

SHE OF CHANGE

Magazine by Maritime SheEO



Padmini Mellacheruvu

Groundbreaker framing Hydrogen Ship Rules

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CLEAN MARINE SHIPPING – FOCUSING ON DECARBONISATION & DIGITISATION IN THE MARITIME WORLD



Isabela Tatu
Co-Founder, Clean
Marine Shipping

Can you share with us a brief overview of your background and what inspired you to pursue a career in Clean Marine Shipping?

I've been navigating the realms of trading, energy, shipping, and climate change advocacy for over 25 years now.

My journey into this world began unexpectedly during my teenage years when I came across some fascinating articles regarding export and import. Little did I know that this was my entry point into the world of trading, as 8 years later I landed my first trading position with one of the largest global commodities trading houses, which had an office in Romania.

In the Romanian office, we were exporting and shipping metals across the world; this was the first time I chartered and operated a ship carrying iron scrap. Born in Romania, a country just emerging from the shadows of communism, the concept of trading was both exhilarating and pioneering and I loved every minute of it.

The dream to explore life beyond

Romania's borders, to see what freedom felt like, led me to move to the UK in 2000. Here, I expanded my expertise to oil cargoes, working as an operator, broker, and trader, which led me to bunker fuel and work with ship owners all around the world.

In 2017, I made a significant career change, leaving corporate life to focus on decarbonisation and digitisation in the maritime industry. It was during this period that I discovered a profound passion for renewable energies, particularly hydrogen fuel technology.

This passion led to the co-founding of Clean Marine Shipping (CMS) alongside two of my mentors who have guided me through two decades of my career. CMS is at the forefront of developing cutting-edge hydrogen fuel cell technology for marine applications, to make these sustainable solutions available to communities throughout the world.

What has been the most rewarding

project or achievement in your career so far, and why?

Taking on the role of manager of the London Trading Supply team between 2006 and 2016—a job that involved both trading and physical operations—was one of the most fulfilling achievements of my professional life.

With the unwavering support and encouragement of my management team, predominantly men, I took on the challenge of forming and leading the team. What made this achievement so special was not just the team itself but its composition and result: a team of 14 people with a perfect balance of gender representation and diversity.

It was a unique situation because when I became manager, I had no idea how to manage people. I was an excellent trader, however, I requested coaching assistance from my manager, which he provided. With the help of a coach, managing and leading people became my passion.



How do you stay motivated and creative in your work?

My motivation comes from a deep passion for my work and the belief in a harmonious coexistence between humans and our planet. This passion is the fuel that ignites my creativity and drives me to push forward, even when faced with challenges. The love I hold for nature, the Earth, and our oceans deeply influences my professional endeavours, especially within the shipping industry. Shipping, in my eyes, is more than just a means of transporting goods; it's a vital link that connects people, cultures, and economies across the globe.

The idea that we can co-live and co-create with our planet isn't just a dream; it's a vision I'm committed to making a reality through my work. By focusing on sustainable practices and innovations in shipping, I aim to contribute to a future where the industry not only thrives but does so in a way that respects and preserves the natural world.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in your career, and how did you overcome them?

Transitioning from the role of a trader to a manager posed some of the most significant challenges in my career. Stepping into a leadership position required a shift in mindset and approach, as I moved from focusing solely on trading strategies and execution to managing a team with diverse personalities, skills, and expectations. This change brought with it the task of balancing team dynamics,

motivating individuals, and ensuring productivity—all while maintaining my own performance standards.

Recognising the complexity of these challenges, I turned to my management for guidance and support. Their willingness to provide 1:1 coaching was invaluable, offering me personalised advice and strategies to navigate my new role effectively.

Building a support network was crucial in overcoming the challenges of my transition. With the assistance I received from work colleagues and management, I sought the wisdom and perspective of my family, especially my elder brothers. This blend of professional guidance and personal support played a pivotal role in my development as a leader.

What advice would you give to aspiring professionals looking to succeed in your industry?

For those aspiring to carve out a successful path in our industry, my first piece of advice is to dive deep into your passions within this field. Start by exploring different roles and areas—this exploration is key to discovering what truly resonates with you and where your strengths can be best applied.

