



Australian Government
Department of the
Prime Minister and Cabinet



Women in Construction

Inspiring storybook featuring women working
in the construction industry



UNSW
SYDNEY

Introduction

The School of Built Environment at UNSW has proudly received a \$2.3 million grant from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office for Women, as part of the Australian Government's Women's Leadership and Development Program. This grant supported the creation of this inspiring storybook that chronicles the journeys of women in the construction industry. Through their stories, we aim to encourage and empower more women to pursue careers in this dynamic field.

This storybook highlights the diverse paths these women have taken, showcasing their resilience, innovation, and leadership. By sharing their experiences, we hope to break down stereotypes and demonstrate that the construction industry is a welcoming and rewarding career choice for women. The stories will serve as a beacon of inspiration, illustrating that with determination and support, women can achieve remarkable success in construction.

We believe that this initiative will not only inspire individual women but also contribute to a more inclusive and diverse industry. By fostering a culture of equality and opportunity, we can build a stronger, more innovative construction sector that benefits all.

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Natalie Arad

National Bid Manager

ADCO



Introduction

My name is Natalie Arad and I am the National Bid Manager at ADCO Constructions.

I have always been passionate about language and story-telling. This led me to study linguistics and English literature at university. Initially, I began my professional career in the publishing industry. I worked at a large international organisation for 5 years, but I had always wanted to live overseas, and I ended up moving to Calgary in Canada. While there I was successful in obtaining a position as a Document Specialist at an environmental consultancy. It was there I had my first exposure to submissions where I would perform final review on them before they went out to prospective clients and government departments. I then moved roles in the consultancy and became an Indigenous Engagement Facilitator where I got to travel to remote parts of Western Canada and meet representatives of local First Nations and Metis groups and capture critical information for government submissions.

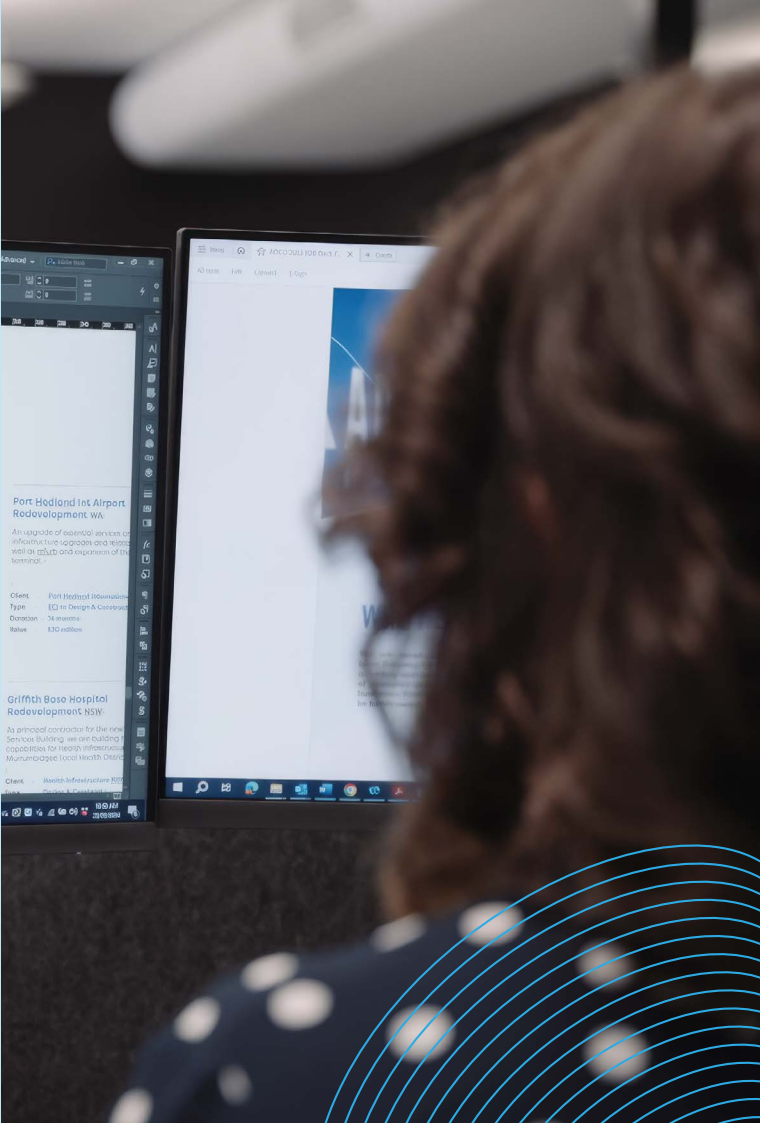
After returning to Australia, I began to work exclusively in the tendering space and obtained a Diploma in Project Management. I started at ADCO in 2021 as a Bid Manager in NSW, and in 2023 I was promoted to National Bid Manager.

The Role

My role as National Bid Manager is to look at the broader picture and be part of the strategy to win work by being a market leading business. My mission is to make sure we are producing high quality and consistent submissions to our clients. I do this by reviewing and providing quality assurance of our work and also by collaborating closely with Bid Managers in the states in which we operate to provide them with the tools to action this on the ground. I perform data management to help us track our progress and maintain transparency. I also work closely with our Bid Managers on national teaming and collaboration.

Challenges

The greatest challenge in my role is the duality of focusing on both the details and the bigger picture. Every day I focus on the detail of where and how we can improve our submissions to create compelling offers for our prospective clients. But I must also maintain focus on the bigger picture objectives, so I can navigate us towards our broader goals and achieve continuous improvement for the business. ADCO supports a lot of initiatives that allow more women to progress in various roles. I am proud to work for an Australian family owned business and as a woman I feel very supported to have both a family and a career.



Why This Role

“

As a National Bid Manager there are lots of things I love about my role. I enjoy being able to work across so many of our opportunities and inspire and elevate our work so that we can put our best foot forward.

Bid management in construction is a bit unique. It is one of the rare parts of the construction industry that is mostly women. I consider myself privileged to be able to work every day with such intelligent, inspiring and driven women.

”

Veronika Bunoza

Project Manager

JLL



Introduction

My name is Veronika Bunoza, and I am a project manager at JLL. I completed my construction management and property degree at UNSW, graduating in 2019. My role involves a variety of tasks, including talking to clients and contractors, organising my team, and ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget.

The Role

As a project manager, my responsibilities are diverse and dynamic. I engage with clients to understand their needs and expectations, coordinate with contractors to ensure smooth execution, and lead my team to achieve project goals. My primary focus is to manage projects efficiently, balancing time constraints and budget limitations to deliver successful outcomes.

Challenges

The path to becoming a project manager was not without its challenges, but with the support of my mentors, I was able to build my confidence. Working in a male-dominated industry, I have been fortunate to have both male and female mentors who have guided me. For women considering a career in construction, I strongly advocate for giving it a go. Being open to learning and having a supportive network can lead to a prosperous career in this field.

