transitioning these workers to a big corporation was a delicate task, but she ensured that they continued to receive daily cash allowances while improving their safety awareness and providing training opportunities. “It was hard work, but I believe that we have succeeded. Our recent survey showed that they are pretty happy working in Jurong Port!” says Wendy.



**STEADY CLIMB TO THE TOP  
Ong Chiew Suan (ABOVE RIGHT),  
Head of Commercial, PSA Corporation**

Such long service is almost unheard of today, but Chiew Suan has spent a good 22 years at PSA, her first employer since she graduated. “It may seem like a long time to be in one company, but I feel that every day is different and my work still challenges me,” she shares.

This high-flier handles wide-ranging responsibilities, including formulating marketing and pricing strategies, cultivating strong customer relationships, driving commercial negotiations and doing competitor analyses.

While no classroom helped to prep

her for her role, Chiew Suan had her parents to thank for her “training”. “My parents used to be business owners. Growing up, I watched them interacting with their customers and creating lasting relationships with them. I learnt so much from them,” she says. Plus, her job rotations in China, Turkey and Portugal helped improve her skills in negotiation and relationship building.

Her advice for succeeding in the maritime industry is simply this: “Be genuine and always work towards win-win outcomes with business partners. I believe that if you love what you are doing, you will be able to do it even better!”

# SAILING TOWARDS SUCCESS

**A tiny island we may be, but Singapore's quality-driven fleet has caught the attention of the world.**

There are more than 4,700 Singapore-registered vessels, carrying at least 88 million tonnes of cargo. It takes a dedicated team to ensure that the vessels and crew meet high standards of safety and function.

## NURTURING PRESENCE

**Kelen Lim (NEAR RIGHT), Senior Manager, Chartering, PCL**

While many of her peers chose different fields or became homemakers, Kelen opted to climb the ranks in what was then the male-dominated field of maritime after her GCE A levels. That was 30 years ago, and she has not looked back once. "No two events are the same, there are so many things to learn, and I get to meet people from different backgrounds," she says.

From crafting documents for container shipping and marketing to crewing and operations, Kelen has dipped her fingers into myriad maritime roles. Today, her speciality is chartering, where she looks out for cargo that fits her company's vessels.

"It is essentially a sales and marketing job," she explains. "Instead of selling a tangible product, we sell space on our vessels."

Her knack for distilling her job description into layman terms explains her reputation as a patient, nurturing character in the company. She is known as the go-to person for young charterers and vessel operators in the team. "Maritime is an industry that will widen your horizons. If you enjoy

meeting people and are hungry for knowledge, this industry has unceasing opportunities for you to learn," she shares.

## SMOOTH OPERATOR

**Farhana binte Samat (ABOVE RIGHT), Ship Operator, Odfjell Singapore**

Ensuring a smooth voyage is not just the job of the crew on board; it requires the combined efforts of charterers, brokers, agents, ship managers, the crew, and suppliers of shipping necessities.

And the person who ties it all together: a ship operator like Farhana.

Farhana is a multitasker who has to communicate with all these parties

daily to ensure that shipments are carried out without a hitch. This may sound like a tall order, but Farhana takes it all in her stride. "Work can be daunting at times as ships are moving 24/7, so it is very important that you don't panic when things get overwhelming," she says.

Amid the bustle of work, Farhana finds joy in hanging out with colleagues who come from all walks of life. "There is a nice mix of backgrounds and experiences, so there isn't any issue about blending in. You get to hear fascinating stories from ex-sailors and shore-based personnel," she shares.



ON KELEN: Dress, Sabrina Goh. Earrings, Swarovski.  
ON FARHANA: Top and skirt, Revolve. Earrings and necklace, Swarovski.  
LOCATION: Distri Singapore.

**CREWING WITH HEART****Tracy Gaowen, Senior Manager,  
Marine Personnel, Fleet Division, PIL**

Tales of life at sea from her seafaring uncle and grandfather intrigued Tracy when she was a little girl. It prompted her to ask herself: “If I had a chance, what would I do to improve the life of a seafarer?”

