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 Founder of Women in Rail, General Counsel for Angel Trains



## Opening the Door to Diversity

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Believe it or not, job adverts tailored to men are discouraging women from applying for roles they are perfectly capable of. Sadly, employers are unwittingly limiting the range of potential applicants they receive through the way they weave words.

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A recent Hewlett Packard report found that male applicants apply for a job upon meeting 60% of the requirements, where women only apply if they meet 100% of the demands. But what does this mean? One can either take from this statistic that men have more self-assurance in the workplace than women, or that job specifications in general need to inform applicants that there is a level of flexibility in their specifications. I would argue that the latter is more accurate and of more importance. After all, studies have shown that it may sometimes not be so much their own capability that women doubt when applying for a job, but a reluctance to waste their own (and arguably their interviewer's) time in applying for a job they feel they may not be fully qualified for.

Women should not be penalised for adhering to specifications. Rather, if employers are willing to offer roles to those who fall outside of the specified criteria, it should be made known. Of course, job specifications are there for a reason, but if we are to encourage more women into the workplace we must take on board the way in which applications are viewed by females. Therefore, when drafting a job advert, it is in the interest of an employer to highlight the requirements, but also the natural leeway that is nearly always apparent with a role.

Failing to take this into account can be a fatal error for industries like rail that are already heavily lacking in employee diversity. Being aware of gender biases is key to finding the most successful candidate for the role. Women on the outside looking in will undoubtedly find it very hard to see how they might flourish when they are forced to look at the industry through a rigid job description.

Throughout my years in rail I have barely come across a job specification that a woman could not do, after having carefully looked into it, beyond the written words. This raises the question: Why is only 16% of the rail industry female? We need to look to the root of the problem, and re-evaluate the very methods that we use to invite people into rail. If there are means that will encourage more women into the industry, then we should absolutely consider using them. If women are more likely to apply for flexible roles, then we should advertise them with flexibility.

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Change to traditional job advertisements is a small price to pay for what will undoubtedly be an ongoing and fruitful reward. Women are making headway in rail; let us extend the hand that will help them.

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