INTERVIEW SUSTAINABILITY BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION FENCES

„Construction sector is no longer a purely male domain."

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INSIGHTS

Angelina Marko is responsible for ensuring safety on PORR construction sites. In the interview, she reveals why she enjoys her job so much and describes her experiences as a woman in this industry.

How did you come to join PORR?

More than 25 years ago, I did an internship at a PORR subsidiary and started working in the planning department right after school. Ever since, I have been a dedicated PORRian –body and soul. I should point out, however, that I only gradually came to work PORR itself over several stations and through various corporate mergers. Four years ago, I had the opportunity to switch to the field of occupational health and safety.

What is your current remit?

As an occupational health and safety officer, I am responsible for advising and training all construction sites and companies in Styria and Carinthia with regard to employee safety. I check the construction sites to see whether all legal requirements are fulfilled. I am also increasingly involved in the planning stages to ensure safe working conditions on the construction site in the work preparation phase. When a serious accident occurs, I immediately go to the construction site, supervise the team, investigate and seek to resolve the cause and communicate the lessons learned nationwide to ensure that such accidents can be avoided in the future.

Have you always wanted to work in the construction industry?

I had no idea about the broad range of opportunities that the construction industry offers, but I knew right from the start that I wanted to pursue a technical profession. My decision to enter the construction industry was also quite a change from the professions in mechanical and electrical engineering that other members of my family pursue.

What do you particularly like about your job?

I have the opportunity to work with and help many diverse people and characters. My job is a consultative role, which suits me perfectly. And one of the best parts of my job is that I get to visit numerous construction sites. It is this diversity that makes the job so special. I couldn't think of anything better right now.

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How would you describe the career opportunities for women in the construction industry?

The business is very varied, and there are countless possibilities. It's not just construction, there are so many related aspects that are extremely interesting such as the innovative technologies that are currently being developed. The difference to the technologies at the outset of my professional career is already quite striking – they are really two worlds, which is very exciting. And it all depends on teamwork. If you like that, the construction industry is the best place to work.

Your work frequently takes you to construction sites. Can you tell us about your experience as a woman?

I have heard many times over that construction sites operate quite differently when the team includes women – whether they are in the accounting department, in civil engineering, construction management or in the back office. The atmosphere is more pleasant, more relaxed, and the way people communicate is different. Many of my former colleagues, who are currently working without women on their construction sites, would gladly see female colleagues on their team again. Simply speaking, a diverse team is the basis of success. I believe and hope that this will happen increasingly often in the future. The construction industry is no longer an exclusively male domain.

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How can we attract more women to the industry?

Construction sites still often have a bad reputation. There is a general perception that interactions are very rude and that women would not be able to assert themselves. But that's not true. Female employees are generally treated very well, with respect. And the work is exciting. But it will probably take some time before this message gets around. In the meantime, we can contribute to making sure the message does get around, and we can show young people – especially women – how the industry really ticks. PORR already does this very successfully in many areas, and gender equality has become a reality.

What contribution can men make to help advance gender equality?

They don't really have to do much – simply treat everyone on the construction site on equal terms and accept and perceive women without reservation. I was lucky that my team never treated me differently. But it is clear that everyone must show their mettle, regardless of whether they are male or female. I also believe that the manager's role model function is important: when a male team leader respects a female team member, everyone else will treat her with respect as well.

Do you have any tips for women who are thinking about a career in the construction industry?

Just forget about the prejudices because reality is most certainly going to be very different.