



Spotlight on...
women in construction

**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Case Study: Robertson Construction

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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?

When I was 14, I gained worked experience in an architecture firm and decided this was the career path I wanted to follow. I continued to work at the architecture practice during all my school holidays, right up to my early years of university. I then went out to New Zealand during my degree, to work on a research project on building energy use which informed changes to national buildings standards. I had a supportive art teacher at school, who allowed me to create my own architecture-based projects and she shared books with me on inspiring architects. At school I chose to study subjects to support my career path to become an Architect, including higher level study of Maths, Physics, Art and Design Technology.

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

In my current role as a Technical Manager at Robertson Timber Engineering, I enjoy leading on innovation work in offsite construction. Through harnessing funding, I have expanded the research and development programme and work with academia, innovation centres, government bodies and other stakeholders to bring new ideas to both our business and the wider construction industry. I dislike people's adverse attitudes to change, as the construction industry needs to be transformed if we are to meet net zero emissions targets.



I lead on the use of digital platforms to deliver data driven insights to make production improvements. A part of my role also involves tracking industry trends and evolving legislation to update our product offering and production system accordingly. This ensures we remain competitive in the construction industry and achieve projected levels of growth by being forward-looking and making continuous improvements. I provide technical support to colleagues in relation to this.

3. WHAT QUALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO DO YOUR JOB?

The qualities required to do my job include strategic thinking, an innovative mindset, attention to detail, ability to apply critical analysis, negotiation capabilities, strong presentation skills and a sense of optimism.

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

My biggest surprise when I started in the construction industry was how long the process of delivering a building can take. I am also now more acutely aware of how little diversity there is in the wider construction industry, how few female leaders there are and how not all tier 1 contractors in the UK are doing something to address this.

5. WHAT WERE/ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

To continue to drive forward the offsite timber manufacturing industry to deliver a more sustainable built environment.

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

Within Robertson, no, we have worked hard to instil our company values and attitudes and uphold ourselves to a high standard. Unfortunately, not everyone works the same way and sometimes others attitudes and implied language can be an issue. I am however empowered to address this on the few occasions that it does happen.

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

I reviewed data recently from the Office for National Statistics, which stated women accounted for only 14.5% of the UK construction workforce in Q1 2022. This figure is low, but when you dig into the figures further and see that women were only 0.8% of Skilled Trades and 81.9% were admin & secretarial jobs, it is clear the industry is heavily underrepresented. This is particularly the case in business leadership positions and operations. Little has changed over the last 10 years. I think there is a historic lack of leading women in construction roles to inspire and mentor others, and

I hope to see that change in the next decade.

In my opinion the ongoing lack of women in the construction industry is due to a misrepresentation of what being in the construction industry actually involves, due to historic perceptions. Working in a modern, heated and clean factory to manufacture elements offsite could provide a more attractive environment to work in, rather than being on site where workers are affected by adverse weather conditions.

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

Yes, it is a very fulfilling career with opportunities to shape how we go about delivering a sustainable future through transforming our built environment. The industry is evolving with the increasing application of digital technology and offsite construction and it's an exciting space to be working in.

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

It is valuable to gain practical experience in the industry if possible. Speak to people involved in the construction industry and find out about the wide range of roles out there.

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

There is a skills shortage and there is a greater pool of people who could work in the industry if we do work to change how it operates and alter misconceptions.

11. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY AND WIDER SOCIETY SHOULD BE DOING TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO WORK IN CONSTRUCTION?

To change, the industry needs to actively recruit women with a target percentage aim and promote the wide range of roles available in construction.

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

Yes, but more needs to be done to further automate construction to avoid repetitive and very physical tasks, this can be done through increasing pre-manufactured value. This would have a benefit to not only some women, but it would reduce health and safety risks for all workers. More automation and digitisation in the construction industry would also open up the opportunity for new jobs, suitable for a more diverse workforce. This would also help to address the skills shortage.