2025 and beyond

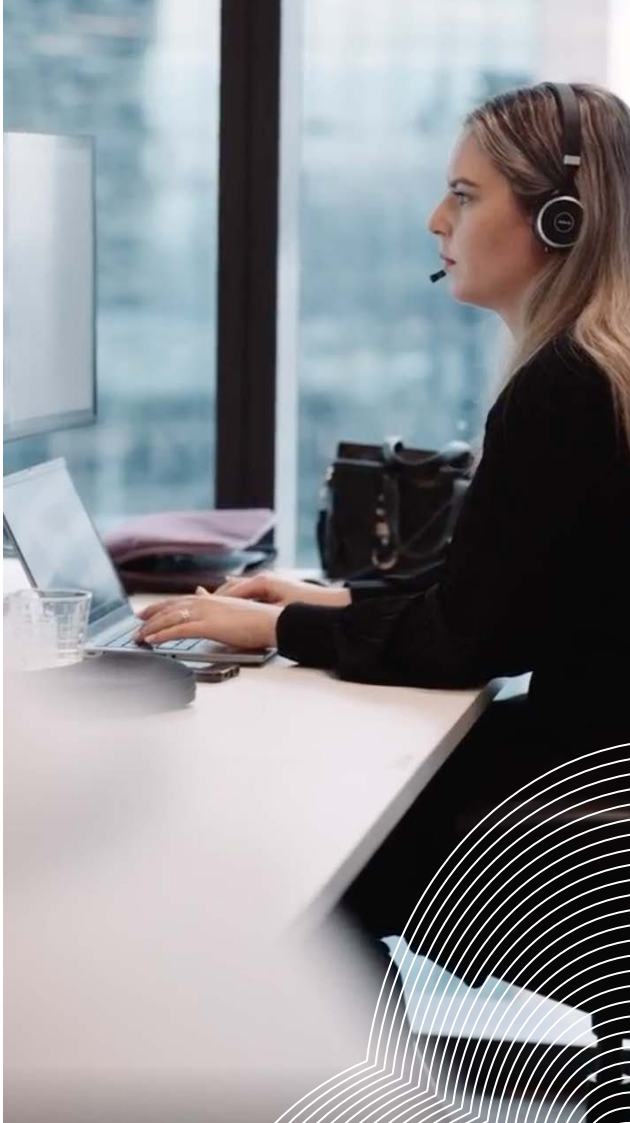
My plan is to keep learning, absorbing as much as I can from peers and to say yes to any opportunities that may come my way. My biggest fear is to become stagnant, so doing all I can to continuously evolve and develop will also be front of mind.

Why This Role

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My journey in the industry began while I was still at university, starting in a cadet role. After graduating, I transitioned into a contracts administrative role at a smaller company, where I had the opportunity to learn and grow under the guidance of a supportive manager. Despite initial feelings of imposter syndrome when offered the project manager position, the encouragement from my manager helped me embrace the role. Today, I feel more confident than ever and am grateful to work at JLL, where nearly 50% of our team are women. Throughout my career, I have been inspired by strong female mentors and supportive colleagues.

”



Esti Cogger

Project Director

JLL



Introduction

My name is Esti Cogger, and I'm a project director with Project and Development Services at JLL. I have ultimate accountability and responsibility for whatever happens on that programme of works.

The Role

As a project director, my role involves setting the culture, ensuring it's inclusive and conducive to doing good work, and making sure that the processes support the best work possible while maintaining a good client relationship. Internally, I also ensure there is a project pipeline, revenue is coming in, and profitability is just right, making my role both outward and inward facing.



Challenges

Having mentors is really important because we don't always have all the answers. I've received several awards, but the one I'm most proud of is the NAWIC Crystal Vision Award in 2017, which is given to someone who promotes women in construction. Being a woman in the industry, I've seen significant changes over the last 20 years. The culture has evolved, and women are now being welcomed and appreciated for the diverse skills they bring to problem-solving. I believe that a combination of both men's and women's skills leads to the best results. For young people who have creativity, drive, technological savvy, and a passion for solving problems and making the world better, I believe we need these individuals on board to improve the construction industry. Their contributions can make the industry more sustainable and future ready.

2025 and Beyond

I hope to continue to grow personally and professionally by taking on new challenges. I'm looking forward to expanding my skills and learn new ones, as well as supporting the next generation of successful women in the industry.



Why This Role

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I love what I do because every day is a little bit different, but most days are about solving problems. I remember being a six-year-old kid sitting at my window on the eighth floor of a residential building, watching the construction of buildings around me. Day after day, I saw these buildings rise from the ground, with people pouring concrete and assembling structures, which I found fascinating. When I started working as a beginner architect, I was exposed to various aspects of the construction industry for the first time. I realised I was more comfortable dealing with contracts, interacting with people on-site, and solving problems on-site rather than just sitting in front of a computer doing design work. Moving into project management felt like the natural thing to do.

”

Sarah Dimitrievski

Director
Chandolin Construction



Introduction

My name's Sarah Dimitrievski. I'm the director of Chandolin Construction, a company that has been operating for about nine years.

I'm on a mission to bring more women into construction and to shake up the way we build in Australia. I'm incredibly passionate about creating space for women in this industry, not just to participate, but to lead, innovate, and thrive.

Over the past year, I've dedicated myself to researching innovative building techniques that could transform how we deliver housing. I recently took a team overseas in search of smarter, faster, and more sustainable construction solutions. What we found was nothing short of inspiring and I'm now focused on bringing those ideas back to Australia to help tackle the housing crisis head-on.

As Director of Chandolin Construction, I've always believed in getting on the tools alongside my team. From demolition to scheduling, I love the hands-on nature of this work, but what drives me most is the opportunity to create real change in an industry that's ready for it.

The Role

As the director of Chandolin Construction, I involve overseeing the entire operation. We predominantly build, but my role in the industry is to oversee the whole lot. I enjoy being on-site with the team, participating in various tasks from demolition to scheduling. This hands-on approach not only keeps me engaged but also allows me to manage the business effectively.



Challenges

There are challenges, especially with the low percentage of women in the field. Balancing work and family life is tough, but I find it rewarding. I emphasise resilience and determination as key qualities for success and encourage others to explore the various roles in construction, despite societal expectations.



Why This Role

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I chose this role because of the diverse opportunities it offers. The construction industry allows me to switch between different tasks, making each day unique. I also believe in the importance of men and women working together, complementing each other's strengths, which is something the industry needs more of.

”

Erica Drummond

Senior Project Engineer

ADCO



Introduction

Growing up, I had always wanted to be an architect, yet I was interested in engineering. I did some research and found that construction management could combine my passion for the built environment with the more practical side of engineering. While studying at UNSW, there were some newsletters sent out by the lecturers and I saw an opportunity and decided to apply for it. The lecturers helped in structuring my resume and that's where I got a cadetship in my second year and that's how my journey began.

The Role

I am senior project engineer which is a site-based role. My role involves working with the designers, subcontractors and specialist consultants to get the design to a point that is practical to be built on site, ensuring it is of quality and very cost-efficient. As the project progresses, my role changes to one where I control the progress and monitor what is being put up to get the project successfully delivered. This means I am quite hands-on with my role. No two days are ever the same. One day, it can be working on meetings and emails and another day can be filled with trying to deal with issues that may have come up on site, some days it can be just a mix of everything.



Challenges

The first hurdle comes when you enter the industry at the onset, yet it gets easier as you go through the job. In the beginning, the role was not easy especially since I entered the industry young. But being confident, doing your research, learning from other people, and having great mentors have made it easier. Also, the industry is very dynamic and as such, I have to constantly be on top of things with new trends, methods and materials. I also faced some challenges when trying to get people to listen to me. It takes keen observation to observe patterns, learning from role models seeing what works best for each person.

Being a woman in the industry now has become easier than it was in the past. More people have become understanding and aware of such issues causing the industry to become welcoming of women.

Important skills include problem-solving skills basically being able to think outside the square, stepping back at whatever issue arises, not being hot-headed and being composed enough to think clearly to bring up solutions. Again, being able to form and maintain relationships that is, being able to manage people is very important and goes a long way as well.

Why This Role

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This role involves being collaborative and working with a talented team with diverse skillsets to come together and achieve a common goal. It is extremely gratifying to watch something the team has planned for so long come into fruition!

”



Jessica Ferguson

Quantity Surveyor

WT



Introduction

My name is Jess, I studied a Bachelor of Business Administration at Macquarie University and then completed a Master of Project Management at University of Technology Sydney.