In her search for an answer, she

worked towards a master’s degree in maritime studies, and is now a senior crewing manager who ensures that ships are manned by qualified and competent crew.

In a sector known for its high manpower turnover, Tracy has earned a reputation for having high crew-retention rates – a real feat, as these individuals come from varied countries

and cultural backgrounds.

She believes one needs to be sensitive to the emotional and psychological needs of the crew. Over the years, she has learnt to listen to feedback post-voyage. “What I’ve learnt is that each crew member is unique, and the element of handling ‘multicultural’ differences plays a very important role.”

“It’s the gratitude I get at the end of the day that keeps me in the job and drives me onwards.”

# DISCOVER MARITIME SERVICES

**Collaborative effort is needed to keep Singapore's maritime industry running at top speed.**

The range of maritime shipping services runs the gamut from marine insurance and law to arbitration, broking and more. These women provide crucial support for the industry in all areas.

## IT'S A SMALL WORLD

*Devika Loiwal, Handy Trader, Cargill*  
Devika may not have done maritime studies, but the industry is a perfect fit for this adventurous soul. The people-centric business energises Devika, who watches supply-and-demand factors of handy (smaller-sized) vessels and takes calculated trading risks for profit. Her role also includes ensuring that high-quality ships reach her clients on time for cargo transportation, and that the supply chain remains smooth.

Today, Devika specialises in the Middle Eastern and Indian markets, which are known to be dynamic and volatile. "Since we are new in the region, it's up to me to lead the focus and find our ground, which I find quite exciting," she says.

But what's even more thrilling for Devika are the endless progression opportunities available in the industry. "I want to build my career as an entrepreneurial trader with a wide range of experiences across vessel sizes and geographic markets, and learn as much as I can about global businesses."

## INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT

*Germaine Ang (NEAR RIGHT), Vessel Operator, Swissmarine Asia*

Armed with a first-class honours degree in maritime business and maritime law, Germaine knew she wanted to be right in the heart of the industry's action. That was why she went after the highly sought-after role of vessel operator.

"It allows me to gain knowledge and hands-on experience," she explains.

A vessel operator plays an important role in the shipping journey. Germaine is in charge of planning a smooth voyage for the vessel to the cargo loading port, and then to the destination port for unloading.

To achieve this, she has to monitor the vessel's itinerary and performance, communicate with charterers and ship captains, plan for refuelling, manage the time spent on loading and unloading cargo, and more. "An eye for detail, good organisational skills and an inquisitive mind are must-haves to be a successful operator," she says.

## SHIP SPOTTER

*Lim Zi Jin (FAR RIGHT), Crewing Executive, POSH Fleet*

Zi Jin's passion for maritime resulted in a curious habit – she attempts to identify different types of ships whenever she is by the sea. When it comes to which vessels excite her today, it's a toss-up between container vessels and POSH's Semi-submersible Accommodation Vessels (SSAVs), which are the largest in the world.

SSAVs can house up to 750 people and may feature cinemas, gyms and game rooms. "It's like a floating hotel and a home away from home for our offshore crew!" she says.

As a crewing executive, Zi Jin looks into the welfare of some 200 crew members on 11 vessels at any one time. She has the autonomy to propose each seafarer's embarkation and disembarkation schedule, a privilege she takes seriously.

"We could do this the mechanical way, or we could go the extra mile by understanding each person's unique circumstances," she shares. This means, at times, allowing them to disembark earlier for family matters.

“The job continues to pique my interest and keeps me focused. You never stop learning.”

Germaine Ang



### TENACITY PAYS

**Gan Sue Ann, Of Counsel,  
Norton Rose Fulbright**

With more than a decade of experience in ship finance and restructuring, Sue Ann has proved that grit and ambition can pay off as a maritime lawyer.

The first few years of her career were tough. Long nights at the office were the norm as she pushed herself to get up to speed. But she ploughed on anyway, subscribing to the belief that “if you don’t help yourself, no one will”.

Her hard work and never-say-die spirit were rewarded. For two consecutive years in 2017 and 2018, Sue Ann was recognised as a Next Generation Lawyer in Singapore’s shipping sector by legal directory *The Legal 500 Asia Pacific*.

