

Fast track to diversity

Getting the right people to do the job something which global management, engineering and development consultancy Mott MacDonald is constantly seeking to improve.

It is one of the reasons the company's rail division engaged gender diversity specialist Skills 4, to deliver its Career Development Programme to help attract and retain more female employees.

Celia Morris, Mott MacDonald Railways Training and Development Manager, said: "The railway market is very buoyant at the moment with many high profile projects and opportunities which we need to resource effectively. We are constantly recruiting to satisfy demand, but we need to attract a more diverse range of people and women are still in the minority.

"Mott MacDonald has a diversity and inclusion strategy and works hard at attracting and retaining staff. Typically there have been very few female engineers, they are underrepresented and we are looking for a significant proportion of those we have now, and in the future, to be leaders – this training helps them to compete and promote themselves.

"When we recruit, women meet positive female role models in the business at interviews."

All of the 40 women out of the 350 employees in the railway division in Croydon, London, Derby, York and Altrincham were given the opportunity to take part in the Skills 4 Career Development Programme.



"It didn't matter how junior someone was," said Celia, "we wanted to give everyone the chance to raise their aspirations. We have really seen an impact with women putting themselves forward for tasks they might previously not have undertaken. They are more proactive, volunteering to do presentations, putting themselves forward for awards - managers are seeing a real difference in the quality of the women's contributions and the content of their CVs."

Marketing Assistant, Jade Megee, said "it showed the company was proactive, staying ahead of the game in a competitive industry – I joined Mott MacDonald because it has such a supportive culture and offering this course is testament to that reputation".

Developing the workforce is central to ensure that the company continues to attract top candidates, male and female, securing the future success of the business.

Though not an engineer, undertaking the Career Development Programme has given Jade a whole new insight into her working practices and environment.

"It is very important for me to understand the company and the way different people work," she said. "From my perspective it was a really intuitive course. In my role I interact with a variety



of staff from different backgrounds and often engage with senior people from across Mott MacDonald. It was a challenge to understand and communicate effectively at all levels especially in a currently, male dominated industry.

"Thanks to the Career Development Programme I feel more confident to put my views across in meetings and more effectively communicate with male colleagues. It has been a positive few months following the three day course and this is certainly reflected in the office. There is now a network of people on the floor who would not have always had the opportunity to get to know each other – now it is more forthcoming, communications have been great and relationships a lot stronger. From the men's point of view they were intrigued by the training we undertook and we are informing them of what we learnt from the experience.

"This training has opened my eyes to what I can achieve. I feel that the possibility of becoming a manager in a male-dominated industry is achievable without feeling that being a woman will hold me back."

Human Factors Engineer, Elaine Thompson, said: "The Career Development Programme was very useful, particularly as I was about to return from maternity leave. It helped build my confidence and was a useful reminder of business behaviours."

New graduate, He-In Cheong, said: "Since the Career Development Programme I am not only proud to be an engineer but a female engineer." Her colleague Nita Barnor added: "The course helped me realise the importance of organising and prioritising my tasks to have a more productive and efficient day."

Graduate Sanaya Kerawala, who is due to gain chartered engineer status, said: "It provided a great insight into how to communicate more effectively and be influential in the workplace as well as the importance in my career of developing a personal and professional brand."

Graduate Victoria Sutherland, who is also due to become a chartered engineer said: "I use the methods learnt on the Career Development Programme to organise my day, prioritise tasks more effectively and mentally prepare for public speaking almost daily. I feel my self-belief has improved significantly."

Male colleagues have been very supportive. Managers are undertaking training which looks at the impact unconscious bias can have on decision making, while Mott MacDonald is looking at rolling out the Career Development Programme across the company.

The training featured in this case study was part of a project managed by Semta and funded by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills Women in Work initiative

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