

Women in Marine Industry Businesses: An Exploration of Career Paths

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PANELISTS

Heather Hovanec, Aquidneck Custom Composites

Heather Hovanec is a boat builder with Aquidneck Custom Composites and the first female on their team. Having attended Johnson & Wales University, Heather worked for 15 years in the food industry, retail and with various equestrian activities. Then she took a leap of faith in her abilities and joined the experienced team at Aquidneck Custom Composites. Based in Bristol, the company recruited boat builders from the hi-tech world of grand-prix racing to start their operation—and Heather joined a team with collective experience that includes the building of high-performance boats that have competed in the America's Cup, Volvo Ocean Race, Whitbread Round-the-World Race, and other racing craft such as IMS boats and Transpac 50s. Heather's first major project was being a member of the team that built the performance luxury 72-foot catamaran *Skylark*, which was launched earlier this year.

Martha Parker, Team One Newport

Martha Parker has been a ground-breaker in the marine industry, both as a woman competing as part of the crew in grand-prix sailing competition and as founder and owner of her own company, Team One Newport. Martha grew up sailing in the Junior Yacht Racing Association (JYRA) of Long Island Sound. She raced Blue Jays, cruised on her family's Irwin Competition 37, and taught sailing at Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club on Centre Island, New York. She discovered her passion for sailing during those early years and used that passion to forge her own path as a competitive sailor and businesswoman. Team One Newport has been a leading outfitter for the world's top sailors, racers, teams, and businesses since its inception in 1985. Martha's vision was to start a company that focused exclusively on clothing for sailors and to also find and develop clothing that fit women sailors. Many Rhode Island locals have started their marine industry careers working at her company.

Tara Regan, The Hinckley Company

Tara Regan is the first woman to be hired as a general manager for The Hinckley Company. She has been the manager at the Southwest and Northeast Harbor Hinckley yards in Maine and is now based at the yard in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Prior to working at The Hinckley Company, she gained experience as the marina manager at the largest full-service boat yard in Cape Cod, Kingman Yacht Center. In an interview with *Down East* magazine, Tara talked about her beginnings: "I've been on the water my entire life. When I was a kid, I'd take my little Sunfish across Buzzards Bay in Massachusetts in all sorts of weather and worry my mom. I started working at the local marina pumping gas and just worked my way up."

Kate Wilson, risingT Media

Kate Wilson first started in the marine industry working for Oracle Team USA and was part of the winning 34th America's Cup campaign. Since then, she has worked with two Volvo Ocean Race teams: as marketing coordinator for Team Alvimedica, and press officer for Vestas 11th Hour Racing. In between, as owner and founder of marketing & communications firm risingT media, she manages a wealth of clients with ranging needs -- from websites, to online education programs, marketing collateral, event production, and social media management. A passionate sailor and educator, Kate has coached the local high school teams for years and designed a summer program that focused on both sailing and environmental education for elementary and middle school students. She was named the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association's Boater of the Year for 2016.

MODERATOR**Holly Ashton, IYRS School of Technology & Trades**

Holly Ashton is a Rhode Island native who has been working in education and training in the marine industry for the past decade. She has a Masters of Education degree in counseling and a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing, both from Providence College, and is a Gallup Certified Strengths Coach. Holly currently works at IYRS School of Technology & Trades where she serves as director of program & career development. For the past seven years, Holly has had the pleasure of working with students at IYRS pursuing careers in the marine trades, composites manufacturing, and digital modeling and fabrication industries. In addition to her work at IYRS, she is on the board of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association and serves as chair for the Education & Training Committee; she also serves as co-president of the Rhode Island Career Development Association. Holly lives in Newport and spends her free time sailing and skiing.