



University of Salford  
A Greater Manchester University



# Constructing Women Leaders

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**Constructing  
WOMEN  
LEADERS**



Highest rated in the UK for research in the  
built environment

# Constructing Women Leaders

## Background

The construction industry is of strategic importance to the North West of England and has an important place in the Regional Economic Strategy. A healthy construction industry is vital for the physical regeneration of the region. According to CITB Skills Forecast Report the UK construction industry is facing severe skill shortages and nearly 83000 new recruits will be required each year between 2003 and 2007. The recruitment of women is imperative to achieving these objectives and prolonging the growth of the industry as the industry cannot rely on the traditional male workforce to meet these targets.

Recent studies have shown that more women in leadership positions would help to solve a lot of problems associated with the recruitment and

retention of women in construction. According to the 2006 Labour Force Survey published by the Office for National Statistics, the composition of men and women managers in construction is 174,000 and less than 10,000 respectively. There is growing recognition that it will be impossible to build a modern nation on the basis of exclusion and inequality. The promotion of women leaders may address many of the problems typically associated with the industry. Studies have shown that feminine leadership qualities often involve participation, motivation by inclusion, power by charisma, and communication to connect or establish rapport. Moreover, women's presence at senior positions is one of the most effective ways of ensuring their participation in decision-making.

## Aim and objectives

A scarcity of women occupying leadership positions in construction has persisted in recent years despite the increasing numbers of women entering construction related Higher Education courses. A 12 month research project Constructing Women Leaders, aims to examine the underlying reasons for the scarcity of women in leadership positions in the construction industry, with a particular emphasis on the North West of England. The project will explore ways to improve the recruitment, retention and development of women leaders in construction. The North West of England's construction industry continues to expand and is one of the region's largest industries. It is also fundamental to all other economic activity. The lack of women leaders in construction has been a concern for many years, attracting government and industry wide attention.

The objectives of the Constructing Women Leaders project are to:

- Understand the role of women as leaders in construction
- Understand the barriers confronting women in leadership positions
- Identify potential remedies for overcoming these barriers
- Examine the experiences of women leaders in other sectors
- Provide recommendations, good practice guidelines and strategies for addressing the barriers (including the identification of strategic leadership skills)

The project will build upon a recently completed ESF project Construction and Women, which examined the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the construction sector.

## Activities

Constructing Women Leaders is a 12 month project that commenced in January 2007. The projects activities are structured around five work packages:

**Work Package 1** – Understand the role of women as leaders in construction in the North West of England

This will be achieved through an extensive review of the existing literature and interviews with women currently occupying leadership positions in construction. The activity will conclude with a study report outlining the current status of women leaders in construction and consideration of the benefits that may accrue from greater representation of women in senior positions.

**Work Package 2** – Understand the barriers confronting women in leadership positions in construction

Further interviews will be conducted among women in construction, supplemented by a series of interviews with women leaders in other professional sectors, such as medicine and financial services.

**Work Package 3** – Examine case studies of women leaders from other sectors

Evidence gathered in WP2 will be used to develop at least four extensive case studies that profile women leaders in other sectors.

**Work Package 4** – Provide recommendations, good practice guidelines and strategies for addressing barriers (including the identification of strategic leadership skills)

Recommendations will be developed that identify policies and procedures to help the development and retention of women leaders in construction.

**Work Package 5** – Dissemination

The final work package aims to inform the construction community, academic community, policy makers and other stakeholders, of the research findings. This will be achieved through a final project report, a project web site, a final dissemination workshop, international conference presentations, and journal articles.



## Further information

If you require further information, or would like to discuss the possibility of participating in the research, please contact:

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