



Diversity and inclusion stories:

Pensi

Maintenance Engineer, Eurostar

Listen and get inspired by Pensi as she talks about her experience of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

First off, tell me about you – what’s your name and where do you work?

My name is Pensi and I work as a maintenance engineer for Eurostar.

That sounds really interesting. Can you talk a bit more about what your role involves?

I mainly work in a workshop where we repair faulty parts that come off the trains. I also work on the train, carrying out modifications.

How did you get into your job?

I got into this job by doing an apprenticeship with Eurostar that lasted 4 years. I spent the first years of the apprenticeship scheme at college full time, studying towards a BTEC LEVEL 3. In the second year I was on day release at college and started practical training, working alongside the maintenance teams inside the depot. In Year 3 & 4 I was working on my HNC Level 4 whilst still working in the depot.

What do you think was the biggest factor in helping you get the job?

I think what made me successful in my interview was making sure that I was prepared for it. I did this by researching the company beforehand. This showed being proactive and using my initiative, and that I had gone out of my way to find out useful information that helped me in my interview.

How did you find training towards becoming an engineer?

The industry I work in tends to be very male-dominated – I was the only woman on my course when I started studying to be an engineer so I felt like I needed to prove myself more than the others. I wanted people to see me as an engineer. I remember my first day of college, going into the engineering building and someone asking whether I was lost. This really motivated me to work hard as I didn’t just want to be as good as the boys, I wanted to be better. I’m definitely a stronger person for it.

It’s great that you felt motivated rather than let that situation knock your confidence. How did you feel when you first started your job at Eurostar?

When I first started working in the Eurostar depot servicing the trains, I thought I would feel as though I didn’t fit in but I have a supportive team at work who are always encouraging and helpful. We are like a big family who help each other out when the other person needs it.

It’s great that you have such a supportive team. What are some specific ways you help each other out?

For example, sometimes I would get worried about tasks that can be quite physically demanding for me, but there is always someone to help. Likewise, if someone is struggling with any fiddly electronics or anything that involves working in a confined space, I am there to help. We always utilise each other’s skills which makes me feel equally valued to my male counterparts. When I took on a deputy team leader role, it was my team who encouraged me to apply for the position. Without them I don’t think I would have gone for it.

Aside from your colleagues, how does your employer help you feel valued and supported?

On a day-to-day basis, we have a team briefing every morning where we discuss what jobs we have for the day, safety briefs and any concerns/problems we may have. I feel like I have the opportunity to speak up when I have an issue. We also have personal development reviews that are one to one with our manager. This gives us the chance to discuss how we want to develop within our role (i.e, more training courses or a bigger variety of work).

What's one thing you've learnt from working in a male dominated environment?

From working in a male dominated environment, I have learnt that It doesn't matter what gender you are, engineering can be for anyone. Also, I have learnt that you should never doubt your ability and that you are stronger than you think.

What advice would you give other young women looking to go into engineering?

I would advise young women who may be interested in engineering or other typically male-dominated industries to look up communities online such as The Women's Engineering Society. They give out awards for successful female engineers and do a lot for promoting women in engineering. I went to one of their events at the beginning of my career and remember feeling so inspired.

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