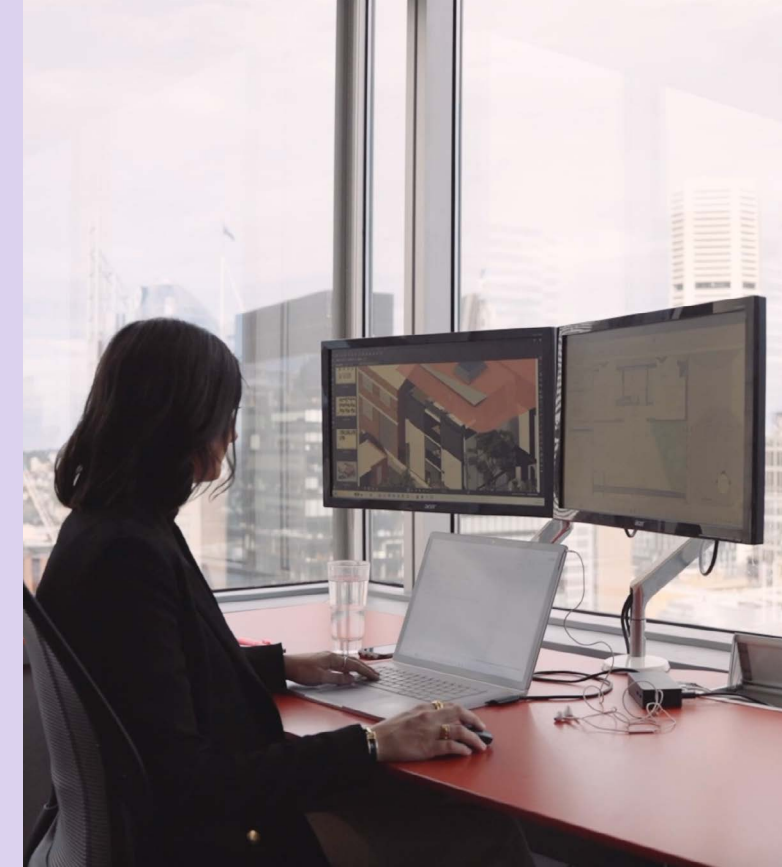
After finishing my first degree, I found out my uncle, who was based overseas, was a quantity surveyor, also known as a QS. It was at that time that I thought about trying a career in the construction industry. I managed to obtain a Cadetship as a QS at WT which was a great opportunity to gain real experience whilst studying and I can't recommend this highly enough.

The Role

As a quantity surveyor, I manage the cost and risk components of construction projects to ensure their successful completion within budget and in compliance with contractual agreements. My day-to-day activities can include estimating costs, preparing bill of quantities, assisting with the tendering process, cost management, value engineering, risk assessment, project reporting, risk management of development costs for financiers, assessing embodied carbon and giving sustainability advice. I also undertake contract administration tasks, such as assessing variations, payment claims, visiting site, time management and liaising with clients and the project team to ensure deliverables are met.

Challenges

In this job, it can be challenging to balance multiple projects, clients, contractors and other project stakeholders and often the work can all land at the same time. The construction industry historically has been male dominated, resulting in a number of challenges. The industry still has a long way to go, however is making efforts to address these issues through a range of forward-thinking initiatives and organisation like NAWIC, which I volunteer at as we all need to do our part to improve this.



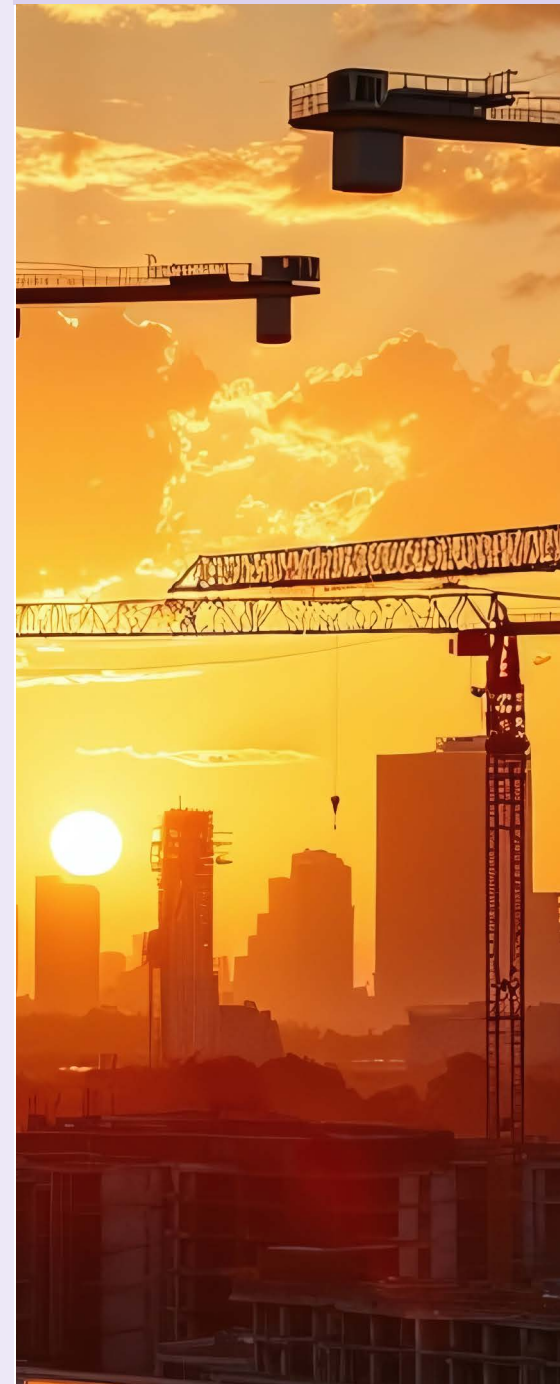
Why This Role

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Here are some of my favourite things about being a QS:

Firstly, I get the opportunity to be involved in a diverse range of interesting and innovative projects and tasks, which not only provides variety but is also very rewarding. The construction industry is very fulfilling and exciting to be a part of and it's hard to not become passionate about the projects you are involved in. I also get to see the tangible results around me, visit different construction sites and see the projects coming to life. Additionally, problem solving, maths and balancing numbers, all provide enjoyable day-to-day challenges. Finally, my job has allowed me to provide embodied carbon and sustainability advice, which I find is extremely rewarding to help make a difference in reducing the emissions caused by the construction industry.

”



Annie Fish

Carpentry Apprentice

Chandolin Construction



Introduction

I'm Annie and I'm a 2nd year Carpentry Apprentice with Chandolin Construction.

I never imagined that becoming a carpentry apprentice would one day take me around the world, but it has. I've just returned from an incredible overseas trip where I had the chance to explore cutting-edge construction methods and innovative building technologies. Now, I'm back in Australia, inspired and driven to bring these ideas home to help address the housing crisis we're currently facing.

I made the leap into this industry at 40, after running my own equestrian centre. It hasn't always been easy, but it's been one of the most rewarding decisions I've ever made. I've always loved building and creating, and now I get to turn that passion into something meaningful helping to shape a better, smarter, and more sustainable future for housing in Australia.

The Role

My role at Chandolin is always interesting, challenging and very rewarding. I am very lucky to get to work on all kinds of projects, from new, to extensions on existing houses, some under heritage and even builds for one of the largest disability support providers in Australia.



Challenges

My role is very physical, so initially it was a challenge for me, being a woman, to build up my upper arm strength, but being on site and carrying out daily tasks, those muscles (and more!) now come naturally.

Another challenge for me was changing careers. I went from owning and running my own equestrian center to commencing my Certificate 3 in Carpentry as a mature age student. I'm 40 and I encourage anyone who has always had a passion for something, or wants to try something new to go for it, it is never too late!

Why This Role

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I've always had a love for building and creating things. I had built three houses under owner/builder with my husband prior to commencing my carpentry apprenticeship, so it is definitely something I have always had a passion for.

