

INTREPID PATHWAYS—GABRIELLE PENNOCK

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Formal qualifications

Bachelor of Engineering
(Mechanical) & Bachelor of
Science (Materials Chemistry)

Current professional role & responsibilities

I am responsible for Technical Assurance for Mechanical Equipment and Piping on Woodside's North Rankin Redevelopment Project. I work

within the Woodside project team to oversee all of the design and procurement activities for mechanical and piping for a new platform we are building, which will be linked via a bridge to an existing facility.



Current employer - type

Large oil and gas company

Overview of career in the industry

I started working as an engineering contractor in oil and gas more than nine years ago, doing project work and upgrades to existing offshore platforms and work on onshore LNG plant. I then spent 18 months working on an offshore platform (FIFO) for a major project upgrade where I was the engineer on site supervising the construction works, installation of equipment and commissioning. After that I went back into design work and spent a year working as an engineering contractor for a major LNG project. Most recently I joined Woodside as part of the engineering client team on the North Rankin Redevelopment Project at concept select phase and have stayed with the project through design and now construction.

EXPERIENCES WORKING IN THE RESOURCES SECTOR

Was working in the resources industry what you expected it would be when you were studying/training?

Working in the industry has been very different to what I expected.

If at any time you left the industry and came back, why did you leave, how long were you gone for and what motivated you to return?

I left for 6 months to go on maternity leave and have since returned to work part time.

What is the single most risky step you have ever taken your career? Did you find it paid off? Is there anything you would have done differently?

One of the most risky steps I have ever taken would be working as a field engineer, as the offshore work force was not used to having an engineer offshore and at that time did not have many females on site. It did take a while to get used to (from both sides) but was definitely the biggest learning experience in my career to date and greatly improved not only my engineering skills but also people management skills.

What would you say have been the most significant 'step changes' in your career pathway, and how have you adapted to these?

Going from university to working is the first step change. For me, transferring from office to site work was another step change and then changing from engineering contracting to working for a client company required a change in perspective and skill set. Being open minded, not afraid to ask questions and communicating with a wide range of people are important in adapting to career 'step changes'. I have also found it useful to talk with "informal mentors" – people you have worked with and who have supported you in your career.

Have you ever been in a supervisory or senior management position? If so, what are the pros and cons?

Currently my role is to supervise our contractor to ensure that the design and all decisions made on the project meet Woodside requirements. It is great to have the big picture view of what the project is trying to achieve and to be able to steer the work in the direction that best meets our company's requirements, weighing up technical with commercial and risk based decision making. One of the cons would be not getting to use your calculator and immerse yourself in the detailed design of equipment, which I miss every now and then.

If you undertook any additional formal study whilst in the industry, did you find it useful in progressing your career?

As a graduate I did a lot of courses on mechanical rotating equipment (pumps, compressors, turbines) which has been very useful in my design work. I have also done a few units in project management, which helped me understand more about project controls issues and management tools.

What have you found most rewarding about the industry and what would you most like to get out of your career in resources in the future? The most rewarding would be seeing the huge scale of production (from offshore, through pipelines, onshore processing and transmission) and designing an aspect of plant (big or small) and seeing it built and commissioned and

working within this development. In the future I hope to work with bringing more discoveries online and ensuring developments are progressed with direct benefit to Australia.

WORKING LIFESTYLE

What are your current work/accommodation arrangements?

Recently I was required to do overseas travel early on in the project to determine which suppliers we would be using for our equipment on the platform and talk about our project requirements. Now that we are in construction phase the work will be mainly office based.

Do you have a preference for any of the above particular working arrangements? What have your experiences with different types of arrangements been like?

I have really enjoyed my work on offshore platform FIFO and would recommend to every young engineer to do some site time as it gives context to your engineering work. You learn a lot about catering for the “end users”, the installation and operations people, in your design and there is no replacement for being there in person when the equipment is installed and started up for the first time.

What changes or compromises have you had to make in order to balance family or other responsibilities or interests with a career in the industry? Have you found the right balance for you?

The balance point is constantly changing. As a graduate engineer I would spend a lot more hours working as I was keen to learn and also spent personal time reading and understanding concepts. Now that I am more established in my career I find that it is more important to separate work and family time and try not to worry about work issues outside of work.

Has your employer been open to negotiating changes to your role or roster to accommodate non-work interests or responsibilities?

Yes, they are very supportive of family and also community initiatives.

BEING FEMALE IN THE INDUSTRY

What challenges have you experienced by virtue of working in an industry that is predominantly male? Do you feel you have had to adapt to 'fit' the industry?

As a female in a male dominated industry you do feel under a greater level of scrutiny and more personal pressure to perform in your role. Sometimes you do need to think about how best to have your viewpoint heard if there are other more dominant people in the room. However, I have also found that you can often let your work talk for itself, and once you have the respect from your work colleagues it does not make a difference whether you are male or female. I also think that being a female provides additional skills and interests that can greatly benefit an employer and your work colleagues as you often see things from a different perspective and