

INTREPID PATHWAYS—JANINE HERZIG

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Formal qualifications

My formal qualification was originally a Bachelor of Engineering with Honours in Mineral Processing.

Current professional role & responsibilities

I am currently a Director of a small consultancy providing independent technical support to mining companies and service providers.

Current employer - type

Small consultancy.

Overview of career in the industry

Upon graduation, I worked for 3 years as a Graduate Metallurgist in Mount Isa with MIM in the Lead/Zinc Concentrator. I left this role predominantly because of health concerns over lead exposure and also industrial unrest on the site. The next 10 years were spent in mineral sands with CRL/RGC and Iluka at various locations including North Stradbroke Island, Pinkenba, Geraldton, Eneabba, Capel, Perth and Hamilton. I worked my way up from a Project Metallurgist, Development Metallurgist to Senior and then Principal Metallurgist. I then accepted a role in Adelaide as Manager of Mineral Processing for Amdel Ltd. 12 months later I was promoted to General Manager of the Minerals and industrial division. After 4 years with Amdel and multiple ownership changes of the company I left to pursue my own business 12 months ago.

EXPERIENCES WORKING IN THE RESOURCES SECTOR

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

Largely yes. I did a lot of vacation work as a student to give me a good feel for what to expect.

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?

The riskiest thing I ever did was to accept an offer to be part of a Management Buy Out (MBO) of Amdel, alongside a Private Equity group. Having collateral in the company gave me more incentive to achieve and it paid off financially in the end but there was a cost to my health and well being.



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

The most significant step changes were going from a supervisory technical role on a minesite to a role in management in the service provider industry. Then taking the next leap within a short space of time into an Executive role. It was really a sink or swim scenario. On the surface it appeared I was swimming and excelling, but deep down I was wearing myself down physically and mentally.

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

I have been in a supervisory role for the last 15 years and in a Senior Management/Executive role for 3 years. The aspects of this I enjoyed were being able to influence major decisions, policies and strategies. Also the ability to act as a positive role model, mentor junior staff and be a leadership figure to encourage positive change in the workforce. The downside was often having to dodge bullets from above, shielding junior staff from this, and also having limited time to spend talking to and advising my staff due to constant pressures for budget and growth deliverables to be exceeded.

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

No formal study myself but I did support a number of my staff in doing so. I also championed a Leadership Development Program and Diploma for my up-and-coming supervisors.

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?

I have a real passion for the industry and I can't see myself ever leaving it. What I have found most rewarding recently is my involvement with the AusIMM Adelaide Branch Committee, Conference Organising Committees and liaison with the Adelaide Student Chapter. In the past 18 months in particular as Vice-Chair of the Adelaide Branch committee I have been very active in organising and chairing events for the Technical Social Program, coordinating our monthly newsletter submissions, speaking at special events and assisting the students with various industry events, mentoring and scholarships etc. It has been a real treat to have the time to devote to this now and I have found it to be a real source of motivation.

WORKING LIFESTYLE

What are your current work/accommodation arrangements?

Capital City based with semi-regular travel to sites.

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

When I was younger I enjoyed working on remote sites and shiftwork but now that I am married I much prefer coming home every night. My husband did a 9 month stint of FIFO at Prominent Hill just after we were married and we found this difficult.

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?

I sacrificed my life with family and friends and pretty much all other interests for the 4 years I was with Amdel. It was a highly stressful role and, being customer service, I was essentially on call 24/7. I regularly worked 6 days a week and sometimes 7. After a slow start to the business of consulting, things have taken off and I have now found a balance I am happy with. There are still times of working 7 days a week when a client has an important deadline but these are sporadic only.

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

Self-employed now. I never really requested changes with past employers. I just accepted my roster whatever it happened to be.

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?

On the whole, I have thoroughly enjoyed working in a predominantly male environment for the majority of my career. In remote locations and on minesites I never experienced any obvious discrimination. I set high expectations for myself regardless of what others around me are doing and I don't feel I behaved any differently due to the mix in the workforce. I was often the only female on a particular site. When I moved to management, initially it was positive, but I did suffer down the track with undisguised comments made in performance reviews about me "starting a family." These comments were again made when I handed in my notice. Subsequent to this, I was in an interview for a CEO role with a mining company and one of the board members was very open and crude in describing me as "Perfect on paper and with experience and credentials" but "5 years too young, too pretty and the wrong sex for the job". I think these individuals are the exception in the industry but nonetheless I found it a deeply upsetting experience on these limited occasions.

Do you feel that you faced any obstacles or discrimination by virtue of your gender in your career and if so, how did you address these issues in order to continue to progress?

I have outlined this above. Each time this occurred I was so shocked that it took me a while to process what had happened. In the first instance, I resigned from the company. In the second, I withdrew my application and subsequently the company went into receivership and the male CEO they had hired was the first one retrenched.