I love the satisfaction of seeing the end result something I have created.

”

Loredana Hibberd

Design Manager

Besix Watpac

Introduction

I began as a graduate, a project engineer, a senior project engineer, and then a design manager. Going through different jobs in the construction industry gave me different perspectives of the industry.

The Role

My role as a design manager is to assess documentation and ensure that it is suitable to be built while keeping track of any design changes in the project. A lot of designers have great ideas when designing and although they may look good on paper, putting them up may not be too feasible. My role is to foresee such risks of buildability (the ease with which a project can be built and maintained) and try to find ways around them. Because in construction, any change could have a butterfly effect, it is important to keep track of all changes - relevant or not. I also try to foresee oncoming risks in the construction project and put in place some measures to resolve it before the project takes off.

To get into this role, there are three pathways. The first is to have an engineering background which I had, the second pathway is to have an architectural background and the third and best approach is to have a construction management background and have experience on construction sites. The best design managers are those who have site experience.

Challenges

The first challenge in my role is that there is never enough time to resolve every issue that come up in the projects. Secondly, because of time limits, the quality of documents that reach my desk may not contain all the information I need to make certain assessments. Then the technical terms used in construction can be challenging especially on specialised construction projects. Having experience on site is crucial to overcoming this.

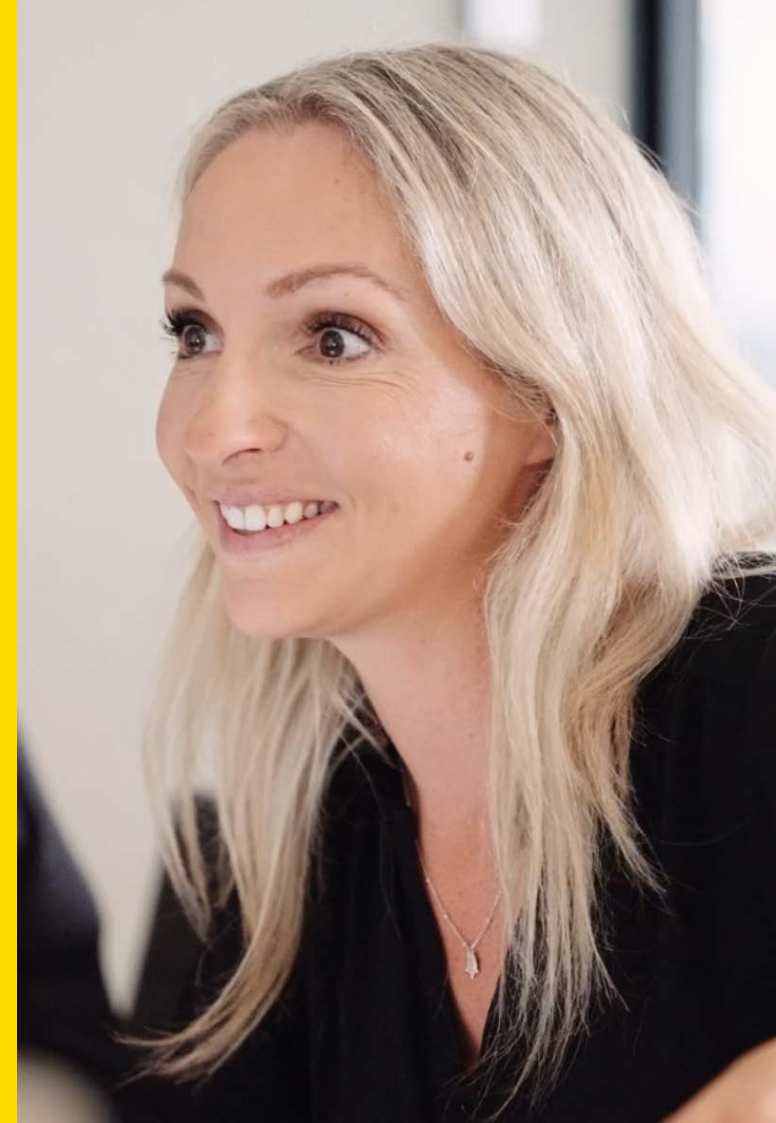
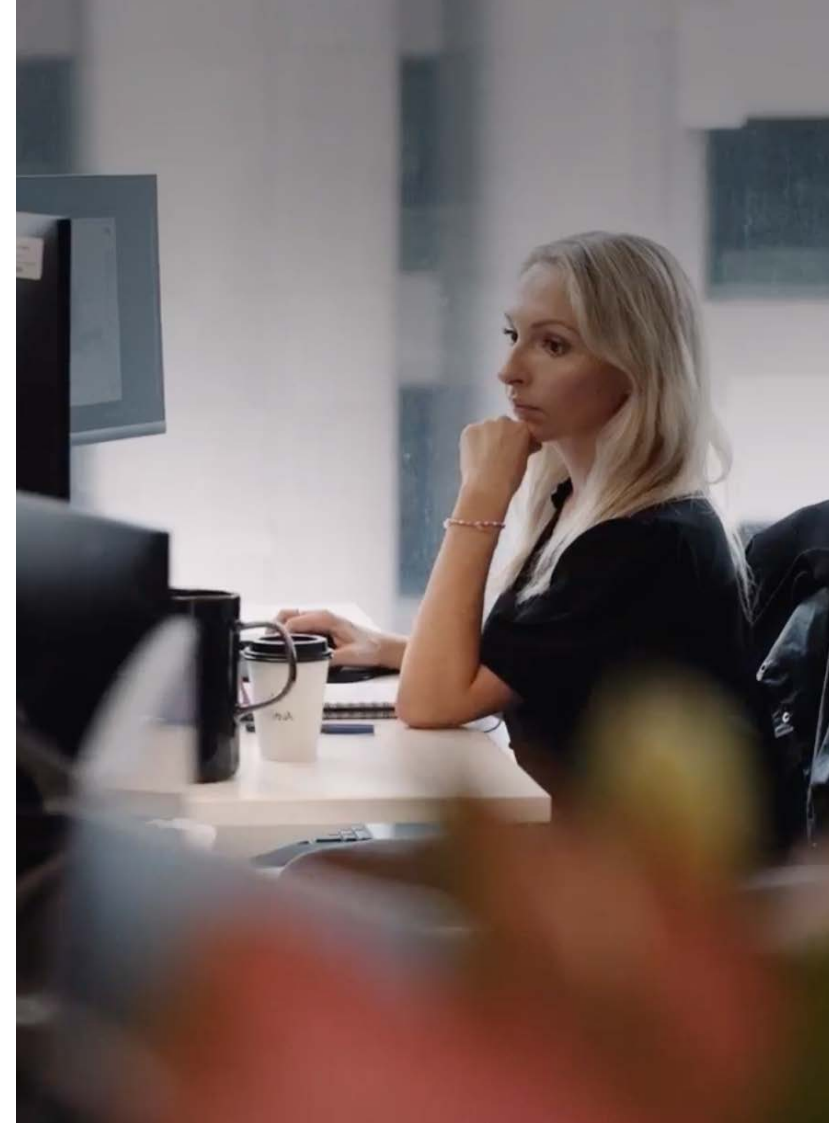
For anyone who wants to get into this industry, prioritise cadetships and site experience. Also, take your time to choose your pathway rather than rush through it because the industry has several career pathways.

Why This Role

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My first experience on the construction site was so much fun and it motivated me to get into the industry. One great perk of this role is having to see your project completed.

”



Lucia Lu

Senior Project Engineer

JHG



Introduction

My name is Lucia, occupying the role of Senior Project Engineer within our dynamic team. My position is crucial in managing the intricate engineering tasks that are central to our construction projects. I take great pride in leading the engineering functions on-site, ensuring that our team operates in a cohesive and strategic manner to achieve our objectives.

