

CASE STUDY: Trudi Bowen, Business Systems Manager, Morganstone



1. Please explain how you first got into construction?

I completed a business degree, majoring in marketing, and took up a role as a Business Development Assistant working for a construction company based in Llanelli. My priority was to secure a role which aligned to my degree. I didn't deliberately target any industry - a construction company had an opportunity that I was interested in so I applied.

2. Did you always have an interest in this area as a child or did you develop an interest as you got older?

My interest developed as I spent longer in the industry and was exposed to the diversity of opportunities that the construction industry presented. I am not an engineer, but I can't walk by a construction project without admiring the engineering and innovation that is unfolding in front of me. This has come from many years of understanding and appreciating how things happen in the construction industry.

3. How long have you worked in your present role with Morganstone? What do you like about your role? Please give a brief outline of your past roles and career.

I have worked in my present role at Morganstone for 14 months, having performed a similar role in the construction industry for over 20 years. The thing I like most about the industry is that there are no barriers to being considered for opportunities, it is down to your ability to perform the role.

I started in the construction industry over 20 years ago working as a personal assistant to a Business Development Manager. The role required me to be organised and a good communicator. After two years of successfully fulfilling this role the company was looking for someone to work with project teams to develop and manage their quality systems. This was the turning point in my career. It was this opportunity that opened the door to the rest of my career and the first step in moving from administration to management. I jumped at the chance to move into a management role and thrived on the opportunity to make a difference in the organisation by developing, implementing and training out new business quality systems. The company was very supportive and trained me well to enable me to fulfil this role and leave a positive legacy over a number of years.

I performed a similar role in the industry, working for three construction companies over a period of 20-plus years, all of whom were large or fast growing national construction companies. My ability to develop, implement, audit and train quality, safety and environmental systems has been refined over the years, supported by each organisation I have worked for.

4. What are people's reactions when they hear you work in construction? Are they surprised/supportive/intrigued?

People who work outside the industry are still surprised that I work in the construction industry and even more surprised that I hold a management position. I recall a time when I was at an event with the construction company I was working for; a colleague's wife asked me what my husband did for the company and she appeared surprised when I informed her that it was actually *me* who worked for the company. When I went on to explain my role she appeared even more surprised. I think the stereotypes still exist outside of the industry but this is not the case within the industry as there are a number of women now fulfilling a similar role to myself in the industry.

5. What do you like about your current role and working as a female within the construction industry?

In my current role I get to access all areas of the business, meet a large number of people and initiate change and improvement in the business. Working with my team I feel that I am able to truly make a positive difference in how we undertake our business. The fact that I am female makes no difference to me.

No longer in the minority

I have to note that being a woman in the construction industry has never held me back but I have seen a great deal of change in the industry. Twenty years ago I used to be the lone female in meetings but this has now changed and I am no longer in the minority at meetings or site visits.

Having reached the position of Head of Health, Safety, Environment and Quality at a national construction company, I decided to consider a change and took up an opportunity with an international manufacturing company, performing a similar role. After a number of months, I realised that the manufacturing industry was not for me and I took the opportunity to come back into construction by joining Morganstone. Having met with Ian Morgan the Managing Director, I felt that I would be able to work with the team and make a positive difference to a rapidly growing company.

I thrive on the dynamic, demanding and rewarding environment that is provided by the construction industry.

6. Do you think the industry does enough to support women in construction, such as flexible working, maternity pay, promotions etc.?

I have had two children and have managed to hold down a full time role in the construction industry throughout. I have been provided with full support and flexibility from all of my employers.

In every role I have held and with every company I have worked, I have been promoted into a management role as a result of my achievements, for which I am extremely proud. I have held a number of senior positions including National Improvement Manager, sitting on the Management Board for an international construction company. Also as Head of Health,

Safety, Environment and Quality at a national construction company, again working with a Senior Management team.

The downside of the industry is the issue of maternity pay; historically the industry only pays statutory maternity pay which is in stark contrast to those working in other sectors. This can prove to be very difficult for some women.

7. What advice would you give to other women or girls who might be considering a career in construction?

Go for it – grab every opportunity that presents itself! You will be supported to succeed in the construction industry. You don't truly realise the opportunities open to you in the construction industry until you start working in it. The construction industry is full of varying sizes of businesses, so the functions, roles and opportunities that are available in other sectors exist in construction, with the added opportunity of technical and trade roles.

8. Do you think there is enough done at school level to encourage girls to choose the right subject to go into a construction-related role?

There isn't enough done to promote the diversity of roles and to breakdown the stereotypes that people outside the industry believe still exist.

9. Going forward, how do you think the industry could change to encourage more women into the industry?

The industry is not very good at promoting itself and its achievements. More visibility and engagement from inspirational women from inside the construction industry is the way forward.