

Celebrating International Women in Engineering Day

23rd June 2019



Root2 Recruit meets Harriet Thompson, an undergraduate Civil Engineer!

#TransformTheFuture

Every year on 23rd of June, International Women in Engineering Day celebrates the inspiring global achievements of past and present women with careers in the engineering industry worldwide! Originally established in 2014 to mark the Women's Engineering Society's (WES) 95th anniversary, since launching International Women in Engineering Day has grown enormously, receiving a UNESCO patronage in 2016.

To mark and honour the inspiring women transforming the engineering industry, Root2 Recruit caught up with [Harriet Thompson](#), a third-year undergraduate student from Nottingham Trent University studying Civil Engineering! With not long to go until she's a qualified Civil Engineer, Harriet is currently on her placement year in industry, working for Civil Engineering Consultancy, [COWI UK Ltd](#). Harriet gave us an insight into what inspired her to study Civil Engineering, the challenges she faces and how female engineers are transforming the future in a male-dominated industry.

Hi Harriet! What were the main reasons for your interest in joining the industry of engineering?

One of the main reasons was that I was always good at maths at school and thrived off being able to solve problems - which is what engineering is all about!

On a daily basis I am solving problems and thinking of new ideas I can incorporate into my work. The other main reason was the inspiration from my brother, who is also a Civil Engineer.

Are there any particular female engineers from the past or present who you feel have shaped your understanding of engineering and have encouraged your drive in studying to be an engineer?

During secondary school I attended a talk called 'Women in Engineering' which was delivered by a female engineer, Elspeth Finch.

Hearing this talk and her past experiences and the challenges she faced to progress to where she is now really inspired me. She emphasised the need for women in the industry and that it was becoming more acceptable in society for women to follow careers in engineering.

How do you feel that female engineers are transforming the future?

I think that now there are more females in engineering, it's challenging the perception of only men being engineers and that women are just as competent.

I think another important reason is that it encourages women in other male-dominant jobs, not just engineering, to seek authoritative roles instead of allowing men to take the senior positions.

What challenges do you feel you face as a woman in the engineering industry?

From personal experience, I have never had to face any significant negative challenges being a female engineer, however I found that during University it sometimes felt as though the female engineers were deemed to be less competent by my peers.

Also, I remember feeling a little intimidated by the ratio of men to women when I started my first engineering job, but I have never faced any problems with male engineers taking my opinion less seriously.

Is there anything you feel society can do better to value women in engineering?

I think that schools should certainly promote engineering more, in particular to girls, as I would probably not have considered engineering if it wasn't for finding more about it from my brother.

Again as a society, we should look to reduce the stereotype of predominantly males in engineering and should promote women in engineering on television and social media.

Where do you intend to take your career in engineering?

Ultimately, I want to become a Chartered Civil Engineer in a few years' time after I have graduated from University. As I am currently working for a consultancy, I would like to carry on gaining a few more year of experience in the design aspect of Civil Engineering and then hopefully move onto project management.

As I am involved with the design work for some of the UK's biggest projects, I hope that in the future I can become the project manager of them instead!



A big thank you to Harriet for talking to us at Root2 Recruit about her experiences as a woman in the engineering industry! We're wishing her the best of luck in the future as a Civil Engineer transforming the future!