

DATE	17 th March 2017
Circulation	6,000



0 Special report part #2: Why more women should work in rail... and why they don't at the moment.



Posted on Mar 16, 2017



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As the rail industry evolves and grows, it is increasingly offering more varied and dynamic career opportunities. And the large number of rail and metro projects currently underway around the world has created an enormous demand for skilled staff. Yet filling positions in these projects be they within engineering, IT, Project Management or Operations is a challenge. There is already a global shortage of engineers, and other industries have proved more adept at recruiting these other key skills. [Last week](#), we looked into some of the reasons which has led to less than a quarter of rail industry staff being female. Surely there's both a connection and a solution to be found here? Today, we investigate further into this issue and focus on some of the important roles that women are playing in global projects and why it is a career that more



people (male and female) should consider entering. Our reporter **Emily O'Dowd** has spoken to a selection of influential and successful women in our industry, including the likes of **Bentley Systems**, **Banedanmark**, **Wi-Tronix**, **Angel Trains/Women in Rail** and **Trenitalia** offering some insights into the reality of working in our industry and why it should appeal to a wider audience.

Adeline Ginn is someone who devotes a lot of passion and energy to promote the benefits of rail to women all around the world. As well as working in a senior role for **Angel Trains**, Adeline also runs an organisation ([@WomeninRail](#)) dedicated to getting more women into the industry. In June last year, **Women in Rail** announced 'the 20 Most Inspirational Women in Rail' - "It feels incredible to showcase the female talent that is in the railway sector, to people within our industry and outside it. There are many fantastic women in rail and it is imperative to the future of our industry that they are shown as role models. Research reveals that by the age of seven, most girls have already switched off from engineering, considering it too dirty and messy."

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But despite these beliefs, Adeline suggests that women should “give it a go!” She emphasises there has always been and will always be a place for women in the industry – it definitely benefits having the different dimensions that women bring to the team.

Jette Aagaard, Project Director at Banedanmark ([@banedanmark](#)) emphasises that rail is changing to become more modern and creative, so to have more women involved “means that new projects can be thought through differently and even become more successful.” Just like Adeline, Jette believes that women should throw themselves into the new opportunities that the rail industry delivers.



Research which was carried out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2015 stressed that the gender difference in education for maths and science is caused by a lack of [female confidence](#). It is only when students are more self-assured that they give themselves the freedom to fail, trial and error, and become more inquisitive about the subjects. [Federica Santini](#), CTO at Trenitalia believes that education and the promotion of the traditionally ‘male’ subjects is vital to promote more women to enter rail. “Most of the

education needs to start in school and university to make young girls aware that there are all sorts of opportunities in the rail industry, because most of the time they do not consider this is a career opportunity. We have to raise the awareness that equal opportunities in this industry are happening and they are possible.” Federica explains that Trenitalia is becoming a more female headed company and the CEO is a woman.

One thing the interviewees all agreed on was the fact that they did not initially set out on a career in rail to begin with. After working in the industry for 25 years **Gita Monshizadeh, Head of BIM**

Implementation at Banedanmark ([@banedanmark](#)) said that it was “a complete coincidence!” However, she has no regrets; “it’s exciting to be part of this industry because we are always working on best practice and accepting new ways to get the job done and work intelligently. Whilst there are lots of challenges along the way my job is so diverse which makes it so interesting.”

So why should more women work in rail?

“The rail industry is such a close knit and caring community, full of passionate people and that is what has inspired me to stay,” reflects Adeline.

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"My job is so varied; I don't think I have done the same piece of work twice while working at Angel Trains and I have been here for 18 years. Every day throws up a new challenge and I relish in the ability to work with people across a number of disciplines, the passion and care people demonstrate in the rail industry always impresses me." Additionally, **Lisa Matta**, one of the founders of **Wi-Tronix** ([@WiTronix](#)) explained that it is extremely fulfilling to contribute to the modernisation of the next generation product to drive the industry in different directions. I have also had the opportunity to educate a lot of the younger talent that we have here. Coaching and mentoring of different team members and specifically women and trying to improve the professional and personal development moving forward.

A few months ago we spoke to [Hayley Magorian](#), Project Management Graduate Trainee at Transport for London (TfL) in an exclusive interview and she offered her inspiration; "... the transport industry plays such a fundamental part of people's lives. Every day we are relied upon by millions of people as a means to access education, employment, health care or for leisure or tourism. Through my work, I can make a real impact on people's everyday lives and this is what really makes my job extraordinary."

Joanna, Slowinska ([@BentleySystems](#)) working with Network Rail in the UK, UTA in the US and SMRT in Singapore has had a significant contribution in the rail industry. "Many of my peers are women. It's very exciting and rewarding working for a software company like Bentley which helps our users deliver the services that help keep the rail network operating safely and reliably. "

Rail is evolving all the time with a number of new challenges which welcomes new talent and new approaches.

There are many long-term problems such as globalisation and environment, tighter budgets and shorter deadlines which means that the rail industry demands a smarter approach. When talking to Bandenmark, they recently launched a competition for the New Civil Engineer Graduate Awards. Three of the final candidates which were shortlisted were women. Bandenmark was especially impressed by the high level of talent that they demonstrated Brittany Harris was the final winner.



In summary, Joanna clearly puts: "The industry needs a variety of skills. If you're a problem solver, team player, like challenges, want to progress and contribute to infrastructure that society needs, then the rail industry is for you."