

Sailing Ahead with Grace and Grit: Meet Alfa Laval China's Pioneer Female Commissioning Engineer

In the traditionally male-dominated field of on-site service engineering, Alfa Laval China has welcomed a remarkable female engineer— Huiyu Li. As the company's first female commissioning engineer, she has carved out her own niche with resilience and unwavering dedication. Recently, we conducted an in-depth interview to gain a comprehensive understanding of her career growth, journey, and unique insights into the industry's future.

Career Growth and Adaptation: Bridging Theory and Practice

Q: What motivated you to pursue a career in marine commissioning engineering, a field traditionally dominated by men? How did your marine engineering background help you adapt quickly?

A: My lifelong fascination with the ocean and ships planted a seed in my heart, leading me to choose marine engineering as my major. During university, I systematically studied core courses such as Marine Power Plants and Marine Automation, which not only provided me with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of engine room environments and components but also laid a solid theoretical foundation for my future work. Upon joining Alfa Laval, I initially felt a bit overwhelmed by the company's complex and advanced marine equipment. However, I was fortunate to have access to a comprehensive training program that covered everything from product principles to debugging techniques. I made full use of these resources, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical operations to swiftly transform bookish knowledge into problem-solving skills.

Q: What was the biggest professional challenge you faced during your initial period? How did you overcome it?

A: Integrating theoretical knowledge with product practice was undoubtedly my greatest challenge. Our company organized comprehensive and meticulous onboarding training, among which the content of safety training left a deep impression on me. It greatly helped enhance my safety awareness, making me understand that safety is of utmost importance in subsequent practical operations and laying a solid foundation for the smooth conduct of my subsequent work. Alfa Laval's Marine products come in a wide variety, each with its unique debugging methods and precautions. To quickly master these skills, I actively participated in internal training, studied product diagrams and schematics, and sought to understand every piece of equipment thoroughly. Simultaneously, I proactively sought guidance from experienced mentors, following them to the field for hands-on operations and observing how they handled various emergencies. After work, I continued to review the day's learnings to deepen my understanding and ensure continuous skill enhancement. Through these efforts, I

gradually overcame the initial difficulties and became an engineer capable of independently undertaking debugging tasks.

Challenges and Coping Strategies: Shining Brightly in Adversity

Q: In the shipyard environment, women may face unique challenges related to physiological needs or physical demands. How do you balance these needs with maintaining work efficiency?

A: The shipyard environment is indeed challenging, especially during summer heatwaves when engine room temperatures soar, creating an extremely harsh working environment. As a woman, I do face special challenges, such as physiological needs and physical limitations. To minimize restroom visits, I try to control my water intake, but this does not mean I neglect my health needs. In fact, I have received extensive support and assistance from shipyard colleagues, who are always ready to lend a hand when I need it. Facing physical demands, I actively seek assistive tools, ensuring efficient work. Simultaneously, I focus on physical exercise to improve my stamina and better adapt to the working environment.

Q: Have any colleagues or clients questioned your capabilities due to your gender? How did you respond?

A: Initially, some colleagues expressed surprise at my gender and even questioned my ability to handle the job. Facing these doubts, I chose to prove myself through actions. I maintained a professional work attitude, taking every debugging task seriously and striving for perfection. Now, they no longer focus on my gender but value my professional abilities and work attitude more.

Diversity Experience and Recommendations: Driving Team and Industry Progress

Q: How do you perceive the impact of team diversity on project innovation and execution efficiency?

A: Team diversity plays a crucial role in enhancing project innovation and execution efficiency. Members from diverse backgrounds bring varied perspectives and ways of thinking, which helps spark new solutions and creative ideas. In the marine service field, we often encounter various complex technical problems and challenges. A diverse team can analyze problems from multiple angles and propose more comprehensive and effective solutions. Simultaneously, a diverse team also enhances team cohesion and collaboration, improving execution efficiency.

Q: If you were a hiring manager, what strategies would you use to attract more women to technical roles?

