

DATE	10 th September 2015
Circulation	22, 000

Rail Professional

#womeninrail

Hashtags have raised the profile of women with successful careers in STEM subjects. Wouldn't it be fantastic if rail created its own hashtag that lets the world know how amazing our industry is, suggests **Jodie Savage**

Social media hashtags such as #notjustforboys #distractinglysexy and #ILookLikeAnEngineer are showing the world that girls are owning jobs that are stereotypically perceived as 'male-only'. They champion diversity and show that being an engineer can be much more than wearing a hi-vis jacket and a hard hat.

The government's #notjustforboys campaign was created to promote the flexibility of women's career options. Having begun in January this year, it continues to inspire women to make career decisions that suit their personalities, skills and interests, and not to let the traditional profile of a worker within a certain industry limit their options. Women in Rail proudly supported this campaign by encouraging women in STEM to showcase their job to the world. Social media gave these women a platform to display the variety of

projects they worked on to thousands of girls and boys across the country. A simple hashtag enabled them to show their collective successes that will hopefully have inspired women across the country to consider STEM careers.

Sir Tim Hunt, the 2001 Nobel Prize winner in Physiology or Medicine, made controversial comments at the World Conference of Science Journalists in South Korea on 9th June. His words: 'Let me tell you about my trouble with girls. Three things happen when they are in the lab: you fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticise them they cry' caused a social media frenzy, and propelled women in STEM back into the Twittersphere. This comment was followed by the tag #distractinglysexy which enabled thousands of female scientists and engineers across the world to unite by sharing selfies of themselves at work. These selfies ranged from women wearing



spacesuits, conducting experiments in laboratories through to women digging in the desert as well as leading their team in



DATE	10 th September 2015
Circulation	22, 000

a meeting. Despite Tim Hunt's comments being perceived as negative, they enabled women in STEM to use social media as a medium to demonstrate just how many women out there encompass these roles and the pride they have in their careers.

Answers on a postcard please

Most recently, Twitter has become a vehicle for female engineers to dispel the myth that all engineers are men. The hashtag #iLookLikeAnEngineer united these voices by connecting selfies posted by women engineers working in technology groups, universities, software and engineering companies. These women leveraged this opportunity to promote the wide variety of roles females are championing in engineering. What's great about this is that it isn't just about sexism. Tweets have also been flooding in from other engineers who didn't feel they fit the 'stereotypical image' of an engineer, growing this hashtag into a vehicle to promote wider diversity in engineering.

While some of these hashtags began as a result of something negative, they have all succeeded in raising the profile of women who have successful careers in STEM subjects that span multiple industries. The selfies are a powerful communication tool and the viral

**MY TEAM IS GREAT.
EVERYONE IS
SMART, CREATIVE
AND HILARIOUS.**

ISIS WENGER
PLATFORM ENGINEER



analogix.com/careers



hashtag enables these images to be seen by thousands of people such as: women in engineering who may feel like the odd one out, young girls who are about to make important decisions about which subjects to study, and graduates considering where to begin their career.

I wholeheartedly support these Twitter campaigns and I think it would be fantastic if the rail industry could create

a hashtag which goes viral so that we can let the world know just how amazing our industry is with great careers available for all people. So, get your thinking caps on and answers on a postcard please!

Jodi Savage is sales account manager at Wabtec Rail and a board member of Women in Rail
 LinkedIn: *Women in Rail*
 Twitter: *@WomeninRail*
 Visit: www.womeninrail.org