As a maritime lawyer who has found success in her niche, Sue Ann firmly believes that women can bring many positive traits to the traditionally male-dominated shipping industry.

With many organisations now recognising that women are key assets, women are now heard and appreciated. “Women bring a different perspective and add diversity to the table. This is valuable as these traits ultimately impact strategy and decision-making” she says.



Wrap dress, Iris & Ink. Earrings, Bimba Y Lola. Shoes, Heatwave. LOCATION: The Co.

ON SHAYNE: Trenchcoat and dress, **Max Mara**. Tassel earrings, **H&M**. Studded pumps, **Heatwave**. ON KIMBERLEY: Turtleneck top and knit top, **Max Mara**. Shoes, **Pedder Red**.



## MARITIME SUPERSTAR

**Shayne Tan (ABOVE LEFT), Underwriter, Shipowners P&I**

As an undergraduate, Shayne might have had an inkling of just how much she would impress in the maritime industry.

She was offered a scholarship for her final year of maritime studies at Nanyang Technological University, and a 12-month trainee programme at Shipowners P&I, a mutual insurance club for shipowners.

Right after her internship, Shayne jumped at the opportunity to join the

company full-time. “I could see myself making marine insurance my lifelong career,” she declares.

Now an underwriter, Shayne covers vessels of members in Australia and New Zealand, and revels in the “art and science” of her role.

The science of underwriting involves loss records of vessels and historical fleet pricings; the art is assessing variables like a vessel’s route, its cargo, and the crew’s expertise. “Every underwriter has a slightly different appreciation and rating method for each vessel,” she explains.

“I like the fact that every single risk is different, and this makes my job exciting and refreshing.”

Kimberley Han

An added perk is the chance to travel up to three times a year to meet members and brokers. This is when Shayne gets up to date with market conditions and members’ operations, and builds positive relationships.

“What amazes me is how one connection always leads to another and another. We get referrals from brokers or local underwriters who trust what we do and are willing to recommend us to their peers,” she says.

## THE GO-GETTER

**Kimberley Han (NEAR LEFT), Assistant Underwriter, MS Amlin**

Diving into the world of marine insurance wasn’t a walk in the park for Kimberley, who studied actuarial science (the study of financial risk). Industry jargon and technical details of vessel machinery drew a blank with her.

But she caught up quickly by attending seminars and conferences, taking examinations and talking to industry pros. “Even today, I’m constantly learning,” she says.

What cemented Kimberley’s interest was her internship experience. She met people from various sectors, including underwriters, brokers and shipowners. “It convinced me that the maritime industry has opportunities for people from various disciplines and backgrounds,” she said.

Despite the technical aspects of the job, the very first thing Kimberley noticed about marine insurance was that it’s a people business. “High focus is placed on providing quality service to our clients,” she adds. Plus, she has to be up to date with industry trends and clients’ risk factors.

# GOING OFFSHORE

**Charting the course for a successful career in this sector.**

The upstream marine, oil and gas sector, commonly referred to as “offshore”, involves exploration, drilling, production and maintenance, plus the construction and installation of facilities in an offshore marine environment. It’s a dynamic industry that employs more than 90,000 people in Singapore. Those who thrive in it owe it to hard work, grit and a whole lot of chutzpah.

## **TOUGH AS NAILS**

***Sophia Low, Director & Lead Shipbroker, M3 Marine Offshore Brokers***

Talk to Sophia about towing offshore drilling rigs, remotely operated subsea vehicles and saturation diving vessels, and she will chat up a storm with you. Her ease with technical jargon comes from her previous job as an offshore drilling engineer, and her subsequent years as a shipbroker.

Her current role entails broking offshore supply vessels for charter, sale and purchase in the offshore marine oil and gas industry. She also manages a team of shipbrokers, and is involved in vessel valuations for owners, banks, equity funds, and mergers and acquisitions.

Sophia’s resilience showed from her very first project, which remains etched on her mind. It was a one-day vessel charter that yielded just US\$75 (S\$100) to the brokerage. She worked the contract until 4am that day, despite the small returns. This is a story she repeats often to junior brokers embarking on a career in the industry. “This client eventually became a long-term repeat client with numerous lucrative deals throughout the years. You should never be too proud to take on small deals even when you are successful. Somebody will always remember the help you rendered to them when they were in need,” she says.



