



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

**CONSIDERATE  
CONSTRUCTORS  
SCHEME**

## **Case Study: Robertson Construction**

Shannon Dawe – Community Impact Advisor

### **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?**

The built environment is all around us and I didn't know much about the construction industry prior to my first role, so it was an exciting opportunity to develop knowledge around a whole new industry. I found out about the job through a referral. My first role in construction was as a marketing and business development assistant, so my Event Management university degree helped towards getting the job. Qualifications required were 5 A\*s – C and a degree in a relevant subject was desirable.

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

My role is centred around planning, delivering, and reporting on social value within the communities where Robertson works. Ultimately, I look at how Robertson can deliver activities and outcomes that benefit the wider community and society. This can take shape in many ways including but not limited to job creation, employment support, educational engagement, volunteering work, community engagement etc. No day is the same, which keeps it interesting. I enjoy working with all the people I'm lucky enough to work with – whether that's site teams, customers or charities and organisations who do amazing work in their communities.



What I dislike about my job is there is a lot of reliance on other people to deliver outcomes, so things don't always go to plan as I would like them to.

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

I think the biggest quality required for this job is being a people person, with good communication skills and the ability to create good working relationships. My job relies so much on other people and our site team getting involved in activities. If you can build a good relationship with your team, then everything after that usually falls into place.

Time keeping and organisational skills are also a big one – there is always lots going on to keep track of; meetings, schools to visit, reports due etc so the more organised you can be, the better.

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

Prior to working in construction, I just thought of construction workers as tradespeople – joiners, bricklayers, labourers so it was surprising to discover the professional construction roles within the industry, and even roles I'd never heard of before, which I have now learned more about.

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

When I left university, I wanted to be an event manager for music and festival events. As it sometimes tends to go, I didn't land a job in the field straight away, so I fell into construction.

My future career aspirations vary. I know I definitely want to stay in social value/community work and work my way up to a senior position. I also like the idea of founding a social enterprise, making a real difference in an area that needs it.

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

I've never really encountered obstacles in my career due to my gender. That may be because of the nature of my role within the industry, but Robertson has been great in supporting me with my career progression in the industry.

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

I think a huge part of it is people, more likely women still aren't aware of the variety of interesting, professional construction roles out there.

I do also think there is still a lot of work to do, with busting the myth of construction sites and trades only being for men. In colleges and universities, we are starting to see an increase in numbers of females coming through.

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

Definitely yes!

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

If it's a career you're genuinely interested in, then just go for it. Be confident in your approach to learning, don't be afraid to ask questions and aim high – the construction industry is one that if you work hard and have the right attitude, you can achieve whatever you want to achieve.

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

Diversity in any scenario is always a good thing. It brings people with different backgrounds and experiences together to collaborate, which in this industry can lead to greater innovation, better decision making and higher employee engagement. Long term it can also make it easier to attract and retain talent and improve the industry's reputation.

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

I think STEM learning and construction apprenticeships also need to be targeted to female students, as apprenticeships are such a great route into the industry.

As many senior teams within construction still remain to be men, we need to make more space for women at senior and director level. In the meantime, whilst this takes shape, we need the men in these senior positions to push for change and advocate for women belonging in the construction industry and equal opportunity.

We need to drop the old-fashioned idea that construction sites are just for men, and accept the fact that women are just as able to use machinery, build and hold their own on a construction site.

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

100%. Like anything, these things take time, but we are heading in the right direction.