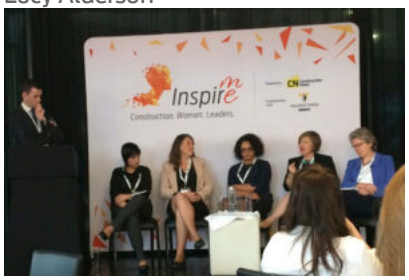
CN BRIEFING

Real solutions to the gender shortfall

18 OCT 2018

Lucy Alderson



VolkerWessels UK chief finance officer Naomi Connell knows a thing or two about challenging wo environments.

During her time at London Underground, where she was finance director between 2003 and 200 Connell was part of a campaign to get more women into the organisation and to change working conditions for female staff.

"At that time in London Underground, we had a real problem," she recalled. "Less than 10 per cen drivers were women." Both physical and structural changes were needed to move forward, she explained

Groups of people could control the scheduling of timetables and give their friends the best shifts, Connell explained. Even going to the toilet was made difficult, with the men's cubicles located at station platform level while the women's toilets were above ground.

"Female train drivers literally had to radio ahead to book a slot [to use the toilet]," she said.

Ms Connell was speaking at *CN's* Inspire Me workshop in Birmingham this morning, where the issu retaining and promoting women in the industry was one of several challenges debated.

So what did London Underground do about these problems?

Family-friendly shift patterns were introduced, allowing both men and women to fit the school ru between work. London Underground's female train drivers began attending career open days, ain attracting more young women into the organisation.

The campaign helped to change London Underground's culture. "Now, you'll often hear a women voice over the London Underground intercom," she told attendees this morning. "It was about op people's eyes and changing the fundamental structure of how the operation ran."

Construction would do well to look to other industries to see how practical step-changes can be r

Ms Connell pointed out that, while great work had been done in our industry, the fact she was am just a handful of executive female directors on top-10 UK contractor boards remained disappoint

It's not just at larger companies where the problem exists.

Maria Coulter, chair of the Construction Industry Council's diversity and inclusion panel, suggested gender imbalance among specialist SMEs in particular represented a "massive issue".

She recognised that smaller companies often lacked the time and resources to think about how t their businesses properly.

This widened their gender disparities, she argued, and created a "negative attitude at the bottom industry".

Linking health and safety with changing behaviours towards women (and diversity as a whole) o one way of tackling this, some Inspire Me delegates proposed.

Several companies are now incorporating behavioural training on treatment of fellow workers alongside their safety programmes.

Through this, sexism on site – from casual discrimination through to harassment – can be gradua reduced, bridging the gender gap and improving delivery by creating more cohesive project teams

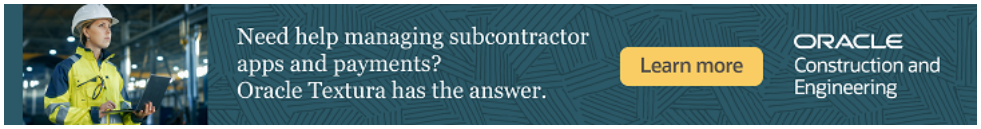
One delegate discussed how taking site-based staff off site to learn about harassment or gender equality led to a "rolling of the eyes". But the subject being introduced into toolbox talks or morni safety briefings, led to a much more positive response.

These are just some of the many points discussed at today's Inspire Me workshop – and you can j conversation too.

CN is hosting the next workshop in London at the CN Summit on 21 November. Registration for pl will close next week and spaces are filling up fast.

Email megan.pringle@emap.com to register your interest, places are limited due to capacity.

To make a step-change in the industry, we need men to support the work we are doing. Come and us next month and help move this industry forward for everyone.



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