

Alice Vincent discuss how she got involved within the rail industry after studying theatre at university, her career highlights and also shared her advice to those who are thinking about getting involved in the industry.

Theatre to RAIL

Please could you give Focus readers an overview of your career?

I first started as a Marketing Assistant at East Midlands Railway and when doing a couple of roles within the marketing team, I grew to love the industry.

I was given the opportunity to work on the mobilisation team for Abellio and essentially my role was to help facilitate the removal of the East Midlands Train's brand and start to implement the East Midlands Railway brand. That was a fun and intense four months where we wanted to present this change in a really lovely way. After being involved with that for a couple of years, I then found myself in the property team, looking at new development opportunities, projects and station refurbishments or rebuilds. From there I moved to Great British Railways (GBR), where I am today, working on the brand implementation plan for Great British Railway.

At university you studied theatre, what inspired you to get involved within the rail industry?

I initially at the time was just looking for a job and I still have this passion for theatre and love watching it as an audience member, but I realised I didn't want to be an actor. I came across the Marketing job at East Midlands Railway and thought I would only be within that role for 12 months. I just ended up carrying on, learning and getting different roles in the industry and I feel lucky to have landed this opportunity.

I also want to share that despite not having any previous rail experience I have still gained transferable skills from my degree going into the rail industry. You can still get into this industry despite your educational background, there's so many varied opportunities and you'll find something you really love. I would say don't let that hold you back because if you have that interest, take that next step. Theatre students are confident, quick thinkers and have the ability to work well under pressure and I think it is important to highlight these qualities that have helped me in my career.

Could you tell Focus about your current role as Senior Project Manager at GBRTT and how you are making a difference in the industry?

My job is kind of split so initially, I look at the brand strategy for GBR and the vision for that brand. For example, I look into where we want to go, where we are now as an industry and how we want to galvanise and move all our employees as well as customers mindsets into having a fantastic journey. It's about how our

customer proposition and our employee proposition are going to work together to meet that vision of loving to travel and enjoying the experience. The second half of it is to look at the implementation plan for the brand and where it needs to go, what assets does it need to sit on, what's the best way to do it and how long it will take and cost.

Therefore, a major part would be making sure it all makes sense for our customers before implementing this and calculating when is best to move forward. Brand is a department that touches all parts of the business and it's our job to ensure we surface something really simple to our customers, and don't show any of the industry complexities underneath.

What is biggest challenge you have faced in your career so far?

I often feel like I'm not taken seriously, for example if I walk into a room with people I haven't met before or join a Teams meeting, I feel there's sometimes an assumption that I'm quite junior. Of course, there's nothing wrong with being junior, everyone has to start somewhere. I unfortunately feel there is an attitude towards those who are new to the industry, that they don't have the same value as other people in meetings and that's quite hard to face. It can at times feel like you are constantly trying to have to prove yourself instead of knowing that everyone is equal in the room and everyone has something to offer.

Everything you input is really important because if one person has that viewpoint, then maybe our customers have got that viewpoint, and it helps us all to understand what we should do next. I would say keep putting ideas forward, ask questions and don't be afraid to speak up.

What is the most rewarding part of your role?

It's a real privilege to be taken out of the complexities of the operation of the railway today and be allowed to think strategically at the future of the industry about where we are heading and where we want to go. It's just so much fun to look at the ideal experience we want for our customers and employees.

I'm sure you have been involved in many projects what would you say your favourite has been?

A project I found fun was when I was back at East Midlands Railway, I was involved in the interior and exterior design of our new Hitachi trains. It was fascinating to seeing the engineers, customers and brand mind all come together, manifesting itself into this beautiful product that works for everyone. I learned so much on this

project as well from having no technical fleet knowledge to now having lots. I can't wait to be on one of the trains and remember that I was in meetings making these decisions.

Being a role model for women and a mentor with Women in Rail, what advice would you give to upcoming talent?

Say yes to everything, that's what I did, even if something isn't the most fulfilling you will always take something away from it. There are also so many opportunities within the rail industry so I would also say capitalise on it and take all of that knowledge in. Also, at times the industry can be complicated, and it may be daunting to put your hand up and say, I don't quite get that, but do not be afraid to ask if you aren't sure of something. If anything, asking questions will make people think what the right decision is and maybe it needs to be broken down in a simpler way. Overall, I would say go out there and be curious.

At the CILT Railway Study Forum, you said in your speech that in the rail industry, just 9% are under 30, why do think that is and also is there anything being done to try and increase that percentage?

I feel rail has got an image problem, showing itself as a complicated place, male dominated, pretty engineering heavy and it kind of shows that front to the outside world. It only showcases a small number of roles and there is a whole sector behind it. In reality when you are in the industry it is really innovative. There are so many opportunities, it really helps you develop professionally, personally and they really invest in your development. Fundamentally what we deliver for people is emotional, delivering connection and that is beautiful. Therefore, I feel emotion is really missing from the image that we project about the industry and I think that's really attractive factor to entice more to get involved. ✖



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