Finding a mentor is another vital step. Look for someone whose career path inspires you and who embodies the qualities you admire. A good mentor can provide invaluable guidance, share insights from their journey, and offer

support as you navigate your path. Cultivate a mindset of curiosity to learn. Engage actively by reading industry-related materials, attending workshops, and participating in discussions.

Ask questions, seek answers, and never stop expanding your knowledge base. Embracing your mistakes is also essential. In all our journeys, errors are inevitable, but they present valuable learning opportunities. Above all, stay true to your values and principles. Integrity, honesty, and respect are the basis of any professional and personal foundation.



How do you balance your personal and professional life, and what activities do you enjoy outside of work?

Balancing my personal and professional life is an art form that I've cultivated with care, understanding that both spheres are essential for my well-being and happiness. At the core of my approach to balance is a deep-rooted practice of gratitude, meditation, and chanting. These practices ground me, providing a sense of calm and clarity that permeates both my work and personal life and helps me deal with all the challenges or difficulties I encounter.

This year, I've revisited one of my earliest passions: literature. It's been a journey back to the roots of my love for reading and writing, rediscovering the joy and fulfillment that comes from immersing myself in the world of words. Literature has always held a special place in my heart, serving as a source of inspiration, reflection, and escape.

Since the pandemic, I spent much more time in Romania, with my family, especially my mother, and surrounded by our dogs and cats in our countryside home where I have my office, brings a unique joy and comfort that is hard to put into words. These moments, set against the backdrop of simplicity and natural beauty, remind me of the pure, uncomplicated pleasures life has to offer. The companionship and unconditional love I receive from my direct and extended family are not only precious but deeply rejuvenating.

Conversely, life in the UK presents a vibrant contrast, imbued with the buzz of a multicultural environment that's always on the go. It's a place of continuous learning, where meeting new people and immersing in diverse cultures and ideas provide a stimulating backdrop to my daily life. It fuels my love for discovery, growth, and the excitement of navigating a dynamic, ever-evolving landscape.

Romania grounds me, wrapping me in the warmth of home and the familiarity of unconditional love, while the UK propels me forward, challenging me to expand my horizons and embrace the endless possibilities of a global community. This

blend of serene joy and vibrant engagement shapes my journey, offering the best of both worlds and a fuller, more rounded perspective on life.



What are some trends or changes that you foresee in the near future?

Several key trends and changes are emerging, driven by technological advances, environmental concerns, and shifting global trade dynamics. Here's an expanded view of what I foresee:

Decarbonisation and Green Shipping:

With climate change at the forefront of global concerns, the shipping industry is under increasing pressure to reduce its carbon footprint. This trend is leading to greater investment in green technologies, such as hydrogen fuel cells, LNG-powered vessels, and wind-assisted propulsion.

Digitalisation and Smart Technologies:

The adoption of digital technologies is transforming the shipping industry, making operations more efficient and transparent. From blockchain for secure and transparent documentation to AI and IoT for optimising route planning and

vessel maintenance, these advancements set new standards for efficiency and safety.

Supply Chain Resilience: Recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the vulnerabilities in global supply chains. In response, the shipping industry is likely to focus more on building resilience through diversified routes, enhanced risk management strategies, and closer collaboration within the supply chain.

Cybersecurity Enhancements: As the industry becomes increasingly digitised, the risk of cyber-attacks grows. Shipping companies need to invest in robust cybersecurity measures to protect their operations, data, and communications from threats.

Increased Focus on Crew Welfare: The challenges faced by seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought crew welfare into the spotlight. Going forward, the industry is likely to place a greater emphasis on the health and well-being of crew members, including better onboard conditions, mental health support, and more efficient crew changes.

Innovations in Containerisation and Logistics: With e-commerce growing, the demand for faster, more efficient shipping of goods is increasing. Innovations in container tracking and management, as well as improvements in logistics and last-mile delivery, will be key areas of focus.



Lastly, what legacy do you hope to leave through your work and contributions to your field?

I dream of a society where everyone can pursue their dreams and passions without the constraints of financial gains or losses, a world where gender equality is realised and where we harmoniously coexist and co-create with our planet and the universe.