The Role

I am entrusted with the critical responsibility of coordination, acting as the linchpin that connects all parties involved in our projects. This includes designers, contractors, on-site trades person, their supervisors, local authorities, and the community. My role involves a broad spectrum of management, including technical oversight, commercial management, and maintaining a strong client focus to guarantee the smooth and efficient execution of our projects.

Challenges

Inherent in my role are the challenges that come with juggling technical and site-specific issues, ensuring all stakeholders are in accord, upholding exemplary standards, and meeting the demanding deadlines of our projects. These challenges call for an adaptive, solution-oriented mindset and an unwavering commitment to project excellence.

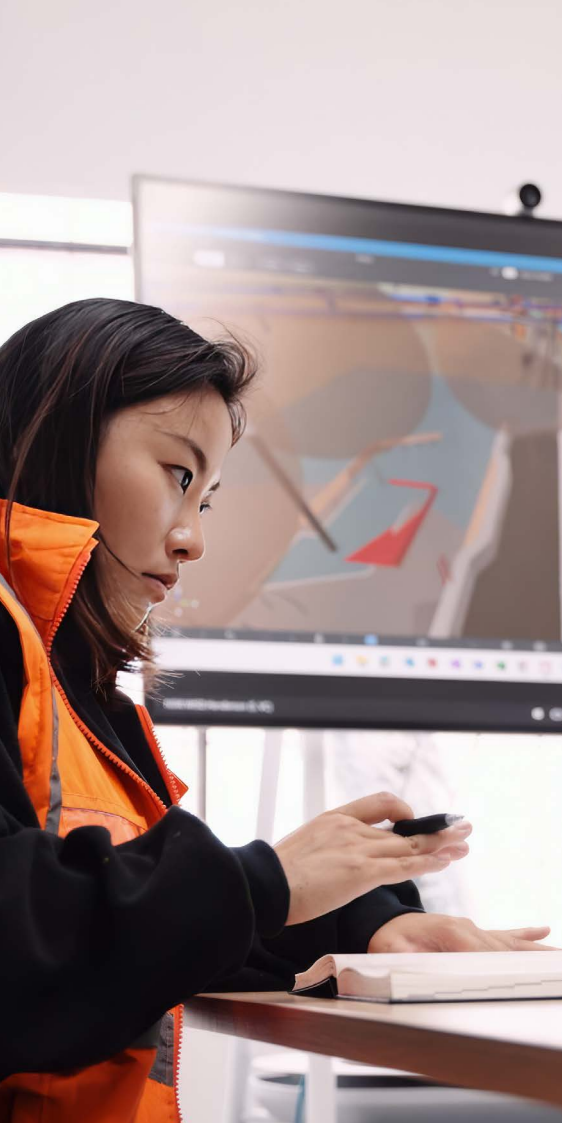


Why This Role

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I am driven by a lifelong ambition to make a significant impact in the construction industry. The dream of constructing a landmark building and contributing positively to the community is a profound source of inspiration for me. Seeing female leaders excel in this field motivates me to pursue my ambitions, reminding me that such achievements are within reach and spurring me on to carve out my own path to success.

”



Maggie Lucas

Submissions Coordinator

BESIX Watpac

Introduction

My passion for art led me to enrol in a design degree at UNSW, which was both dynamic and practical. Nearing the end of my degree, I completed an honours project in digital illustration. My lecturer at the time connected me with an architectural practice, where I began my career as a graphic designer. Over the years, I worked in various marketing and communications roles, including preparing submissions for a number of architecture practices, before eventually transitioning into the construction industry in a submissions role.

The Role

My role as a Submissions Coordinator is quite unique and may not be as widely understood, even within the industry. I am heavily involved in business development, producing tenders that guide the company through various stages of the selection process. In this role, I collaborate closely with other team members to ensure we create compelling submissions that ultimately win projects.

This role demands a critical eye for detail, strong organisational skills to manage various people and information involved, time management due to the deadline-driven and fast-paced nature of the tender process and a combination of graphic and strategic content inputs to ensure the production of stand out submissions.



Challenges

Although perceptions of the role are changing, its career pathway and remuneration rewards can still be limited or unclear, despite the significant experience and time invested in developing the necessary skills required. The role demands a broad spectrum of skills including administration, content writing, editing, design and production management and strategic marketing which can take a long time to develop. Also, the high pressure nature of this role requires a strong supportive team that can collaborate effectively and provide consistent encouragement to manage stress and maintain productivity.



“I think for anyone seeking to enter the industry, you should open yourself up to try various roles and opportunities. Be patient and don’t give up on finding a company that fosters a supportive environment and encourages you to be your authentic self.”

Why This Role

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What I love most about this role is the collaborative aspect, the ability to work closely with diverse teams in a supportive environment and foster my creativity. This role is also female-friendly and would appeal to any woman seeking a work-life balance in the construction industry, as it is an office-based role and offers flexibility. Finally, it provides me with financial freedom, something I never thought possible, which is a wonderful benefit.

”

Jade Danielle Mellor

Trainer and Assessor

Australian Trade Training College



Introduction

At a young age of seven, I was diagnosed epileptic but that didn't stop me from going into sports and other physical activities. In high school, I found that I was really passionate about the creative arts and chose performing arts but I never had the confidence to do the performing part of it. I ended up merging this arts side with design technology and that's why I went into carpentry.

The Role

A lot of people think that carpentry is just about building houses or boxes, rather it is about being creative. It is a transferable skill which can be used in various disciplines. For instance, going into the film industry and theatre for stage design, film set up in the film industry for which I worked on a film/movie production. It is not just about being on a construction site; there are opportunities to be a mentor or a trainer for other tradies as well. There is also the pathway of transitioning into project management or project coordination or even cost estimating. The beauty of skills in trades is that the acquired knowledge of the construction process propels you into further growth and advanced employment activities. There are also opportunities for self-employment such as the making of furniture that never goes out of demand. I have also come to see that with my skills in carpentry, I can easily cross-over to other trades without having to start from the beginning of the learning curve.

Challenges

A challenge in this job particularly comes up at the apprenticeship stage where you are mostly running errands, and doing menial jobs all the while wondering if this is teaching you anything about carpentry. But it is those little things like sweeping after a job that gets you noticed as a neat tradesperson. Again, carpentry like many other trades is physically and mentally challenging. However, learning to give your all in a team can make the difference in delivering a project to the satisfaction of everyone or just having a bad project. The job can be tasking physically, and it is important to go into this trade knowing.

