

COMPASS FEMALE MENTORSHIP NETWORK

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COMPASS proposes to develop an effective mentorship and networking model for women in the marine transportation industry.

“Mentoring ... is a personal enhancement strategy whereby one individual facilitates the development of another by sharing known resources, expertise, values, skills, perspectives, attitudes and proficiencies.” It also provides

benefits for the mentor (experienced women who mentor feel a “profound sense of wanting to give back to the community, to educate others about their work and help out in some tangible way”) and quantifiable benefits to employers, including “improving employee retention, managing organizational change, bridging competency gaps, rejuvenating mid-career employees, developing managers, helping employees obtain formal certification and increasing the representation of minority interests.” (*Women: An Unmined Resource – A Report on Female Participation within BC’s Mineral Exploration and Mining Industry*, p. 43)

Given the extent of their current underrepresentation in the marine transportation industry and their relative youth, a mentoring and networking model would provide significant benefits to female marine transportation professionals.

In 2014, COMPASS conducted a *Survey of Female Marine Transportation Professionals*. While the 100 females who responded to the survey do not constitute a sample size large enough to generalize the results to the population as a whole, the survey does provide the views of 100 women working in marine transportation professions; and the survey findings do provide some valuable insights relating to mentorship and networking.



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The fact that 55% of all respondents and 57% of those who have held seagoing-only positions were under the age of 35 and that 71% reported being employed in a seagoing position for less than 10 years illustrates their relative youth and short time in the industry.

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A COMPASS *Survey of Seasoned Mariners*, also conducted in 2014, drew responses from 229 mariners, 93% of whom were male. Of the survey respondents, only 23% were under 35 years of age, 50% were 45 or older, and 20% were 55 or older. Of the 222 respondents who indicated how long they had been or were currently employed at sea, almost 75% reported being employed at sea for more than 10 years; and 57% reported being employed at sea for 15 years or more. Again, the survey sample size is not large enough to generalize findings to the whole population, but the findings do clearly suggest that at this time male mariners are significantly older and more experienced than their female counterparts.



These findings reinforce the critical need for and benefit of an effective mentorship and networking mechanism for this group of young women working in non-traditional occupations in an industry sector dominated by men. Of the female marine transportation professionals responding to a COMPASS survey

question on mentorship, 91.6% indicated that mentorship with other women would assist women to remain in and advance their careers in the marine transportation industry.

HRDC's *Good Practices for Employers Covered by the Employment Equity Act* (May 7, 2001) points out that "mentoring and networking are increasingly being used as a measure to increase retention rates" and that "mentoring of new employees has encouraged sensitivity towards diversity and helped designated group members feel they are important to the workforce. As well, they were able to gain insight into the 'unwritten rules' which could lead to promotion."

Bev Mackenzie's paper, "The 'Leaking Pipeline': Examining and Addressing the Loss of Women at Consecutive Career Stages in Marine Engineering, Science, and Technology," published in the World Maritime University's *Maritime Women: Global Leadership*, points out that there is "strong support for mentoring schemes and evidence that it encourages women to apply for promotions and other opportunities. In addition, networking is seen as extremely important." (p. 78)

When the proposed COMPASS Women's Mentorship Network has been established and tested, it can be evaluated for potential expansion to, or adaptation for, other underrepresented groups within marine transportation. It may well be adaptable also to other industry sectors dealing with similar employment equity issues.

