



Spotlight on...
women in construction

**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Case Study: Peabody

Yosra Khalaf – Clerk of Works

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 construction industry is unique in being so diverse and has a wider range of jobs and career paths than many other industries, the ability to develop and progress in my career as well as improving my salary was an advantage. I have studied Civil engineering at university before I moved to the UK and then I started as an Assistant Site Manager where I was then promoted to a Site Manager after completing some courses.

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

I spend 4 days a week visiting sites with the fifth day used as an 'admin day' to go through my emails and issue my reports to the contractors as well reviewing drawings and designs.

So a typical day would start with visiting site, inspecting all work activities carried out on site to be able to issue my weekly report covering all work aspects, whether there are health and safety issues or non compliant to building regulation and/or employer requirement then all issues will need to be discussed with the site team straight away to agree solutions and work plans.



I don't like when contractors can become overly defensive when I rightly pick defects and non compliances as I am meant to be a helping hand and an extra pair of eyes to improve quality by spotting issues or defects.

On the other hand it's so satisfying seeing the project through the different phases of construction up to the finishing and handing over process, the best feeling of all is when you see people moving in to what you have helped build and you can see how happy and satisfied they are with their new home.

3. WHAT QUALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO DO YOUR JOB?

Like all other jobs, in order to be successful you need to have the right mindset to keep learning and more importantly working with people not against them, so being collaborative is a must.

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

Statistics were surprising, firstly when I found out only 14% of the workforce in the construction industry are women! And secondly when I knew it's more likely men die due to mental health illness rather than by accident on construction sites!

5. WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

Teaching and training, however I do still enjoy going up and down the scaffold.

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

Many really, but what was considered once as a weak point in my character has made me who I am, unique and strong.

Many would use our differences in gender or appearance against us but I've learned to use my differences as advantages, so when I've been undermined because I'm a woman working on a construction site, I didn't feel the urge to justify myself instead I have shown my knowledge in a very professional way and at the right time.

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

In general media is not doing a good job when it comes to highlighting women success stories in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and specifically in construction compared to other industries like sports.

Furthermore, construction companies, developers and everyone working in the construction industry should take women's complaints and comments seriously in order to be able to change the industry's mentality.

For example women are often accused of being sensitive when they complain about co-workers using offensive language in the workplaces and therefore most women decide to put up with it unfortunately.

8. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT YOUNG WOMEN SEEK OUT CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THEM?

Absolutely, I'm a very big supporter of girls into STEM, in fact I volunteered with an organisation called 'I CAN BE' where they arrange for professionals to visit primary schools to encourage young girls into different/out of the ordinary jobs. I arranged once for a primary school girls aged 9-10 to visit one of my sites where they enjoyed visiting the marketing suite and exploring the architect model.

9. HOW DOES A DIVERSE WORKFORCE BENEFIT THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE?

Acceptance is a great quality and helps individuals to become more considered and flexible, improve communication and help to share ideas and pass on knowledge.

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

The industry can do more surveys in the workplace asking women what they think may improve their workplace, offering more scholarships and internships, further training and introduce more flexible/ hybrid ways of working to encourage women into the industry without compromising on their family life.

The industry can spread knowledge through short courses and workshops to families explaining the variety of opportunities available within the construction industry so they can influence young pupils to aim higher.

11. ARE YOU AWARE OF ANY SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATIONS OR INITIATIVES THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO WORK IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?

I have been helped through a voluntary organisation called Women into Construction they helped me taking the first steps by booking my CSCS course and test and then they found me an internship.

Another organisation called Transitions work with both men and women, but are very keen on supporting women specifically into employment within the construction industry, they are also a voluntary organisation that help professional refugees into employment.

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

I'm hoping so, there is still a long way to go but I think we are on the right path.