Women In Marine: Confidence, Clarity and Connection at Southampton International Boat Show

LA Marine was proud to be one of the sponsors of the Women in Marine event alongside Barton Marine, DF Capital and Haven Knox Johnson. Returning to the Southampton International Boat Show on Wednesday 24th September, the event brought together a strong panel of voices and an engaged audience for an afternoon of conversation, reflection and inspiration. Organised by British Marine and hosted at the Quarterdeck Bar & Restaurant, the session highlighted the experiences of women working across the sector, while also opening the door to frank discussions about confidence, career progression and what it really takes to thrive in an industry where representation is still uneven.

This year's theme - "Diverse Talent in Action: Leadership, Representation and Career Progression in the Marine Industry" - set the tone for a discussion that was as personal as it was practical. Panelists, Captain Claire Thompson, marine stuntwoman Sarah Donohue, HR Officer Claire Abraham and joint Managing Director and Owner of ADPR Kate O'Sullivan, shared their career journeys and the lessons they had taken from them, weaving in stories of strength, self-belief and the importance of support along the way with the session compared by Nicky Vaux 'The Boat Princess'.

One thread that ran through the conversation was the idea of transparency. Drawing comparisons with military careers, where promotions and pathways are clearly defined and merit-based, the panel asked how much businesses in the marine industry could learn from this approach. The clarity of knowing where you stand and what is expected of you, they suggested, helps to eliminate the creeping doubt of imposter syndrome. Without it, self-belief can become shaky, and reassurance is often sought from others.

Failure, too, was reframed as an essential part of progress. "Even if you do it wrong, push yourself through," was the advice shared. Mistakes were seen not as dead ends, but as important stepping stones. Finding the courage to own them, to name them, and to learn from them was described as a strength, not a weakness. It was a point that resonated strongly across the room: no growth comes without falling, and sometimes the best way forward is simply to keep moving, even when panic sets in.

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The importance of support and having allies also came through powerfully. For some, finding the right mentor had been a turning point; for others, it was simply the presence of someone who believed in them when they didn't believe in themselves. That support doesn't always need to come from a senior figure - it can be a colleague, a friend, or a family member - but having someone to remind you of your achievements was seen as invaluable. Equally, the panel stressed, men's support is vital too, with allyship across genders creating the kind of inclusive environments in which talent can truly thrive.

Perhaps the most striking moment of the afternoon came with a reference to Aristotle's famous line: "There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." It was a reminder that negativity and judgement are inevitable if you are visible, ambitious, or striving for more - but that the alternative, shrinking back and doing nothing, is far worse.

The takeaways felt both simple and profound. Life and work, one speaker suggested, are like learning to ride a bike: you cannot do it without falling. Growth comes from getting back up, learning from the mistakes, and finding your rhythm again. The collective message was one of resilience, encouragement and self-belief - themes that carried beyond the panel and into the conversations and connections made throughout the room.

The Women in Marine event once again proved itself to be more than a discussion - it was an exchange of stories, experiences and reminders that no one negotiates this industry alone. Supporting the charity Room to Read, which works to end illiteracy and gender inequality through girls' education, the event highlighted the value of opening doors, lifting others up and creating opportunities for the next generation.

The audience was encouraged to reach out to seven people and ask them to write five words that describe them, and to reflect on the experience of seeing themselves through others' eyes.

Everyone left with something - whether a renewed sense of confidence, a fresh perspective on leadership, or simply the reassurance that challenges are shared and surmountable. Above all, it was a celebration of women shaping the future of the marine industry, with a powerful reminder that progress is made not by doing nothing, but by speaking up, stepping forward and being something.

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