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SHELLY-ANN WILLETTS

BRIGHTON-BEST INTERNATIONAL

Shelly-Ann Willetts, Sales Manager at Brighton-Best International UK takes part in the latest Women in Fasteners feature with *Torque Magazine*...

How did you get into the industry?

I started at BBI when I was 19, I had never been in the fastener trade previously. It was my first full-time 9 to 5 regular job and my career has just progressed from there. I have been here over 11 years now and there have probably been four or five steps from where I started to where I am now. I have been involved in every aspect of the business and I will turn my hand at anything that BBI needs. I was given a great piece of advice early on and that was to make yourself the go-to person, and effectively, that's what I did.



→ **What does your day-to-day job involve?**

It could be anything depending on what is happening in the industry or where we are in the month. So it could be anything from doing large customer enquiries/orders, some form of HR, EDI testing, customer visits, organising our exhibitions (like Stuttgart or Torque Expo) or to our QMS, the potential is endless. There is always going to be a reactive element of my day-to-day role because of what we do. It might be a quality issue, pricing, orders or something operational. Actions will have a domino effect on certain things, and then that triggers another job, so no two days are the same. You have to change hats consistently.



where they are now, I enjoy seeing that hard work come to fruition. I love doing the exhibitions, I enjoy meeting our customers and building relationships. I am a people person. I work with an outstanding team and we are very transparent here. I've never known a company like it, I think that's why we do things as well as we do. Because if there's any problem then we will all be involved in it and have some acknowledgement or awareness of everything. The communication here is extremely strong and we all work really hard.

What do you think needs to be done to encourage more women to get involved in the fastener industry?

I think it's happening naturally anyway. I think it's becoming more and more evident that women are a growing presence within our industry. There's not many companies today that we deal with where there's isn't a female member of staff. More and more of the key people we work with are now women, which is promising and it shows progress if you compare it to 5 years ago.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the industry and company since you started?

It is quite hard to quantify because I feel like in the past three years, we've had three big changes. COVID, Brexit and anti-dumping. They have all come very close together so it's hard to tell which has had the biggest impact. People within the industry were lacking a lot of information and knowledge on all three which has had a substantial impact. Goods are taking a lot longer to move within our industry across all levels of the supply chain in comparison to years gone by but to know how much of that is due to Brexit, COVID or ADD is difficult to pinpoint a percentage. All three have impacted our industry significantly in both good and bad ways. Brexit and the ADD676 impacted us more operationally than COVID and we've spent a lot of resource adapting and streamlining to accommodate these changes. So effectively, while all of these issue were challenging, they were all triggers, so to speak. Once you've done what you need to do with that component, you just kind of move on to the next one.

Can you share some of your career highlights and milestones so far?

I would say my highlights are if I look at this company from when I first started here, to where we are now. The difference between the two and the level growth we have achieved in that time; knowing that I have played a part in that is rewarding. A lot of this is down to how slick and efficient we are. We're constantly evolving and consistently improving the operation, the product, the customer service, everything from start to finish. We're always, always improving. We strive on being the best. The progression of BBI as a company is unreal, and I know I've grown at the same time alongside it. I look forward to see where we will be in 10 years' time.

What is your favourite thing about the fastener industry?

Achieving results. I like putting the graft in and then when it comes to the end of the month or year, when all the sales figures are in and we run the numbers on where they used to be and

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However I've always been fortunate, as BBI UK have always had quite a few women working within the company since I started. I don't know whether my vision is a bit closed on this just purely because I've never known anything else. A large portion of Brighton Best staff globally are women, we have a lot of women in senior management positions from our CEO, branch managers, regional managers, product managers etc. A lot of our women are heavily involved in Women in Fasteners (WIFI) and similar things. It has never been a conscious thing, it was never really distinguished. Women being involved was not actively promoted but it just naturally happened.

Any final thoughts?

Gender doesn't really make that much of a difference anymore. Success is all down to personal attributes; positive attitude, motivation, work ethic and commitment. All of those attributes combined with a woman is a force to be reckoned with. When you put women together, powerful things can happen.

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Women hold key positions across Brighton-Best International's UK hub. We talk to some of the team about their experiences working in the fastener industry...

Lisa Hood
Sales Account Manager
Top left

Everybody needs fasteners. Whether I sit there and think they're as good as a pair of shoes, it's not the same thing. But if you look at everything, whether it's at home, or whether you're walking along the street, it's always fasteners keeping something together, otherwise everything is going to fall apart. It's quite an interesting industry, knowing that you're dealing with something that is essential and that everybody needs.

Cathryn Sturch
Accounts Payable
Top right

I'm new to the fastener industry and Brighton-Best, but it's great. I really love it. The people are nice, and you couldn't want for a better team. They are really supportive and will answer any questions I have.

Katy Woodhouse
Inside Sales Representative
Lower left

As long as you can do the job, I don't think it really matters whether it is a male or female. Here it is purely coincidental that there are more women than men, although when you step into the warehouse it's different. I've never felt any prejudice towards being a female in this industry.

Marta Sibelska
Sales and Exports
Top centre

I find the fastener industry really interesting as there's loads of different little things. Before I started, I didn't know the difference between nuts, bolts, fully threaded and these sorts of things. But the more I look into it, there is so much more I need to learn, and I find it very interesting. I feel that women are accepted well in the industry and I haven't come across any negativity.

Kymerley Da Costa
Sales Team Leader
Lower centre

I love my job. It is different every day, nothing is the same. There is always a new challenge, and it is never the same kind of thing, so you are forever learning, evolving and getting better at what you do.

Tracey Bond
Inside Sales Representative
Lower right

I have been in the fastener industry for around eight years, and I'd never done it before but found it quite interesting. People might think, there's nuts, bolts and washers, but it's incredible how many different items there is out there. I have a habit wherever I go, I identify different fasteners, you get obsessed. They are literally everywhere in everyday life. Fasteners hold the world together and I find it quite fascinating.