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# Women in the Fastener Industry - Glenda Roberts, TR Fastenings



**Glenda Roberts, Global Projects & Marketing Director at TR Fastenings, talks staying connected through hybrid working practices, company plans for expansion and her love for the industry with Torque Magazine...**

Credit: Torque Magazine

## How did you get into Fastenings?

By default, if I am honest! I was Regional Sales Manager with several American owned companies selling fast moving consumables e.g. food and beverage products to the HQs of supermarkets and pharmacies.

This was in the 1980's before computerization, and stock management and replenishment planning to ensure that the product was in the right place, in volume and on time was a very manual process. I could see that with new technologies emerging the need for large sales forces would become a thing of the past. I put my CV out with agencies and the rest as they say is history and that is how I joined a Fastener Distribution Company.

## My career Highlights and Milestones

I joined TR as Sales Director for one of the Manufacturing facilities and progressed to Sales Director for the UK and Ireland. Over time as TR developed sites around the world, I became the Group Sales and Marketing Director and formed a Global Strategic Team to manage major OEM's and their subcontractors. This proved to be a successful strategy and I joined the Trifast plc Main Board in 2011. Currently my role is on the Operational Executive Board and I have responsibility for Global Projects and Marketing.

## What are the biggest changes that you have seen in the Industry?

Without doubt it is the Modern workplace that we have today with all of the tools that we have at our fingertips. We have 32 sites in 16 countries and as a global company connectivity is key.

This was never more evident than during this Pandemic where we were able to communicate with our workforce, customers, and suppliers through video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Having data and statistics instantly, as well as search engines to assist with research and varying information, has transformed the way we all work. Adopting "hybrid" working practices encompassing the ability in certain roles to work from anywhere and still be effective, has also changed the perspective that we need to be in an office to be productive. That could not have happened even 5 years ago.

Other changes in my 31 years with TR is that we have a far more balanced gender workforce as this industry had been notoriously male dominated.

Seven of our locations have female General Managers who have progressed through the company from differing disciplines including Quality, Project Management, Finance and Sales.

## What do you think needs to be done to encourage more women joining the Fastener Industry

I don't believe that we need to do anything. The world will always need fasteners, so it has longevity and our teams



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interact globally, so it is an exciting company to be in.

I have travelled on company business to four continents, and so have a number of colleagues which gives you many interesting experiences that people rarely get in their usual job roles. It is a fascinating industry as our fastenings go into an amazing range of products from Domestic Appliances to 5G infrastructures to Electric vehicles. We are members of WIFI who promote roles for women in the Industry. I have loved being in this Industry.

## The effect Covid has had on TR and the consequences

As the Pandemic moved around the world, we saw the impact that it had quite quickly in our Asia operations. As the virus moved into Europe, the UK and then North America we saw the scale of the reduced requirements from the OEM's. So yes, we were impacted, and we felt the financial pain that everyone else did. We had a strong balance sheet which carried us through, and we saw recovery as soon as August of last year.

All of our locations, including the manufacturing sites thankfully remained open as we were classed as an "Essential Supplier" by many of our customers. This included companies in the medical sector where we worked to support them particularly with parts for their ventilator productions. We are seeing that there is pent-up demand in the marketplace for everything from washing machines, vacuum cleaners, power tools and now of course from the burgeoning electric vehicle and battery developments. We are already quite heavily involved and have received some good business awards. The challenge now, which is a good one, is in managing the volume

increases that have ramped up in the last 5 months.

From a people perspective within the company despite remote hybrid working we somehow have been more connected than ever. It has consolidated the team spirit. However, as a company we are conscious that lockdowns and working from home can also bring other stresses. We have been proactively working with anyone that needed help and providing support as for some it has been a lonely existence and they miss the office environment. We all just want to get back to whatever the new normal will look like in the future as soon as possible.

## We have a 5-year plan in place to expand

Despite the Covid situation we have invested in new machinery in Asia, Italy and in the UK to build up our inhouse capability and increase the capacity.

We are focused on new products to add to our existing extensive range, some of which are meeting the needs of the latest industry requirements in EV and BEV. We are actively seeking acquisitions of companies with a similar culture to TR to increase our manufacturing portfolio and our production capacity. At this moment in time we are recruiting in a number of our regions to further strengthen the teams, and also to bring in new skills. A good example which helped earlier this year would be where we have recruited specialists in customs processes due to Brexit which helped us through this difficult learning curve. Basically, there is never a dull moment