



Progress & Perspectives

WOMEN IN STEEL

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Where did your education and career start?

Following high school, I attended a community college, where I earned a technical certificate in business administration. I spent a few years in the workforce applying the hands-on skills that I learned in administrative-type roles. After joining the Steel Dynamics team and exploring career opportunities, I took advantage of the tuition reimbursement program and earned my undergraduate degree in management and my graduate degree in human resources from Indiana Tech in Fort Wayne, Ind., USA.

Prior to joining the Steel Dynamics team in 1998, I worked for a not-for-profit agency serving individuals with developmental disabilities. I worked in the areas of payroll and accounts payable. I also worked for a local school system in the guidance department assisting ninth-grade students in developing their four-year academic plans as well as helping high school seniors research colleges and scholarship opportunities. While working with the high school students, I discovered my passion for people development, which led me to a career in human resources.

What brought you to the steel industry?

In a couple of words: good fortune! Steel Dynamics was building its second location, the Structural and Rail Division, in my community. It was an exciting time for our area and the news created quite a media buzz. There was much talk of good jobs in a stable industry. After doing my research about the company and the industry, I learned that working for Steel Dynamics was not only an opportunity for a job but a long-term career that had the potential to be life-changing for me and my family.

Tell us about how you have advanced in your career.

Over the course of 23 years at Steel Dynamics, I have had the opportunity to work in several positions across the company. I was hired as payroll and benefits specialist at the Structural and Rail Division and worked in that position for nearly four years. Then I moved into the role of administrative assistant to the general manager. After completing my undergraduate degree, I transitioned to human resources manager for our metals recycling platform, OmniSource. For the past 10 years, serving as the employee development manager, my efforts have been focused on training and development initiatives for our steel, metals recycling, and fabrication platforms. I am also actively involved in our technical training programs which include the Steel Dynamics apprenticeship program and the Northeast Indiana Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) program.

Can you talk about the importance of support and mentorship in order to keep women in the steel industry?

My entire career in the steel industry I have been surrounded by talented people who have encouraged and supported me.

Early in my career, I had the privilege of working alongside Dick Teets, Steel Dynamics co-founder. His passion for the steel industry was contagious and inspiring! He was eager to share his knowledge, support my career growth, and provide honest and candid feedback along the way. Dick introduced me to the Association for Iron & Steel Technology, encouraged me to be a part of the scholarship committee, and emphasized the importance of industry networking. From him, I learned many things but most importantly I learned the value of building trusting relationships with people.



As I look back over my time at Steel Dynamics, there have been many people who have played an integral part in my career growth. Many of the leaders at Steel Dynamics are learning and development champions. With their help, we have built a manager and supervisor training program that touches every leader in the organization, as well as an apprenticeship program and the Northeast Indiana FAME chapter, that allows individuals to skill-up to more advanced technical roles. While leading these programs has had a major impact on my career trajectory, they have also benefited our team members by providing opportunities for them to advance in their careers.

As someone who works to cultivate the next generation of engineers, why do you feel diversity and inclusivity are important in the workplace, and the steel industry as a whole?

I don't think anyone can be successful in their career unless they surround themselves with people who have different views and ways of thinking than they do. A diverse workforce is made up of people with unique experiences, skills, perspectives, insights and backgrounds. If an organization has multiple people thinking the same way, growth and innovation are stifled. Diversity allows a company to draw on people's unique experiences, generating a wider range of knowledge and creativity which enables problem-solving and strategic thinking. Diversity provides an organization the opportunity to look at things through

multiple lenses. To reap the benefits of a diverse workforce, an organization must work together as a unified team and respect each other as individuals. They must foster a culture of inclusivity and create a welcoming, open environment, ensuring the best ideas are heard and valued, regardless of the position or individual. When an individual experiences this type of work environment, the organization will gain the benefits of the individual's best work and ideas.

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

First, I would encourage them to do their research and learn more about the career. Oftentimes there is a lack of awareness of the opportunities and career paths available in industries that are considered male-dominated. There are negative perceptions and stereotypes formed around certain jobs. Over the past few years, there has been a gradual shift and women are now filling roles that were once thought of as male-oriented. Many women are experiencing successful careers in engineering and technical fields and thriving in workplace settings that were once considered male-dominated.

Additionally, I would suggest they identify a mentor who is willing to guide them. I would encourage them to be willing to learn from their fellow team members and be open to feedback. Lastly, I would advise them to be confident in who they are and the skills they bring to the workplace. ♦