



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

**CONSIDERATE  
CONSTRUCTORS  
SCHEME**

## **Case Study: JJ Rhatigan**

### Aoife Healy - Community Liaison Officer

#### **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?**

Working in construction is honestly something I never saw for myself. I went to an all-girls school in Ireland, and it wasn't an industry that was ever mentioned to us, let alone promoted.

I studied International Business and German at Technical University Dublin, and after some travelling, pursued a career in dance. I was a dance teacher for three years when I, unfortunately, sustained several injuries meaning that that career path was no longer viable.

I was familiar with JJ Rhatigan as they have a great name in Ireland, and I have family members in the industry. When I decided to move to London three years ago, I saw they were hiring for an administration role and applied for the job. Luckily, the Regional Director saw some potential in me, and even though I had no construction experience, offered me a job as Project Administrator.

While working as a Project Administrator, I gained an interest in CCS and the community aspect of construction. As well as my official role, I took on many Community Liaison tasks - partly because I genuinely enjoyed it and partly because I felt it would benefit the company. Within a year, I was promoted to Community Liaison Officer, which is a role the company never had before.



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

As a Community Liaison Officer, I am responsible for initiating, building, and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders throughout the areas in which we're building. I work with various charities, schools, and organisations and have met some incredible people along the way. I also coordinate the Considerate Constructors Scheme across all our sites to ensure we maintain an excellent standard.

One of the best things about my job is that there isn't really a "typical day". In the beginning stages of a project, I focus on researching the area, putting together a community impact plan, reaching out to schools and charities etc.



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Once I've made contact with the right people, I always ensure our initial meeting is face-to-face. Travelling around to different communities is quite time-consuming, but it's important to me to make genuine connections with people and see the work they're doing firsthand.

Each relationship I forge as a CLO is bespoke, so I work with community groups and organisations to benefit their specific needs. I organise and attend a lot of fundraisers, school talks/site tours, and community engagement events, all with great support from the JJR project teams.

I'm also hugely involved in running the Considerate Constructors Scheme for the company, so I meet with Project Directors/Managers frequently to ensure each site is hitting our expected targets.

I love the freedom in my role and the variety of people I get to work with. Working with charities and schools and promoting the industry (particularly to women) is truly fulfilling, and it's becoming an increasingly important part of construction.

There's nothing I particularly dislike. Sometimes, it can be a bit overwhelming when I have to meet a million different people in a week and maintain those relationships, but it's all part of the excitement of the job!

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

First and foremost, you have to be a people person for this job – good communication skills are key. I often spend all day talking, so it's important to keep up the enthusiasm and maintain a positive attitude. Organisation is imperative, especially when working across a large number of sites. It's also valuable to have a genuine passion for what you're doing as a Community Liaison Officer. Caring about the community you're working in makes the role so much easier, as what you're doing feels worthwhile and less like a job.

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

Honestly, everything felt like a surprise! I spent my first two weeks in construction googling words I had never heard before. The biggest surprise for me, however, was how much I loved it. It was a risk to take on a role in an industry I knew so little about, but I learnt quickly and worked with a great team that was more than happy to answer all my questions (and there were many).

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

Before starting with JJ Rhatigan, my career aspirations were completely different. I wanted to continue as a dancer and continue to grow the dance school I was working with. Now, my aspiration is to champion the importance of community engagement within the construction industry on a larger scale. I've watched firsthand how people's perceptions of a big, bad contractor or developer change once you effectively engage with them and show that you're not just there for profit, but to improve a locality as a whole. JJR have been fantastic in supporting my pursuit of this, and it's something I'd love to help drive across the industry.

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

Thankfully, being a woman in construction has never held me back. In fact, sometimes it's a benefit to be the only woman in a room. Being the minority doesn't have to be detrimental – it can give you the opportunity to share a different viewpoint and shed light on issues someone else mightn't have thought about. I've never seen myself as less than any man I've encountered in construction, and I've been lucky to work with some great ones.

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

I think it begins in schools. It's difficult to be represented in an industry you're not typically encouraged into. As I said before, construction was never even mentioned when I was in school. I had no idea about the different sectors and that it was so much more than just physically building something, which I'm sure is the case for many schoolgirls. I also don't think we realise how transferrable skills can be. Dance and construction don't explicitly go hand in hand, but the confidence and discipline I gained in dance teaching have stood to me in this industry. That would also be the case for many other careers, so it's all about promotion and encouragement.

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

Absolutely! The opportunities in construction are vast and there's huge potential for career growth. The knowledge and skills you gain in construction can take you all over the world, so I think it's a great career option for young women.

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

View yourself as a person in construction first, and then champion being a woman in construction. Putting yourself in a box won't do you any favours. Strive for your goals regardless of your gender and let your hard work speak for itself. Self-confidence and a positive attitude will get you far in anything you do, so if you ever come across a naysayer, drown them out with your success!

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

The importance of women in construction goes far beyond individual roles; it's about fostering a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion that drives progress and innovation.

I would like to think that in 2024, we can recognise the advantage of a diverse range of experiences and opinions. An inclusive industry is without a doubt a stronger one, and I think that's becoming more and more apparent.

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

Schools, schools, schools. Teaching the younger generation about the wider industry gives them the opportunity to do their own research and pique their interest in something they may never have thought about before. We need to show that working in construction isn't just something women can do, but something that we as an industry want them to do.

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

I do, but it will take time and effort. The number of women in the industry has continued to grow over the last 10 years or so which is encouraging, but there's still a lot of work to do.