



Progress & Perspectives

WOMEN IN STEEL

Vicki Anderson

Chief Executive Officer

Stevens Engineers & Constructors Inc.

Where did your education and career start?

I received a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from Ohio University. When deciding on a major, I knew that I wanted to study engineering; however, I did not know what discipline. It just so happened that my advisor at Ohio University was a chemical engineer. He was very passionate about the field and inspired me to pursue chemical engineering.

I graduated in 1984 and started my career at Fisher Body, a parts supplier division of General Motors (GM), where I worked as a manufacturing engineer in the production of polyurethane seat cushions, armrests and headrests. GM partnered with Ashland University to offer interested employees the opportunity to earn an M.B.A through night classes held at various local community colleges. I signed up for the program and after three years of working full time and taking classes at night, I earned my M.B.A.

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

My supervisor at GM was one of my first role models and was a great mentor. I worked very hard to do everything he expected, and I think he quickly learned he could count on me and entrusted me with a lot of responsibility. Unexpectedly, my career with GM was cut short when the company decided to divest the supplier side of the business and sell what they could to outside companies. The local union at the plant where I worked would not agree to a sale; therefore, GM closed the plant.

My immediate supervisor/mentor had an entrepreneurial spirit and pursued the startup of a new company to produce a share of the product line that was currently supplied by Fisher Body. I was asked to join his new company and I gladly accepted the opportunity to continue working and learning alongside him. This was pivotal to my career development as I came aboard as one of five principals to help run the new company.

Several years later, I was recruited to join the team at Stevens Engineers & Constructors Inc. as they had just taken on the largest project in their company history. This opportunity with Stevens offered me the chance to take on a role larger than I ever could with the startup. It was the hardest decision I ever made, but it ended up being the best decision, and I have never looked back.

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I began my career with Stevens as a financial analyst and later moved on to become the corporate treasurer for most of my career. The project that brought me aboard was the installation of a cold rolling mill for Bethlehem Steel, located in Baltimore, Md., USA. This was my first experience in the steel industry, and

I was fascinated by the enormity and complexity of the work. Since my first project, I have been involved in many other steel industry installations such as: walking beam furnaces, quench and temper process lines, caster installations, galvanizing lines, cut-to-length process lines, and many more.

What are you most proud of in your career?

Three years ago, I was named chief executive officer, and have had the ultimate privilege to lead our company on its mission to be the preferred industrial engineer and constructor of choice in the heavy industrial marketplace. As the CEO, my passion is to instill and continually build upon a culture that is committed and focused on three key core values — Safety, Family and Customer. I am most proud of the huge strides that Stevens has made in building upon these core values and advancing the company on its mission to be the best we can be.

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

My advice to any woman contemplating a career in the steel industry is to definitely pursue it! Every day, women are showing up and proving that we deserve a seat at the table in the steel industry. The work is exciting, and it is on the forefront of innovation and technology. A career in this industry promises a great opportunity for professional growth and provides a great sense of accomplishment toward ensuring our country remains a global leader in the production of steel.

Transitioning from working as a female engineer in the manufacturing sector, compared to construction in the steel industry, was like night and day. Though this field is male-dominated, I do believe attitudes have improved over the almost 30 years I have been working in this industry. In my early years at Stevens, my colleagues were always respectful, even if skeptical of my capabilities to contribute to the success of the company. Often people would raise their eyebrows in surprise when they learned what my position was. I know that it was only through dedicated service working alongside my male colleagues that their doubts were replaced with true acceptance and respect.

Has the steel industry become more inclusive?

I do not get that same raised eyebrow reaction these days, as women in high-level positions are more common. A female colleague of mine recalls that she has also felt generally accepted; however, she was always the person asked in a room full of men to be the one to take minutes. She says that does not happen



Vicki Anderson is pictured here with Mary Frankovitch, project manager, Stevens Engineers & Constructors.

anymore and she feels she has the respect from her male colleagues that she deserves.

I will always be grateful for all I have learned and experienced during my career. I take pride in being a part of an organization that is committed to improving diversity and inclusivity and it excites me to see more and more women thrive as they step into positions of authority throughout the industry. In addition to AIST's Women in Steel Steering Committee, I am also a member of the Association of Women in the Metal Industries and I strive to utilize these memberships to do my part to help advance diversity and inclusivity of women and minorities in the steel industry. The state of the steel industry will continue to grow and improve with the continued growth of diversity and inclusivity. ♦