



Female job applicants demand respect



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Women in Road Transport made a significant impact at this year's Road Transport Forum Conference. Not only did we have an exhibition stand promoting the role we play in the industry, signing up members, and generally providing information on what we do, but we also ran an auction, which managed to raise more than \$4000 for WiRT to help our activities over the next year. Without a doubt, it was a successful event.

However, the short session we had in the conference's plenary gave us the opportunity to highlight the problems that women face when being interviewed for roles in the industry. This is a major issue for WiRT and a message that we were pleased to be able to get across in front of so many influential people in our industry.

WiRT member and fuel tanker driver Mel Foot related her unfortunate interview experiences to the conference delegates and presented a powerful case for positive change within the industry.

Mel focussed her message on how a poorly thought-out interviewing style and underlying prejudice against women applying for traditional male-dominated roles can be harmful to a transport business.

She began her presentation by outlining her impressive credentials as an experienced fuel tanker operator discharging ships and delivering 380,000 litres of fuel each day; definitely not a job for the unqualified or irresponsible.

"I am a woman in road transport. I have been trained at considerable cost by my company, to the highest industry standards. My confidence in my training allows me to feel that I am a valued member of staff," Mel says.

"I am proud to work with a great team in a job that I love. I do good work conscientiously, as do all of my fellow colleagues. My gender has never been an issue because it is my skill level that is important.

"... I am here to tell you that some interviews during my driving career have been interesting and not always professional experiences. One interview, in particular, did nothing to encourage me and quite frankly, it did nothing to enhance the image of the transport industry."

“Some interviews during my driving career have been interesting and not always professional experiences”

Mel then played a video re-enactment of the interview she had that nearly turned her off our industry. The reconstruction showed at best, a bad interview technique and at worst, a gender-based lack of respect for women

even being in transport. The interviewer was late and kept Mel waiting; he had little to no respect for her experience and was basically condescending and rude.

Although it was four years ago, for Mel, the incident is difficult to forget. Luckily for her and us, she moved on from it and is now a valuable highly-competent member of our industry. The video is available on the WiRT News page on the RTF website and our Facebook page and I encourage operators to watch it as an example of what not to do.

Changing tacks, I have been alerted to an exciting opportunity for aspiring female leaders through Woman and Leadership NZ.

Set to take place on 23 November in Christchurch, Emerging Leaders is a One-day masterclass that will assist new women leaders to increase their skills and knowledge, enhance their understanding of effective leadership, and engage in a powerful, peer-orientated, shared learning experience.

The principal themes are purpose-designed for women who are looking to become great leaders in their workplace and/or community.

Twenty seats are available at a discount of 60% (\$395 per person rather than the standard \$995 per person) by entering the coupon code EL18 at the time of booking. ■

For more information and to book, visit womenandleadership.co.nz/emergingleaders.html.