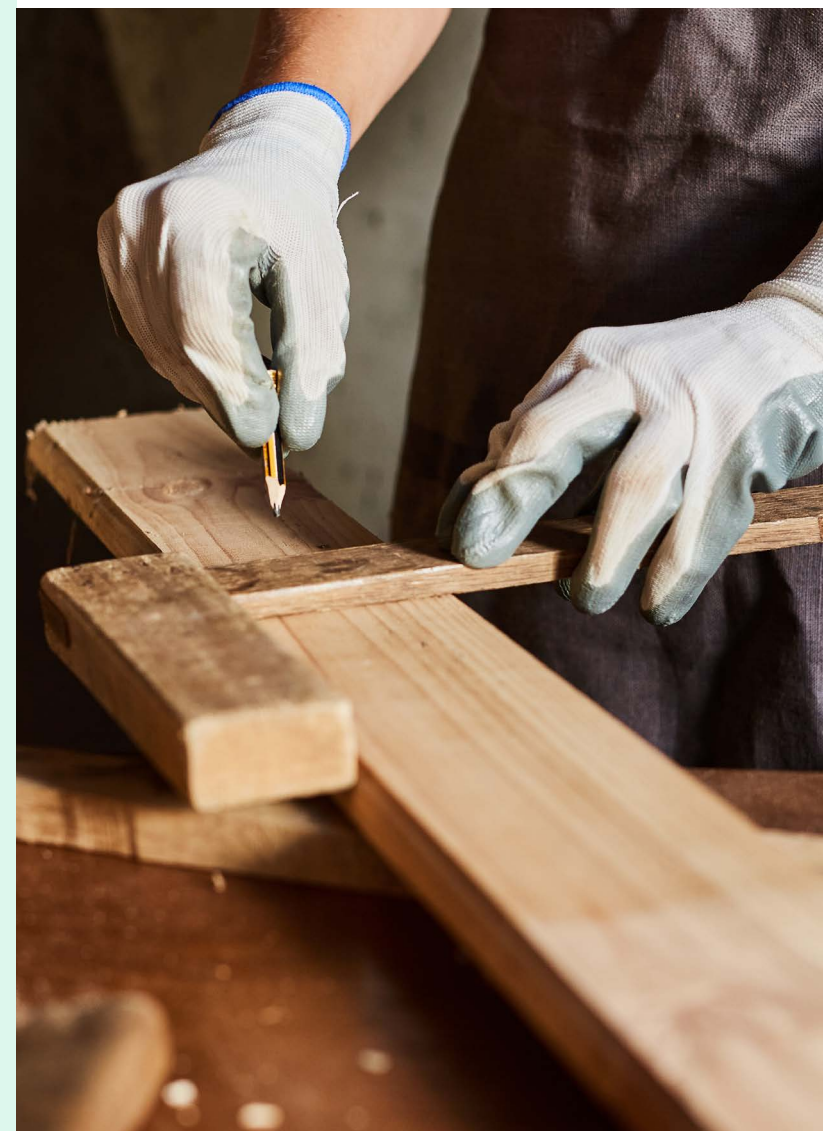


Why This Role

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Simply, I love having to see something we envision come to life. The greatest achievement in this job is having a happy client.

”



Taylor Perrin

Project Engineer

KANE Construction Ltd



Introduction

I come from a family of construction workers, with both my parents being in the industry since a young age. This meant I grew up around construction most of my life and was exposed early on in life to trades and construction.

The Role

After I completed my trade apprenticeship in 2013 at Capital Veneering in Queanbeyan NSW, I moved from being a cabinet maker at that company to a floor manager, then a site installer, and eventually, an estimator and project manager role. From this experience I was able to move on to become a site engineer at the Australian War Memorial project in Canberra for Kane Constructions. My job entails making sure I am the link between the site team on the ground and the admin team behind the program. Day-to-day, I am usually doing a lot of checks, making sure everything is going according to plan, speaking to the right people, etc. It is a sort of hybrid role, looking at a bit of everything, from management, finance, structural, etc. To do this efficiently, you need to have great organisational skills, not get overwhelmed with the pressure and workload, have self-confidence, and be able to read drawings and documentation.

Challenges

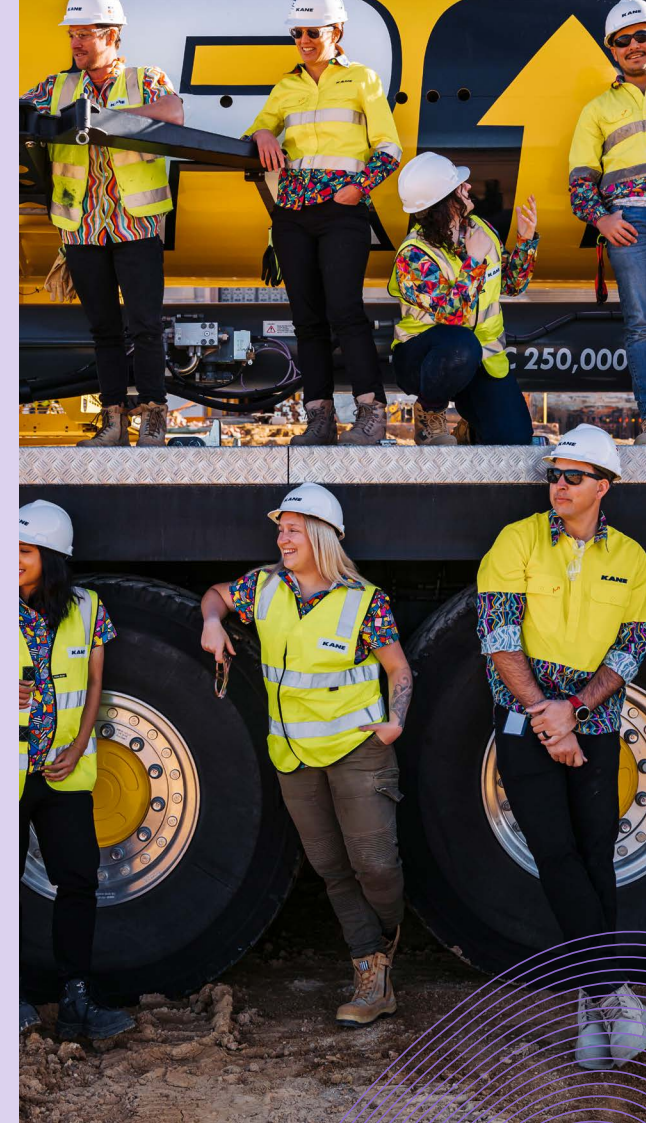
There are always rewarding days and challenging days, but I can definitely say there are no two days that are the same. The biggest challenge as a female would be to get your foot in the door at the beginning. For female construction workers and tradespeople, there are always additional challenges we face in our journeys that our male counter parts do not have to concern themselves with. In my time in the industry, I have experienced things such as doubt of my abilities, exclusion, and harassment from outside sources. I am very lucky and grateful for the incredible support and mentorship I received at Capital Veneering and Kane Constructions to build me up into the person and worker I am today. Overall, my career has been positive though. I have had some incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and met incredible people from all over Australia and the world. Like any career in construction, you need to keep working at it, keep showing up, and keep bringing your best to the job regardless of the role given to you on-site. People will see you, and your reputation will grow by giving your best. Keep putting yourself out there and be ready to try new things. The industry is not as scary as it looks from the outside.

Why This Role

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I was familiar with trades from my early exposure, and I was also taught in primary and high school that having a trade is something that can provide a young person with financial stability, a good work-life balance where you can be creative, active, and see your work come to life. Being in the trades is an incredible career choice, giving you financial freedom, travel opportunities, and, what's more, you can use this skill in different countries, which doesn't limit your relevance worldwide. I have been able to experience the world in many amazing ways because I chose to have an exciting career in construction and trade.

”



