

Anonymous, Spain



“Training is the key. A solid technical background will support your idea in front of a sceptical team and being updated in the last technologies and developments will pave the way for your professional growth.”

Her professional background

- MSC Civil Engineer and master specialization
- 8 years of experience in transport sector, maritime and railway.
- Key Account Manager in the railway sector

Her story

Transport and logistics sector is not the first-choice sector for women in Europe (22% is such a small percentage), and the rest of the world is not refuting this situation. Even so, still some ray of hope can be found.

Have you ever heard about a woman working in transport sector story? Our interviewee had a happy childhood that she spent playing, studying and dreaming about what she would do when she grew up. When she was young, she was aware of the importance of obtaining a university degree, but she would have not known which would have been her future job until some years later. When she was 18 years old, she chose civil engineer by her own initiative and with her parent’s support. She studied for 5 years (degree and master specialization) and then she started

to work in the transport and urban services, in the fields of urban mobility, ports, cities planification, railways. As most of her mates, she chose a career path to follow and kept fingers crossed to find a challenging inspiring job, where she could grow and learn day by day.

Let’s start from the beginning. When she achieved her university degree, she unfortunately entered the job market in the middle of the economic crisis of 2008. It seemed too complicated to find a job as a civil engineer, so she decided to keep on studying, and reoriented her career path towards management in the transport and logistics sector, by attending a master specialization. An internship in a transport-related company was included and she immediately realized that it was the perfect way to get a foot in the door of a company and to start her career.

Although, she entered a well-known Spanish shipping company and a traditionally male-dominated sector (20% female workers), times were changing, and she did not expect to experiment any gender bias. At the beginning she learned a lot from the company and was grateful for the knowledge she received. However,

although she proposed to attend specialized training courses, she was not allowed. She felt disappointed: *“It is widely recognized that the most prepared an employee is, the better he/she will accomplish his/her tasks and the more confident he/she will be in his/her workplace”*.

Men were employed in responsible positions, whereas women were not considered, despite their high training. The straw that broke the camel's back happened when the company denied her the chance to apply to a job for a position of higher responsibility inside the company without explanations. She witnessed how her male colleagues, with less experience were climbing the career ladder. In fact, all the responsible positions were assigned to men while better qualified women, worked in administrative departments. Our interviewee initially learnt a lot about the maritime sector in the company but, it did not matter how hard she was working, she hit a glass ceiling in the company and her achievements and capacities were barely recognized. Frustrations grew until she decided to leave and to try her luck in a different field inside the transport and logistics sector.

This was how she landed in the railway logistic sector, another masculinized world, another challenge to face and other stereotypes to break down. However, this time it was different. She entered the company as head of logistic operations that means, she was in charge of organizing the operation of movements within the railway terminal and assigning equipment for their realization. At the beginning, it was not easy to make her team trust her: *“My colleagues could not understand why they were told what to do by a young lady”*.

She had to justify all her decisions, highlighting that her choice was the best option for the company. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that she was always supported by her chief, what helped her in gaining respect when dealing with her colleagues, even with senior employees.

“In this company I was given from the very beginning the opportunity to give my opinion, change and improve all the operations that I saw were being performed improperly. They gave me the opportunity without knowing me and bet on me and my way of working. I believe that without the support of your superiors and without sharing the same goals for the company it is very difficult to change the vision of the sector and swim upstream.”

Despite the initial barriers, she never gave up, she proved her value day by day and nowadays she is a Key Account Manager. She oversees big customer projects, focusing on teams and resource efficient management. She has already reached almost the top of the career ladder, but she thinks that she still has possibilities to grow personally and professionally. She does not put limits on herself. It is inspiring to see how optimistic she is, after all the difficulties she came across during her 8 years spent working in the transport and logistics sector.

“Be strong, be target-oriented and most of all, trust yourself, your principles and your ideas. In this way you will be able to create great teams that will follow you as they’ll see you as a leader.”

Her company is still far from the achievement of the gender balance (only 1 out of 3 employees are women). However, changes are about to appear, and she is going to be part of them. Our interviewee was invited to give a speech to master’s students to show a typical working day in a railway company. She shared with the students a different vision of the sector and a practical view of the professional world providing technical and centralized information on rail and multimodal terminal. Showing the application in the professional world and how a railway terminal operates

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What’s more, she highlighted job networking as one of the more helpful tools to achieve results inside and outside her company. However, as a woman an extra effort is still required: *“Be strong, be target oriented and most of all, trust yourself, your principles and your ideas. In this way you will be able to create great teams that will follow you as they see you as a leader.”*

She strongly believes in the crucial role of education: in teaching children from an early age that there is no female or male education, or female and male jobs. It is vital to foster girls’ participation in STEM degrees and that would be possible if more female role models were accessible and most of all, more visible. Will our interviewee be the next role model in the railway sector? Who knows, so far, we are glad to have had the chance to share her story with an audience that, we are sure, will be inspired by this insightful experience.



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