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WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Adeline Ginn: 'It's not just about train drivers and Fat Controllers'

The Women in Rail founder on '1950s stereotypes' and flexible working.

by Kate Bassett

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Adeline Ginn was a bundle of nerves at her job interview with Angel Trains back in 1999. 'I was terrified,' she admits. "I bawled my eyes out the night before and said to my husband "I'll never be able to do this".'

Ginn had qualified as a barrister in 1994, practising criminal and family law before converting to a solicitor. The interview with Angel Trains - for a job as an in-house lawyer - was her first foray into the rail sector.

'Women think they need to tick all the boxes in a job description before they apply for it,' she says. 'Men have a better approach: they go for a job even if they only meet half the criteria. Lord Sugar said you should 'never go for a job you think you can do' - and I think that's great advice. You need to be outside your comfort zone.'

Ginn aced the interview and quickly rose up ranks of the train-leasing company; fluent in three languages, she helped to negotiate contracts overseas and expand the firm's international arm. In 2009, she was appointed general counsel of Angel Trains.



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A mother of two, Ginn is a fierce advocate of flexible working. 'I'm usually in the office by 6.30am, leave at 4.30pm to pick up the kids, and often work in the evenings. That's not in my contract; it's down to trust. It shouldn't matter when or where you're doing the work, so long as it gets done. There's a lot of talk about flexible working but senior managers and executives need to lead by example.'

Ginn is a rare female in a notoriously male-dominated sector. Just 16.4 per cent of the rail industry is made up of women. And the stats get worse the higher you climb: only 9.9% of mid-managers are women, and a paltry 0.6% are executives or directors. For an industry that employs 212,000 people in the UK and generates £39bn for the British economy – more than music (£3.5bn), house-building (£19.2bn) and alcohol (£38bn), that's pretty dire.



But that doesn't mean the sector is anti-women. 'I'm frequently the only woman in a meeting but my gender has never been an issue,' says Ginn. 'The only thing that has held me back is my own self-confidence. I, like so many women, suffer from the 'imposter syndrome' – you worry you're not good enough and you'll somehow be 'found out'.'

Keen to recruit other women into the sector, Ginn founded Women in Rail in 2012. Her mission is to overturn '1950s stereotypes' and promote rail as an attractive career choice for young people. According to research by Network Rail last year, girls aged seven to nine still think of engineering as 'dirty' and 'messy', while girls aged 12 and 15 describe it as 'unglamorous' and 'socially isolating'. 'The sector is still grossly misunderstood,' says Ginn. 'It's not just about train drivers and Fat Controllers. We need to showcase the talent we have and appeal to new generations.'

Adeline is a guest speaker at MT's Inspiring Women event on 16th November. [Check out the full programme and book tickets here.](#)

Image source: Bill Ohl/Flickr