Alison Scotland

Chief Executive Officer

Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council

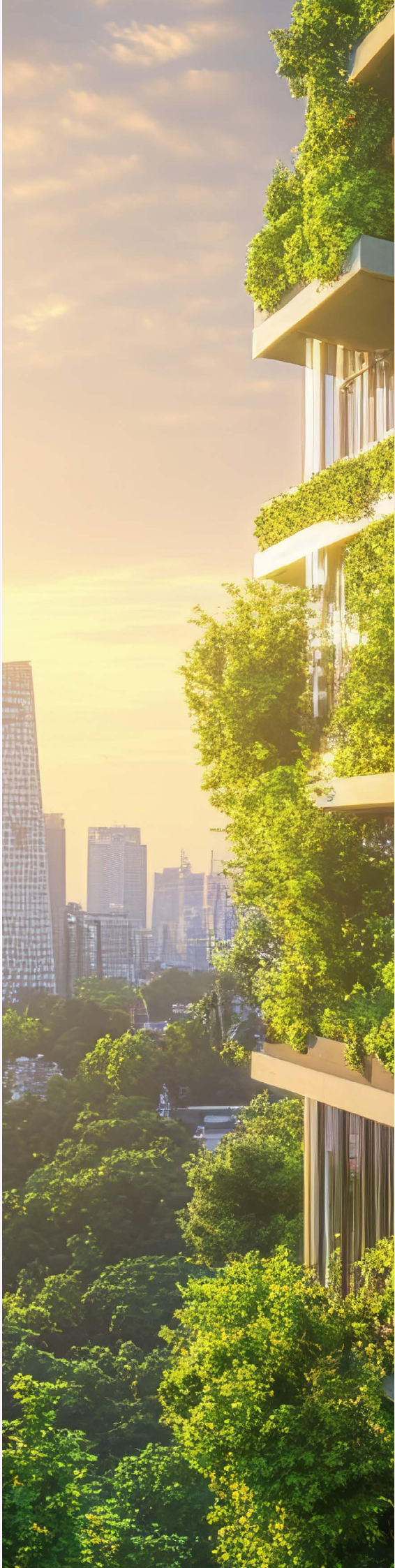


Introduction

Growing up, my dad was an electrical engineer and my mum juggled a part time job at a bank and getting us kids to and from school (no before- or after-care those days). Growing up with an older brother, I always wanted to be like him and was determined to do whatever the boys could do. I must have been naturally inclined to leadership positions from an early age, being vice-captain in both primary and high school. I have an undergraduate degree in Science and Communications, and was able to gain valued experience through internships and cadetships during these years. I also have a Master of Business Administration. My professional experience spans both private and public sectors and I try to seek continuous learning throughout my career, such as through various leadership courses for board directors.

The Role

My role is more understood as complementary to the construction industry, working in the policy and technical space. While I may not have always donned hi-vis on the construction site, I am involved in collaborative discussions with government and industry to make it better. My role looks at interventions and policies in the industry seeking to make it safer, more sustainable and more productive for all the players involved. I am also involved in mentoring, leading, training, and offering support to organisations within the industry.



Challenges

First, I am a woman, I am small and look young; that visual bias alone is something that I have had to overcome time and again. Often the only female in a room full of men throughout my career, I was mindful that I had to work harder to prove myself, be heard and my opinion regarded.

Why This Role

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I am passionate about the built environment sector in Australia because there is so much opportunity to make a positive change in the industry. In my previous role, I had the opportunity to engage the players in the built environment to develop standards for the industry and I believe those relationships have made me more effective and impactful in my current role.

You can be a leader and still have empathy and be modest. It is not about throwing orders around and waiting for results. For me, I am happy to be vulnerable as a leader and show my femininity. I have found that my lack of ego and lack of power play is a strength – because collaboration is really how you get things done. I am also very lucky to have some phenomenal role models over the years who helped shape me and my values.

”

Emily Taylor

Project Engineer

BESIX Watpac



Introduction

My father is a builder, my brother is a carpenter and my two grandparents are carpenters as well. I did not want to go into the university without any practical knowledge about construction, so right after gaining admission, I reached out to my current company and they accepted me as a cadet, and that is where it all began for me.

The Role

I do a lot of quality management to ensure that whatever is being done on the project site fits the design and key requirements. My job is very dynamic, in that I am never doing the same thing day-in or day-out. Usually, my job roles change as the project changes or depending on what project I am working on. I could be a quality manager on one site and then a manager of the sub-contractor trades on another project. I am the person on the project site trying to make everything buildable.

Challenges

Personally, managing people can be quite challenging as you have to manage everyone on the project with different personalities. Also, the construction site itself and the construction process can be very unpredictable. There is always something on site that has not been anticipated. In this role, I have to get comfortable being wrong or making errors, learning from them and moving on.

To be good at this job, you must be resilient because that resilience will get you to see the work done. Time management and being time conscious are essential. Also knowing how to delegate tasks and people management are also good skills to have in this role.



Why This Role

“

I really like the challenges this role throws at me. I like the feeling of knowing I solve a problem and the sense of accomplishment it brings to have completed a project. This role taught me early to accept that I don't know everything and that people will not always agree with me.

”



Christelle Tuyau

Contracts Administrator

BESIX Watpac



Introduction

I never planned on a career in construction but rather fell into it. In high school, I studied Business and Information Technology and majored in Marketing and Business Technology. After that, I found a marketing role within a signage company, which had ties to a fit-out company. From there I moved to the fit-out company in a marketing capacity and when that fit-out company was being bought out, I followed the project manager to a construction company, and that's how I began my construction career. Whilst working, I completed a Bachelor in Construction Management.

The Role

My role as Contracts Administrator is very important because it is a key role that is responsible to assist in the management of the money that comes from the client that will be paid to a project's subcontractors, while making sure it fits within budget and maintains company profit. Every project looks at cost, time and quality, and cost is always a big part of all projects. It is my job to ensure that costs do not go beyond budget forecasts, which can be quite difficult in an ever-evolving market. In the downstream part of my role, I work with tender negotiations, quotes, and subcontractors' scopes for works that are needed to complete the project. Upstream, I work with the client and administer the head contract, working with the Project Manager, Commercial Manager and Contracts Manager. I would say the Construction Management degree in the university is an essential certification to work in my role, but it is important to realise that a lot of knowledge is gained from working in the role itself. To be good at this job, you need to be confident in your decisions. You should have an understanding of emotional intelligence because you are also constantly dealing with different people. Being detail-oriented is important, to avoid errors and mitigate any losses (of money).

Challenges

The challenges in this role may be that at the start it can be overwhelming knowing that your decisions could lead to the projects loss or affect overall margin. There are a lot of technical industry aspects I encounter, and this role would have been more challenging if I had not gained prior site experience. Working with a variety of personalities can also be a challenge and that is where emotional intelligence is very important to manage working relationships. I have also realised, females coming into the industry are unaware of the expectations they may face.



Why This Role

“

Seeing all the numbers on the spreadsheet come to life gives you a sense of accomplishment, that is, being a part of a project team is an amazing feeling despite the challenges the role brings, being mentally challenging.

”



Shannon (Xiaona) Wang

Property Portfolio Manager

Cushman & Wakefield



Introduction

I began my journey as an international student in 2012, pursuing a Master of Translation & Interpreting at UNSW. After graduation, I unexpectedly entered the property development field. Over the next four years, I gained a wealth of experience across various areas, including residential and commercial development, project management, sales, marketing, and leasing. In my final year with the company, I discovered a keen interest in commercial property management, which motivated me to explore it further. This passion led me to join JLL and then Cushman & Wakefield, two global leaders in commercial property management, where I spent several more years refining my skills and expertise. Additionally, I chose to pursue a part-time Master of Property and Development at UNSW, which allowed me to blend academic knowledge with hands-on experience, further enhancing my skills in the field.

The Role

A property portfolio manager is responsible for overseeing and managing commercial properties on behalf of property owners or clients. My role encompasses a wide range of duties aimed at ensuring the smooth operation, maintenance, and profitability of these properties, which include lease management, rent collection, arrears management, budgeting & financial management, and client relationship management. A successful commercial property manager is skilled in multitasking, problem-solving, financial management, and maintaining positive relationships with tenants and clients. The role is integral in ensuring that commercial properties run efficiently, remain compliant with regulations, and generate optimal returns for the owners or clients.

Challenges

The biggest challenge I face in this role is managing a large volume of properties while also maintaining strong client relationships. Clients often expect timely updates, clear communication, and quick resolution of issues. Ensuring each property is managed according to the client's objectives, while maintaining high standards, requires careful attention to detail and a proactive approach. Balancing multiple tasks, meetings, and deadlines demands time management skills to prioritise urgent matters effectively.

The property industry can be demanding, making it difficult for women, particularly those with family or caregiving responsibilities, to maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, there is growing recognition of the need for increased diversity and inclusion within the sector. Initiatives such as mentorship programs and efforts to boost female representation in leadership roles are helping promote equal opportunities for women. As more women break barriers, the industry continues to evolve, creating new opportunities for future generations.