Lace trenchcoat and dress, **m.d.m.s.** Shoes, **Bimba Y Lola** LOCATION: **The Co.**

# FOLLOW THE RULES

**Classification work is done to protect work crews, ships and the environment, and is based on rigorous standards.**

Establishing and maintaining high technical standards for safe shipping and clean seas are why classification societies play such an important role in the industry.

## TOP IN CLASS

**Charmaine Pang, Principal Engineer, Singapore Engineering Services, American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)**

Since joining the company in 2006, Charmaine has risen through the ranks from plan approval engineer to her current position. She now heads a team of five engineers to identify and resolve engineering issues of vessels, and ensure timely delivery to clients.

The job has brought Charmaine lots of satisfaction over the years. "Knowing that my job ensures classed vessels under our care can safely operate and are in compliance with international standards gives me a sense of purpose," she says. One of the most memorable projects Charmaine handled was the successful launch of the first liquefied natural gas-fuelled vessel in Singapore.

As a female shipping engineer, Charmaine believes hard work is the key to winning over peers and stakeholders. She took a part-time Master of Science in Maritime Studies with a scholarship from ABS and MPA in 2011, and proved her worth when she topped the cohort.

“Regardless of gender, one who possesses the right attitude towards work and the ability to provide practical solutions to problems will make a great maritime engineer.”

# NURTURING FUTURE TALENTS

To develop Singapore as an international maritime centre, our schools are hard at work grooming the next generation of industry professionals.

The Singapore Maritime Academy (SMA) at Singapore Polytechnic (SP) offers maritime diplomas and internship opportunities, while the MaritimeONE Scholarship programme administered by the Singapore Maritime Foundation (SMF) gives students a leg up with funding, and networking opportunities with industry professionals.

## LET'S TALK DOLLARS AND SENSE

*Professor Annie Koh, Vice-President, Office of Business Development and Professor of Finance (Practice), Singapore Management University (SMU)*

Prof Koh is a highly respected figure in the field of international finance who has also served on the advisory committee of SMA. At SMU, she and her colleagues steer the Maritime Economics Track, a cluster of courses within the economics major. Modules include maritime economics and ship finance, port economics and management, and shipping business. Students also get funding from MPA and have the opportunity to participate in an exchange programme with the Copenhagen Business School.

The industry is evolving and digitalising quickly, says Prof Koh, and education will need to cover the softer business aspects of the job to “future-proof” our talents. Prof Koh’s finance background comes in handy when explaining the big picture to her students. “Knowledge in international finance helps maritime students understand the supply chain and the inherent financing and business risks,” she explains.



Suit, **Massimo Dutti**. Shirt and necklace, **Bimba Y Lola**. Pumps, **Heatwave**.

**DESTINED FOR MARITIME***Cathy Cong, Lecturer, SMA*

It certainly wasn't by accident that Cathy entered the shipbuilding industry. Both her parents worked in the line – her dad had his own marine consultancy, while her mum was in port operations – and she believed from the get-go that she was going to be at least equal to, if not better than, her male counterparts.

Armed with a first-class honours degree, Cathy became a naval architect with a renowned firm. After six years, she took a dip into teaching in SMA. What was supposed to be a part-time gig became a full-time passion.

“I felt a satisfaction I had never experienced before, sharing my knowledge and experience with the students and seeing them progress,” she says.

Her students now span a wide range of ages, from 17 to over 50. On top of teaching, she works closely with the industry to keep ahead of the curve when designing the school's curriculum.

To inspire her students to stay the path, Cathy shares the variety of jobs available in the industry and success cases of SMA alumni. She also encourages them to do a visualising exercise, to picture themselves in 10 years' time in their ideal role within the industry.

“Women stand an equal chance to progress and succeed, especially in Singapore. We have to believe in our capabilities and be confident enough to take up challenges.”





# THE MARITIME INDUSTRY AND ITS MANY OPPORTUNITIES

