



WOMEN NEED SUPPORT FROM TOP MANAGEMENT



MANTANKISO TSOLO | EMPLOYER



Name of Company:

John Moffat
Prolock



Sector:

Manufacturing
of automotive
parts



**Number of
Employees:**

75



Position in Company:

Head of Human
Resources



Location:

Robertsham,
Johannesburg



**Percentage
of Female
Employees:**

43%



**Company
Size:**

Medium
Enterprise





WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED SOME CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY WITH MEN NOT ACCEPTING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE, ESPECIALLY WHEN MEN NEED TO REPORT TO A WOMAN.



WORKING TOWARDS EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN

Our current aim at John Moffat Prolock (JMP), is to achieve equal representation of men and women employees in the company. This directive comes from senior management, and we are working towards 50% women and 50% men in the company – at the moment we have 43% women. We have already made some progress towards achieving this aim as two of our six employees in senior management are women, three out of five supervisors are women, and most of the employees on the factory floor and in our administration department are women.

Our focus as a company is to encourage the employment of woman at all levels, including at senior level where we have employed a female Head of Human Resources (myself), and a female Production Supervisor and Head of Engineering/Continuous Improvement Projects (Engineer) within the last year, so we are slowly moving in the correct direction. We are all about upskilling our employees and creating opportunities for growth. We assist and provide funding to our female employees interested in taking courses to improve their skills in the workplace.

We are also in discussions with our management to provide learnerships and internships to female Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college students and graduates. We want to provide them with on-the-job training when they reach the workplace, so they have the necessary training and skills to succeed.

We actively participate in the High Gear programme with the National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers (NAACAM) with the specific aim of recruiting more young women in the production and manufacturing sector. We will also be involved in the Youth Employment Service (YES) programme to provide learners with technical skills, and we hope to absorb some of them at the end of their training.

ACCEPTING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

We have encountered some challenges along the way with men not accepting women in the workplace, especially when men need to report to a woman. I think there is a general problem in many places where men have been told they are the 'head' in all aspects of their lives, both at home and at work, and so they expect everything to go through them. Another challenge we have, which I know many companies struggle with, is with equitable salaries. It may come down to job title and associated responsibilities, but I would not say the salaries are equitable at the end of the day.

PEOPLE STILL BELIEVE ENGINEERING IS FOR MEN

We have also encountered some challenges with recruiting technical skilled female employees. A lot of people still believe that engineering is for men and so we tend to find that women with engineering skills are very scarce.

We do also struggle to encourage our female employees to apply for new positions within the organisation: When we recruit, we always post the job advertisement internally first, to give our staff the opportunity to apply for the post, but we find some women are reluctant to apply because of the perception that jobs in manufacturing and production are only for men. We are working to break this mindset by educating our female employees that the duties required can be performed by women, and so we encourage them to apply.

RECENT POSITIVE SHIFTS

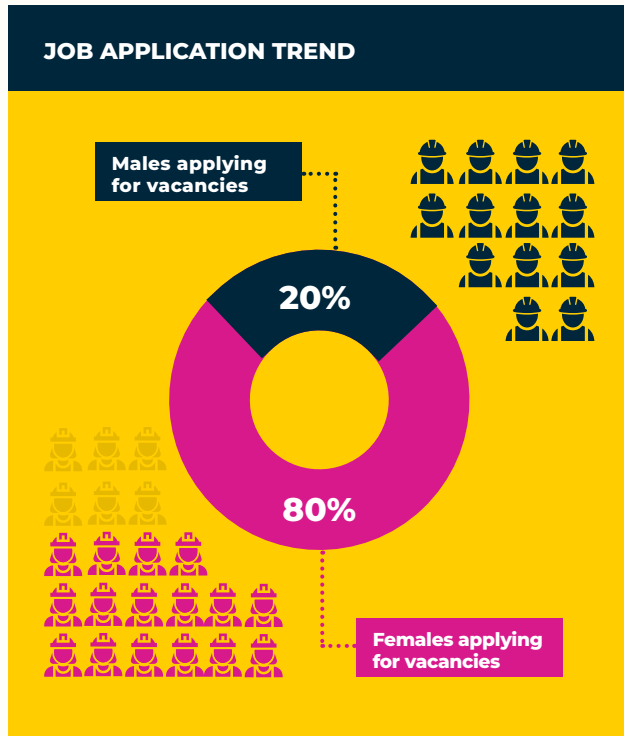
This perception that our industry is only for men has meant that historically we have seen mostly men applying for new positions, however we have two recent examples indicating a potential shift.

WE HAVE ALREADY MADE SOME PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THIS AIM AS TWO OF OUR SIX EMPLOYEES IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARE WOMEN.

TOP MANAGEMENT



I recently interviewed candidates for technical buying positions and of the five candidates, only one was a man. This is the first time we have had women apply for this type of position. We are also looking for an African female candidate for an external sales representative position and have received promising responses from the required demographic.



WOMEN NEED SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL THROUGH TO THE WORKPLACE

Increasing the number of women who pursue and remain in the engineering professions involves support through their entire career journey, from school and career planning, through university, to ensuring a conducive working environment. Promoting different career options for young women needs to begin at school level. It is about exposing them to a range of careers so that they broaden their ideas on what they would like to pursue. If they don't see women engineers, they won't know that it is a career option.

When it comes to bridging the gap between studying and the workplace, one idea to help grow the representation of women in the industry is to have a central database where companies can access students at TVET colleges or universities, or skilled unemployed candidates. This would make it easier for companies to find potential female employees who fit our criteria.

To encourage female employees to remain in their positions once they reach the workplace, a range of initiatives are required.

Women need support from top management, preferably from a direct manager with whom they can address issues and challenges as well as mentorships from senior managers. Career planning and opportunities for growth and promotion are also key. We need to recognise the dreams and aspirations of women and help them to succeed. We must also ensure women are rewarded for their contributions to the organisation through promotions.

BREAKING THE BELIEF THAT SOME CAREERS ARE ONLY FOR ONE OF THE GENDERS

There is a culture around people believing that some careers are only for men and others are only for women. Growing up there was a perception that only women should be nurses and if you were a male nurse, you would be laughed at. This is now changing as people are more educated about these things, and the same needs to happen with engineering.

We need to educate employees in the workplace about available posts and vacancies and ensure the women realise they can also succeed in engineering and manufacturing roles. The broader manufacturing industry also has a role to play to promote and encourage female engineers through education, communication and other initiatives.

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