

Women in rail

Adeline Ginn



Imposter Syndrome: a gender neutral issue

On Thursday 11th July, the SWIFT Network of **Women in Rail** hosted a top table dinner to explore the so-called 'imposter syndrome'

Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a 'fraud'. The Women in Rail dinner, attended by senior women in (or formerly in) rail and transport together with their male allies and rising female talents

Deborah Hulme from Minerva Engagement gave a fascinating keynote address which was followed by table discussions. Guests took away a better understanding of imposter syndrome and tips on how to help overcome it



from their organisations was sponsored by Stephenson Harwood and SNC Lavalin Atkins.

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During the dinner, it became clear that the imposter syndrome is not a woman-only

phenomenon with men in the room candidly recounting stories of their experiences of feeling not good enough. However, it was acknowledged that the more senior a woman becomes, the more likely it is that she will suffer from imposter syndrome and feel lonely in tackling the issue. Hence the importance of a strong support network of senior men and women like SWIFT.

The imposter syndrome is tied up in our belief systems, runs deep and is

closely linked to a lack of self-confidence. In fact, unless we challenge our beliefs, push ourselves and take risks, face fear and proactively take ourselves out of our comfort zones, we will continue to struggle and potentially hold ourselves back in our careers. It is important to accept that we do not need to have all the answers to be worthy of the job we are in. Having a successful career is about increasing knowledge and experience.

As for tips to help overcome the imposter syndrome, Deborah explained that there is a direct link between our physical health and our mental wellbeing and that imposter syndrome is more likely to creep in or be exacerbated when we are stressed, tired or run down and our resilience drops. She added that it is important to acknowledge feelings of fear and train ourselves not to allow this to take over.

Re-programming our neural pathways can help overcome the issue. Her tips included physical exercise, good food, sleep and practicing positive thinking: valuing ourselves, focussing on our strengths and to keep reminding ourselves of our achievements day-to-day. In the mornings, focussing on positive aspects that we can bring out in our day. In the evenings before bed, reminding ourselves of the good things we have achieved that day. It is also



important to work with good mentors and coaches and to avoid those who pull on our energy or drag us down.

Imposter syndrome is a gender-neutral issue. Talking it through within a strong network like Women in Rail and SWIFT provides an opportunity to understand and overcome it. It also encourages self-reflexion on our achievements: what we do well, where we get our energy from and help us decide where we want to be.

SWIFT is an integral part of Women in Rail and was created by – and comprises as

its core membership base – senior women in (or formerly in) UK rail and their male allies. SWIFT's purpose is to provide space and support for its members through a peer to peer network and to offer support to high potential women in our industry and help them progress their career and/or transition to more senior roles.

For more information on Women in Rail or SWIFT, please contact wr@womeninrail.org or swift@womeninrail.org



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