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| DATE | 25 th November 2015 |
| Circulation | 22,000 |



Rail Professional

Getting Women on Board

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With Women in Rail's new report revealing that only 19 per cent of women working in the industry are in managerial roles, we need to work together to change this, says Adeline Ginn

Women in Rail was created in 2012 to provide networking opportunities and support for all women working within the railway industry, promote rail as an attractive career choice, develop strategies for engaging the younger generations to consider a career in the sector and to influence key stakeholders and undertakings to support and encourage initiatives aimed at improving gender balance and bridging the skills gap in the railway sector.

In the three years since its launch, Women in Rail has achieved a tremendous amount, growing from strength to strength and moving closer to attaining its vision for the rail industry.

The railway industry is full of fantastic and talented men and women, but more people need to know this. Women in Rail's recent study showed that less than one quarter of the workforce is female and the number of women in the top positions is even lower.

The power of a more gender-balanced workforce has been proved time and time again. Studies have shown that companies with more women on their boards outperform their rivals with a 42 per cent higher return in sales, 66 per cent higher return on invested capital and 53 per cent higher return on equity. With a more diverse workforce comes different perspectives, experiences and skill sets, as well as new ideas and ways of working, all of which ultimately bring about positive change within companies. To keep its competitive edge, the British railway industry needs to focus on getting more women to join the sector but also to support them progress the career ladder in the company within which they are employed.

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Time for change

The latest report from Lord Mervyn Davies, the government's champion of gender equality in the boardroom, has seen the percentage of women on boards grow from 14 to 26.1 per cent in just five years. However the rail industry is often misconceived as an unattractive industry. In reality, rail is one of the most dynamic and exciting industries in the UK to work in at the moment. At a time when many sectors are struggling, Crossrail and HS2 are experiencing billions of pounds of investment.

Our report released in November shows that the number of females working in the rail industry is 16.4 per cent of the total workforce, with only 1.3 per cent of these women working in senior roles. These results show there is an imperative for change and we need to work together to make this happen.

Our report also discusses what we as an industry can do to amend the outdated image that rail has in our society. With some of the leading names in the rail industry providing their thoughts and opinions on the current situation, Women in Rail has been able to draw conclusions on how to tackle the problem at hand. Most notable is the need to promote the industry more positively among our young girls and women. After all, given rail's rich history and heritage in this country, our young generation should be excited to be a part of it.

Striking the balance

Women in Rail aims to bring together key stakeholders in the hope that collectively they can improve gender balance within rail along with helping our members grow stronger and foster key relationships.

We hold workshops and events addressing the key issues our members have told us prevent them from pushing themselves forward in their career. We have also introduced our 2015/2016 mentoring programme, developed to help women in the industry receive the advice and guidance they need to get a better understanding of the rail industry they work in but also get support in furthering their career.

Women in Rail is currently the only independent organisation in the rail industry that focuses on fostering the women working within the sector. It is an initiative that benefits us all, so if you can help, please do contact us. We are always looking for individuals and organisations to work with us and help us to showcase rail as the modern, dynamic and exciting industry it is.

Adeline Ginn is founder of Women in Rail and general counsel at Angel Trains

Visit: www.womeninrail.org

LinkedIn: Women in Rail