



**Spotlight on...**  
women in construction

**CONSIDERATE  
CONSTRUCTORS  
SCHEME**

## Case Study: L & Q

### Leanne O'Donovan - Assistant Site Manager

#### 1. WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED YOU TO WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE JOB AND WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DID YOU REQUIRE?

I never initially knew about the potential job opportunities within the construction industry whilst at school and all the way up until university. I studied Property and Planning at university, aiming to become either a valuation or development surveyor. In my 2nd year I was required to complete work experience, where I gained a response back from L&Q offering a 2-week working placement as an Assistant Site Manager on one of their construction sites. The 2 weeks were enough to make me fall in love with the industry and I kept in contact for future jobs. I applied for a job as a Graduate Site Manager the following year at L&Q even though my degree was not construction related my application was successful. Three years on I would never look back at the decision I made to work as an onsite manager in the construction industry.

#### 2. TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE. WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? WHAT DO YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT THE JOB?

I'm currently an Assistant Site Manager at a project in Croydon called Addiscombe Oaks which I've been on from the very beginning of the development. My day to day varies, usually encountering unexpected questions such as design questions that require a quick answer and solution to carry on the works. One day I will be walking around H&S onsite, next the building control inspection and the following, conducting a quality inspection on the electrical first fix installation.



The thing I love most about my job would be the ability to manage my own time and my workload as it changes from day to day. I do not have a set routine and every day is completely different to the next. I can spend most of my day out onsite in a more practical environment rather than being in the office which is a huge benefit in my eyes.

One thing I dislike about my job would be a contradiction to above. As my job involves being onsite most of the day, this comes with keeping up with the British weather and adapting to keep comfortable. I have worked all seasons, through the snow, high winds, thunderstorms and extreme heat conditions.

### **3. WHAT QUALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO DO YOUR JOB?**

Organisation and being able to manage not only your own time but others efficiently. The ability to solve problems onsite either by yourself or seeking advice from the project management team. Being able to communicate efficiently with the workforce, management and supply chain, but also being respectful and understanding of others.

### **4. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE YOU FOUND WHEN YOU STARTED WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION?**

The biggest surprise is how well I fitted into my job role and loved working in the industry from day one and 3 years on, my opinion has not changed. Also, the opportunities for growth in my career and salary expectations were a lot higher than I initially thought.

### **5. WHAT WERE/ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?**

I want to work up the career ladder to become a construction director to prove knowledge, experience and hard work can be achieved when you are passionate about the industry.

### **6. HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OBSTACLES IN YOUR CAREER BECAUSE OF YOUR GENDER?**

At present I have not encountered any obstacles in my career because of my gender as I believe you can achieve anything you want with hard work and being in an excellent company who are willing to push and reward your achievements.

The only obstacles I have encountered, is I believe I must work harder and gain respect off others in the industry for being a woman. I have been spoken to differently by individuals which I believe is because I'm a young female ,as the other male assistant site manager doesn't get the same treatment.

### **7. WHY DO YOU THINK WOMEN REMAIN UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE INDUSTRY?**

I had no knowledge about a career in construction until getting a 2 week work experience placement onsite. I believe there should be more intervention at secondary school where you only learn about a handful of jobs and generally none of which are in the construction industry.

Also, there needs to be more opportunity through work experience placements being offered by the leading companies, rather than individuals seeking/ asking for work experience. Companies should be offering/posting opportunities within schools to open prospects and enlighten potential young individuals to join the growing construction industry.

### **8. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT YOUNG WOMEN SEEK OUT CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION?**

Yes, without any doubt in my mind, young women should seek and explore all departments in the construction industry to find the best match for them.

### **9. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY WOMEN WISHING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?**

The opportunity has become more and more since I've joined. Do not join with any pre-judgemental opinions of what you've heard from peers, there is a place for women in construction and the benefits are unmeasurable.

## **10. HOW DO YOU THINK A DIVERSE WORKFORCE BENEFITS THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE?**

By having a diverse workforce, you have the upper hand of being about to use strengths from individuals from different backgrounds to incorporating into different ways of thinking and working collaboratively to become successful. I've come from a working-class background with none of my relatives attending university or higher education for that matter. I believe the construction industry can offer opportunities for individuals like myself to push and explore my potential to help flourish, which can benefit the industry dramatically by being open minded and pushing innovation.

## **11. DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY CAN GET TO A POINT WHERE THERE IS A BETTER BALANCE OF GENDERS?**

I believe that the industry is not far off from becoming more balanced. Although I am the only assistant site manager on my project and was the only female in the whole of the south division, I've seen more being done to encourage and invite young females into the industry.