

## Lucy Prior, UK



Source: LinkedIn

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### Lucy Prior’s professional background

- Business Engagement Director with 3Squared.
- During her career, she worked with different railway companies.

### Lucy Prior’s story

Lucy Prior, business engagement director at 3Squared, moved into the transport industry ‘by luck’, according to her.

After finishing a degree in languages, she was recruited almost immediately to work for a hardware company, selling depot maintenance products for trains.

Her career progression took her to different railway companies, and currently to 3Squared, showing how passion and commitment can open spaces in the industry, independently of your background: *“There was always a challenge, having to know the product I was selling, its interface with the vehicles, etc. Developing a degree of technical competency has always been a challenge, but an interesting one.”* Lucy went from selling train equipment to her position today by knowing her products, how things fell into place in all the environments she’s worked in, developing a good level of technical competency by being curious and dedicated. Although she has faced challenges in her 16 years in transport by not

being a male engineer, most companies have championed her progress: *“I had a lot of supportive male champions on gender inclusion.”* Policy and peer support helped her navigate through male-oriented and engineer-dominated environments.

At 3Squared, based in Sheffield (UK), she works with young railway professionals, women in rail and many trade associations, on one of which she is deputy chair. After a brief period in a software company, she was headhunted by 3Squared, a company committed to equality and aware of the need to self-evaluate and improve their policies and actions:

*“We have subconscious bias training, work actively at uni and school recruitment events, advertise on our website, with gender neutral language, we have Disability Confident rating, and we are looking at the redesign of all our software to achieve the maximum accessibility score we can (as a UI, but a great example of our awareness).”*

A recent interview with 3Squared's HR manager, Cherry Limb, is available [here](#), showcasing the company's concern with diversity, job advertising/recruiting and the need to hire diverse staff in all areas. Lucy acknowledges there is a long way to go, but they are committed to diversifying transport's work culture and demographics. With a team comprised 1/3 of female employees at all levels, the company is aware of the need to diversify their ethnic background as well, recognising they have a lot to do and being committed to do so. 3Squared is a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME), but its committed role is essential to change the face of smart-mobility and transport, as "SME's represent 99% of all businesses in the EU" (European Commission: Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 2012), holding a lot of influence over the market and society in general. It is still working with local universities, such as Sheffield Hallam University, challenging gender stereotypes in rail and tech-related courses where women's representation is low.

Lucy recognises the existence of gender barriers in her career and in the industry, but also thinks beyond gender. Gender barriers are there, but she asks rhetorically "*Is it as simple as gender though?*", resonating with TInnGO's multifaceted approach and commitment to equality and intersectional understanding of transport culture and society. Lucy mentioned that Age, for instance, is an important demographic in any policy. Gender and age expectations, alongside a lack of women's representation in certain fields, can also influence women's self-esteem, confidence, and perceptions of peers of their abilities and capabilities: "*I know I have to battle my own imposter syndrome, and that in turn must affect how people perceive me. [...] One angle is for not being from engineering, and other is not being in a "young" category. Very early in my career I remember going to careers where I was the only woman aside from a waitress. Sometimes it's surprising to see there are other women in the room [...] It's good to see such fact is changing, but you feel like it's harder to put your point of view across not being a male engineer, to be considered*".

3Squared's recruiting is incentivised to look for new talent outside of regular advertising sources,

going through varied and diversified channels. For Lucy, a company "can't be what you can't see", meaning it is important to talk to staff and to outreach, "recruiting groups to align the company's image with its intended policies and diversity actions". "Supporting local schools and youth clubs" is a piece of advice Lucy gives us: "*Reaching out to the young population and presenting them career possibilities they might not be familiar with or considered, especially girls in relation to STE(A)M areas.*"

From the ground-up, gender concerns are an important item in 3Squared's agenda, from boosting career levels to tackling gendered perceptions in the workplace. "*We have some amazing ladies in senior roles, but we have to tackle the mid-career, help bring more people up, not to let maternity leave hinder your prospects or progress and we do need to challenge the gendered perceptions of what is 'good' e.g. bossy girl or a confident boy?*" The company is currently helping to raise supply chain awareness of the need for inclusive design and public consultation, also on letting manufacturers know how important this is and who is using it. 3Squared is also translating concepts of policy language, regarding age and population, to speed up communication processes between sectors.

***[Being part of the Networking]... "as meeting people and making connections might not have an immediate benefit for yourself, but it can help someone else."***

Lucy is also involved with [Women in Rail](#), with STEM networks and many engagement programs: "*As an employer, the sector needs to show that it is a good career for all, and this ties back to the effort you make to a) find diversity and b) show off the benefits of this: there is so much evidence now to prove that a diverse workforce = more successful companies in whatever way you measure it. [...] As a service provider, transport designers, planners, providers, approvers need to truly and totally embrace inclusive design.*"

Networking is an important tool for Lucy, “as meeting people and making connections might not have an immediate benefit for yourself, but it can help someone else.” “Doing that, you create a lot of meaningful and important connections. It instils positivity, helping each other, without it we don’t create new ways of thinking, an inclusive approach.” It is important, in her opinion, to let students, girls, people with disabilities and many more, know what’s out there, the environments and workplaces they could feel comfortable being part of.

Lastly, her experience tells us how expectations and social perceptions of gender can be challenged when work environments are open to diversity and understanding. When asked about her gender as a factor in her successful story, she believes she has “[...] succeeded ‘regardless’ of being a woman [...]”

Such affirmation showcases that gender expectations, especially in certain professional areas, undervalue professional women, something Lucy helped change in places she’s worked and in the people she influenced, challenging gender misconceptions and influencing her environment:

*“When I was pregnant with my child to fiddle with the train’s tools and things, the blokes were scared, there is a kind of protectionism around it. They were always worried about the weight I was carrying when I was with my second child. When I say ‘regardless’ of being a woman, again, certainly the trade association I was working for, they recognised the fact that diversity is a good thing, that different people have different points of view, bringing such things into the conversation. I was enabled in that way, but because I can be like the lads if I want to be, I can hold my own and not be talked down by men [...]”*



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