A: If I were fortunate enough to become a hiring manager, I would adopt multiple strategies to attract more women to technical roles. Firstly, I would simplify job descriptions, avoiding overly professional or obscure terminology to make it easier for female applicants to understand the job content and requirements. Secondly, I would use video formats to visually showcase engineers' work and shipyard environments, giving applicants a more intuitive understanding of the working environment. Additionally, I would emphasize non-material benefits such as onboarding training and career development to show female applicants the growth prospects and opportunities within the company. Finally, showcasing successful female career cases within the company serves as effective motivation, allowing female applicants to see their growth path and possibilities within the company.

Personal Growth and Reflections: Thriving Amidst Challenges

Q: What has been your greatest personal growth during this past year?

A: This past year has been filled with challenges and growth for me. I have transformed from a passive task-acceptor to an active problem-solver. Facing problems, I no longer rely on others' guidance but can think independently and find solutions. This growth is not only reflected in professional skills but also in mindset and way of thinking. I have become more confident, resilient, and independent, better equipped to handle various challenges and pressures.

Q: If you could describe this year with three words, what would they be and why?

A: If I had to describe this year with three words, I would choose "Solid," "Breakthrough," and "Warmth." Solid, because I have continuously learned and accumulated, integrating theoretical knowledge with practice to lay a solid foundation; Breakthrough, because I have overcome initial difficulties and challenges, achieving a transformation from passive to active, and my character has become more resilient and independent; Warmth, because I have felt endless care and support within the Alfa Laval family, with colleagues and leaders providing me with great help and encouragement.

Outlook and Plans: Marching Towards Higher Goals

Q: What are your career plans for the next 3-5 years?

A: I have clear and specific goals for my career plans over the next 3-5 years. In the next 1-2 years, I will continue to delve into fieldwork, continuously improving my mechanical and electrical knowledge to independently debug more complex and advanced marine equipment. Within 2-3 years, I aspire to become a reviewing role, providing guidance and support to other engineers and helping them grow rapidly. In the long run, I aim to expand my

professional boundaries and become a mentor, contributing to the company and industry's development.

Q: As a representative of the company's diversity initiatives, what message would you like to share with other female professionals or the company?

A: As a representative of the company's diversity initiatives, I would like to say to other female professionals: Do not be confined by gender labels; women can equally showcase their talents and charm in outdoor work settings. The key lies in daring to try and persevere, believing in your ability to overcome all difficulties and challenges. Simultaneously, I would like to say to the company: Please continue to optimize the working environment for female employees, providing more support and convenience to enable them to play a greater role and value within the company.

Q: If you could design a "female-friendly" shipyard, what elements would you include?

A: If I were to design a "female-friendly" shipyard, I would consider incorporating the following elements: Firstly, adding clean and hygienic restrooms and rest areas for women to provide a more comfortable and convenient resting environment; Secondly, setting up air-conditioned rest areas exclusively for women to offer a cool resting place in high-temperature environments; Finally, establishing lactation rooms and other facilities to provide convenience for female employees in need. Through these measures, I hope to create a more friendly, inclusive, and comfortable working environment, allowing female employees to work with peace of mind and joy in the shipyard.

Words from department manager

Recruiting female commissioning engineers represents a key initiative for our team to advance both self-awareness and diversity. This effort has been strongly supported and encouraged by James Le, President of the Marine Division at Alfa Laval China. Over the past year, Huiyu Li has delivered outstanding performance, earning widespread recognition and praise from customers. Some have even proactively commended Alfa Laval's ongoing commitment to diversity. This experience confirms that in the traditionally male-dominated field of on-site technical services, women can excel through professionalism, diligence, and capability—demonstrating equal competence and dedication.

– Zhenyu Jiang, Commissioning & IMS China Site Manager

Words from HRBP

As Alfa Laval China's first female commissioning engineer, Huiyu has broken industry barriers and demonstrated through her professionalism and resilience that there are no gender boundaries in technical fields. Her journey is paving the way for future generations. We look

forward to her continuing to elevate service standards through her unique perspective, blending technical excellence with the distinctive strengths that women bring to the profession.

– Violette Yang, HRBP of Marine Division