

ROSA HEARN

BRIGHTON BEST INTERNATIONAL

Product manager, head of global marketing, chairwoman of WIFI and 2018 Woman of the Year in Business – Brighton Best International's **Rosa Hearn** shares her professional triumphs and tips for other women looking to succeed in the fastener industry...



How did you get into the industry in the first place?

I was working as a cashier in Carl's Jr when a temporary agency representative handed me her card, mentioning she liked how I was handling the customers. She said, "when you're ready for a change, call me." That same week, I was offered a promotion to become a shift manager at Carl's, and while I was proud to work there, I knew it was not my future, so I quit and walked into the temporary agency the next day.

The sales agent remembered me and asked if I wanted to go for an interview that same day for a receptionist job at Bolt Products. I was hired that week as a temp. I was so scared to have my first office job at 18 but I worked very hard and didn't want to disappoint the representative who placed me there.

Bolt Products made me a full-time employee within two weeks of being on the job. That was 27 years ago, and I have been in the fastener industry for 25 years.

What kind of work does your department do?

I am very fortunate to be part of three departments. Each department helps me grow on a day-to-day basis. I enjoy completing sales which give me the opportunity to brush up on my Spanish. I am able to be more analytical by managing a product line. I also get to be creative and manage a great out-of-the-box-thinking team. These three departments together help me execute the company's vision. I am also able to bring in different perspectives and insights to each project I do and help the team visualise the big picture.

What does your day-to-day job involve?

Working for an international company makes it a little difficult to have standard working hours. →



"Deeply entrenched stereotypes ensure most girls reject the idea of a career in construction, manufacturing or industrial jobs"

Usually my day starts at 5:30am answering emails and prioritising my day. I work on any technical or price-related questions first, then I start working on my marketing duties and sales inquiries throughout the day.

Some days, I am at a customer's facility doing training or basic sales calls. Other times, I am at a trade show or conference.

What are the best things about working in the industry?

What I like most about the fastener industry is the opportunity to change it and grow within it. The fastener industry has been around a long time. It has history, longevity and stability. However, because it is so traditional change is slow, but that is the best part! Technology, social selling, going international are a few examples of how a company can grow, create new departments and reinvent themselves. To be able to create a new department because you speak a different language, or the ability to embrace new machinery, makes this industry so exciting to me.

Can you pick out any particular career highlights or milestones?

With the support of Brighton Best International (BBI), one of my highlights is to build tomorrow's workforce and provide career opportunities to high school and college students.

There is evidence that links business involvement with fewer dropout rates, and when students see the relevance for pursuing a career in a specific industry, they are motivated not only to stay in school but to do their best. This helps create positive growth within the community over the long-term.

I believe every student should have equal access to education, experiences and career opportunities that will help them reach their full potential.

Do you have any advice for other women thinking of stepping into the fastener industry?

My advice for women stepping into this industry is to have confidence. I really believe the biggest challenge for women overall is oneself. Self-inflicted challenges like giving up, stubbornness, limiting your own potential, lack of focus, negative thinking and poor due diligence keeps some women from being successful regardless of their position or industry.

You have no idea how many men have come up to me at tradeshow and asked, "How do I get my female employee to accept a promotion?" Many of these promotions come with travel, extended hours or doing something out of their comfort zone. Whatever the reason is to not accept that position, every woman should believe they can do it and do that job well.

What would you say to anyone that is put off by a male-dominated culture perception?

My advice is simple: if you are uncomfortable with something, voice your opinion. Do not be afraid that the office is male-dominated. You work hard and have every right to speak up. Stand up for yourself and command respect. I will never let

WIFI is a regular fixture at industry shows, reaching out to women in the fastener sector





Rosa Hearn has worked in the fastener industry for 25 years

myself go unheard, and that confidence has been instrumental in building my credibility and brand. Confidence is important when it comes to promotions as well; I work hard and I am not afraid to ask for it.

Do you think there is a stigma attached to the industry that keeps young women from entering it?

Most women are influenced to join the industry by a family member who working in manufacturing or the industrial sector, but in general, academic children are not going to consider the trade, though they may enter that industrial or manufacturing sector via further education and university as architects or engineers. Non-academic boys will readily apply for a position in one of the trades, but deeply entrenched stereotypes and immaturity ensure that most girls will reject even the suggestion of entering the construction, manufacturing or industrial job market themselves. It is more comfortable to conform than to differ.

What unique qualities and perspectives do you think women bring to leadership, specifically in this sector?

Females perform construction, industrial and manufacturing tasks as well as males. Women bring to their employment many soft skills recognised as important by other industries: communication, ability to empathise with the customer, attention to detail, multi-tasking and so on.

What do you think has kept women from getting more of a share of the leadership in the industry?

The women I know in leadership roles have worked intensely to earn their positions. There is no magic to this. They focused on it and walked the talk. Instead of always focusing on what

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women need to do to increase their leadership chances, manufacturing or industrial companies should concentrate on preparing men to work more effectively with women and training more women on the operations side of the industry.

What progress has been made in integrating women into the manufacturing and industrial sectors?

The US manufacturing and industrial sectors have become increasingly sophisticated and the introduction of female-friendly work policies has increased as well. Employers who offer flexible work schedules, day care and the ability to perform assignments through technology have made it easier for women to participate in our industry.

What more do you think could be done to further women in the industry?

I believe the way the sector can inspire females to enter the industry is by concentrating its energies on the adult women new entrant. Once women are in the 26-35 age group, they also have experience of the job market and – more importantly – life. They want to be able to provide more for their family, overcome socio-economic barriers, and even plan for old age.

Because they have acquired these values, adult learners are more driven and resilient. They have more at stake and so exercise tenacity and work ethic. These women can more than fill the gap while we wait for our school graduates to gain interest.

Also, the industry must change the perception of what a manufacturing or industrial working person looks like and put new faces to the profession so that it seems like an attainable career for people, for either gender and across ethnicities.

What are you seeing with regards to women in the industry now that inspires you?

There is little support that such women can tap into, one exception is Women in the Fastener Industry (WIFI). WIFI is a non-profit organisation whose main purpose is to empower, support and promote women in these male-dominated occupations. WIFI run workshops throughout the country, and its offices are based in Illinois. Here, over many years and through several incarnations, a group of dedicated women has worked to achieve these aims through providing activities focused largely on the fastener trade.

Any woman is welcome to get involved and we do ask for membership. I am proud to be the current Chairwoman for WIFI. We run very basic courses, some held for men and women, but all seminars are taught by skilled and qualified professionals. We do not offer trade-level training but hope to inspire and inform women who may never have considered fasteners before.

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