Why This Role

“

Dynamic & Varied Work – No two days are the same, with responsibilities spanning lease management, stakeholder engagement, client meetings, and financial planning.

Evolving Industry – The property sector is constantly growing and adapting to market trends, regulations, and economic shifts.

Impact of PropTech – Emerging property technologies are transforming the industry, offering innovative solutions for efficiency and asset management.

Networking & Growth – The role provides opportunities to build strong professional relationships with investors, tenants, and industry experts.

”

Renee Zaitouni

National ESG Coordinator

ADCO



Introduction

I've been in the construction industry for nearly 20 years, though my career began in a completely different field. In high school, I was interested in a timber trade, but opportunities for girls in construction-related trades were limited. Instead, I completed an apprenticeship as a pastry chef after leaving school. After working in various roles, I eventually transitioned into construction. A few years in, I pursued further study, and while completing a Bachelor of Business, I discovered my passion for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG).

The Role

My role is dynamic, supporting the implementation of ADCO's strategic initiatives. I advise the business to ensure that our ESG initiatives align with our overarching business plans while ensuring compliance with current policies and legislative requirements. I actively contribute to leadership working groups such as the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group, the Modern Slavery Working Group, and projects focused on measuring our emissions and developing pathways to Net Zero, all while enhancing our social impact. This involves continuously exploring innovative ways to communicate and facilitate these plans across the business.



Challenges

One of the biggest challenges I face is ensuring that initiatives proposed at the business level are relevant and can be effectively implemented at the site level. Bridging the gap between high-level strategies and actionable steps on the ground can sometimes be difficult, but it's a challenge I'm committed to overcoming.

In this role, organisational skills, communication and data analysis are all key. However, I believe that a passion for driving change is just as important. Progress may be gradual, but the resolve to see change enables you to develop the best strategies that would benefit everyone involved.

Why This Role

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Beyond the dynamics of the role, as a proud Aboriginal woman, my commitment to creating equality for future generations is a key motivator. This position allows me to drive meaningful change, which is both rewarding and fulfilling.

At ADCO, strong support mechanisms have played a key role in my professional development. The Women of ADCO program, mentoring support, sponsorship for the Property Council of Australia's 2024 500 Women in Property program, and various learning and development opportunities have all been instrumental in helping me grow in my role.

”

Mishelle Yam

Associate Director,
Project Management

TCubed Consulting



Introduction

I am an Associate Director at TCubed Consulting. TCubed is a project management and quantity surveying consultancy. I specialise in client side project management services with a focus on stakeholder management, design management, contract negotiation, risk mitigation and sustainable construction. Alongside my professional role, I have recently embraced the profound journey of motherhood. I also run a personal styling and lingerie business that focuses on supporting women to feel confident and empowering women in their daily lives.

Early Career and Education

At 18, I embarked on my academic journey in architecture at the University of Melbourne, envisioning a future as a glamorous architect depicted in cinema. Six months in, reality reshaped my aspirations, though I persisted, completing my degree and furthering my education with a Master's at the University of Western Australia in Perth. My post-graduate years coincided with the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, a tumultuous job market led me to a pivotal role in academia and research. There, I innovated on flatpack housing projects that mirrored IKEA's efficiency, aimed at supporting Western Australia's mining communities.

Professional Shifts and Growth

My career trajectory took a global turn with a move to Hong Kong to work in an architecture firm. This role tested my limits and set the stage for a significant career pivot to retail store development, where I joined H&M, the global fast fashion giant. This position honed my project management skills and opened up opportunities across Asia, including a strategic transfer to Singapore to lead store development initiatives.

In 2016, I returned to Australia to pursue an MBA at UNSW while working as a Design Manager with a contractor. This period was marked by intensive learning and professional growth, managing complex retail construction projects nationwide.



Transition to Project Management

The next phase of my career began with a move into project management, where I utilised my contractor-side experience to excel in client-side project management. This included overseeing a wide range of projects from retail to mixed-use developments. The highlight was managing the construction of the southern hemisphere's largest data center for NEXTDC, an ASX Top 50 listed company. This project not only challenged but also expanded my expertise in large-scale project management.

The Role

Today, as the Associate Director of Project Management at TCubed Consulting, I leverage my extensive background to provide client-side project management services across multiple sectors. My role involves leading project delivery strategies, ensuring timely execution, and managing stakeholder relationships to achieve optimal project outcomes. As a project manager, I always emphasise hands-on project execution, risk mitigation, and successful delivery for clients.

Challenges

No two days are the same in my role. I am continually meeting with clients, consultants, and internal teams to drive projects from planning through to completion. My daily activities might include site inspections, developing procurement strategies, reviewing tender proposals, or conducting stakeholder engagement sessions. Each project presents unique challenges, from navigating financial feasibilities to ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks.

Why This Role

“

I chose this role for the opportunity to lead high-impact projects that shape the built environment in meaningful ways. My focus is on direct project execution and delivery, working closely with clients to bring their visions to reality. This role has allowed me to apply my expertise in project management while deepening my understanding of risk management, contract administration, and stakeholder engagement.

Each project I manage aims to enhance urban environments, making them more liveable, accessible, and sustainable. Through strategic project management and a focus on client and community needs, I strive to not just meet but exceed expectations, fostering positive change through each initiative.

”

Feng Zhang

Cost Manager

Linesight - Global Construction Consultants

Introduction

As a child, I was always drawn to activities related to building. My curiosity about construction grew when I transitioned from high school to university. While browsing a brochure outlining potential courses, I came across the term “quantity surveying.” I had never heard of it before, but the name intrigued me. Though I didn’t fully understand what it entailed at the time, it sparked an interest that would shape my career path.

The Role

A simple way to understand the role of a quantity surveyor or cost manager is by comparing it to being an accountant in the construction industry. We handle anything related to money within a project. Titles such as cost estimator, cost consultant, and quantity surveyor are often used interchangeably, and I believe their differences are subtle. “cost manager” is more commonly used in the U.S., while “quantity surveyor” is a British term.

As a quantity surveyor/ cost manager, I am involved in pre-contract and post-contract management. During the pre-contract phase, my responsibilities include budget setup, feasibility analysis, pre-tender estimates, and tender analysis. Once we move into the post-contract phase, my main duties shift to tasks such as monthly progress valuation, variation assessments, and providing cost-related advice to the client.

I believe that having strong technical knowledge in construction is crucial in this role. It enables you to measure quantities accurately and identify any potential costs not explicitly outlined in the documents. This insight helps clients better understand the true cost or risks associated with their projects.

Challenges

One of the key challenges I see is how we can leverage new technologies to improve our work and understand how these advancements might impact both costs and the construction process.

For someone entering this field for the first time, it can be intimidating, as many construction professionals can seem daunting. In this job, you’ll be working with a diverse range of people, each with their own attitudes and ways of approaching tasks. Adapting to these varying personalities is an ongoing challenge, but it’s an important aspect of the role.

I believe that young students should keep an open mind when choosing a career path and focus on doing something they are passionate about. Having mentors is essential in this industry, and I strongly recommend finding guidance from experienced professionals to help you navigate the journey.

Why This Role

“

There is a sense of fulfillment that comes with being part of a project and seeing it through to completion. This profession is also very accommodating to women and offers great financial rewards. The role isn’t confined to an office; you also get to experience life on the job site, which broadens your knowledge and perspective.

”

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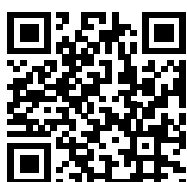
Project Officer:

- Yenny Bendatu
Email: y.bendatu@unsw.edu.au

Project Chief Investigators:

- Associate Professor Cynthia Wang
School of Built Environment, UNSW Sydney
Email: cynthia.wang@unsw.edu.au
- Associate Professor Riza Yosia Sunindijo
School of Built Environment, UNSW Sydney
Email: r.sunindijo@unsw.edu.au

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