



Progress & Perspectives

WOMEN IN STEEL

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Where did your education and career start, and what brought you to the steel industry?

I graduated from Queen's University, Kingston, Ont., Canada, with a B.Sc. degree in metallurgy in 1984. I then went to Finland to work in a program called International Association for Students for Technical Exchange (IASTE) for Outokumpu Oy in their engineering division. After returning from Europe in 1985, I joined AMOCO (Standard Oil of Indiana) in the oil and gas industry in Drayton Valley, Alta., until mid-1986. As the industry took a downturn, I was let go and returned to Ontario, looking for a more stable industry where my skills could be used.

I was hired by Dofasco in 1987 as a direct hire into the #1 Meltshop in steelmaking technology. At the time, I was the first woman to work in Dofasco's #1 Meltshop in technology. The role of the production engineer was to do work on process and product improvements for the shop. I have since worked for ArcelorMittal Dofasco for over 35 years, in a career which has progressed from steelmaking technology to commercial management to quality systems and metallurgy in corporate project management. The last 16 years doing corporate project management have been the most rewarding, working with people across the organization and accomplishing a variety of projects addressing product quality improvement, value plan contribution, inventory reduction, metrics, benchmarking exchange work and most recently systems design work.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I am most proud of the fact that I have been able to work with people from many diverse backgrounds, from operators and production personnel on the meltshop and casting floor, to personnel in technology roles to

planners and schedulers to executives to colleagues from around the world, to achieve results. To me it has been very important that the right people, good communication and understanding of the objectives have been in place to ensure that the projects are successful. This has been my experience across my career progression at ArcelorMittal Dofasco as I started to work at the plant floor level, with small trials and a productivity and quality cost focus. Increased experience has brought with it an expanded scope of work, both technical and of influence. Projects that I have been assigned to became more complex and contributed a higher value to the organization, and began to incorporate a larger involvement of people and groups. I first expanded to working across business units at ArcelorMittal Dofasco, then across the organization internally, then externally in our ArcelorMittal organization to our facilities in Brazil and Europe and finally outside of the organization. The gradually increasing scope of the work has also allowed the results achieved to increase in significance and value to the organization, contributing to the bottom line.

In the middle of my career, after the electric arc furnace implementation was complete and the facility started up, I participated in a campaign for the promotion of Dofasco and steel with the tag line "Our Product Is Steel. Our Strength Is People." As I look back, across 35 years, ArcelorMittal Dofasco has allowed me to have a career where being a woman did not affect my career; it made it all the better because I was a good fit into the organization, and I have worked with many colleagues and made many friends across the work that I have been involved in during this time.

Can you talk about support you've received to advance your career?

I believe my career advancement can be attributed to several factors, including:

1. Challenging assignments increasing in scope. Supervision recognized me as an individual who could take on different kinds of projects, which was not limited directly to my education; therefore I was exposed to a breadth of subject matters in the consideration for new opportunities.
2. Networking, from associations such as Canadian Institute for Mining and Metallurgy, where I became the first woman to serve as chair in 1993, to Association of Women in the Metals Industry, to the Northern Member Chapter of AIST. I also recently joined the Women in Steel Roundtable at AISTech 2022.
3. Mentoring, which started with the first person who hired me, Trevor Wright at Dofasco. Many others have provided advice and technical support to go into a direction of project management. I have taken what others have done for me to heart and given back for more than 10 years, by being involved in Technology & Trades for Women presented by our Hamilton Training Advisory Board, Employment Ontario, acting as an organizer and team leader to provide young people with the opportunity to talk to women who are working in trades and technology careers.

What is the best thing about being a woman in this industry?

The best thing about the steel industry is that there are no boundaries, and opportunities are everywhere for women. At our company, you are an engineer, or technically competent individual first, and then a woman second. At the end of the day, if you are doing your job well and making contributions, you will get noticed and this opens doors. Opportunities have been made available across my career to work in diverse workspaces, such as steelmaking, facility start-ups and inventory yards, to commercial to information technology. It is also through the annual performance review process where you can let your leadership know what opportunities you would like to take advantage of or where you would like to work next, and plans can be put in place to make your objectives achievable.

Do you feel that the steel industry has become more inclusive over the years? In what way(s)?

The steel industry is becoming more inclusive as it has worked hard to make a larger, more favorable presence, being cleaner, environmentally responsible, sustainable, technology savvy and leaving a better impression on society in general. This has allowed people to be



more knowledgeable of available career options. Two examples at ArcelorMittal Dofasco include modifying our recruiting strategy to ensure we build a more diverse applicants pool to apply to available jobs and sponsoring community events, such as the Bay Area Science and Engineering Fair.

Industry and steel groups have also promoted opportunity through scholarships, internships and partnering. This allows students to access funds while promoting the industry as a great place to work with lots of career choices suiting a multitude of education specializations. I believe if students experience a workspace as a summer or intern job, and are exposed to great people, workplace culture and work, they are likely to remain associated with the company or industry.

What advice do you have for young women who are interested in pursuing a career in a field that is typically male-dominated?

The steel industry, where I have worked for 35 years, is welcoming and the opportunities within it are limitless. I think the “male-dominated” perceptions should be seen as a non-issue. I believe that women today are talented, confident in their own knowledge, with skill sets and ambitions to succeed in the workspace, and will be able to accelerate the pace of change in an industry which is striving to be diverse and inclusive. The steel industry in general is working very hard to change both its perception and makeup and is using forums like AIST and its Women in Steel initiative to strengthen its impact by sharing and developing solutions to support the change. Companies like ArcelorMittal are making commitments to build a workplace for tomorrow that is diverse and inclusive. For ArcelorMittal, part of this is setting concrete targets for women in management — the company is committed to doubling women in leadership to 25% by 2030. Deliberate targets like this open up opportunities to work and excel in a career and industry which is exciting, challenging and rewarding. ♦