

Dawn Fisher

In May 2008, Dawn Fisher received the Newcomer of the Year Award at the inaugural MAN Everywoman in Transport & Logistics Awards. Here Dawn tells us her success story.



- **What is your background and how / why did you come into the transport and logistics industry?**

I graduated in 2005 with a Masters in Mathematics from Bangor University. I had originally planned on working as an actuary; however, after visiting the AECOM (previously Faber Maunsell) stand at a Careers Fair in Manchester I became interested in a career in transport. I joined AECOM that August as part of their transport modelling team as this seemed the most logical role for a maths grad. The company has a policy of graduate rotation – where you work within 3 or 4 different teams for 3 months each. Following my last rotation I requested to join the freight team as the ‘kitchen rumour mill’ suggested they were the up and coming bunch. I ended up working in logistics through a very fortunate series of accidents. I have always been interested in transport and for a year around the age of 17 I passionately wanted to be a truck driver (heavy machinery seemed very cool at that age). However, a career in transport was never really put forward as an option when I was at school. I originally joined the transport world thinking my mathematical background would be perfect for a career in transport modelling. My rotation to the freight team gave me a massive insight into the extremely complex and interesting real life workings of the industry and there was no choice for me but to stay within the team and learn more.

- **What was your first job and what was your role when you entered the awards?**

My first job in the industry was working for AECOM as a Graduate Consultant (straight out of university). I had recently been promoted to a full Consultant role when my entry was submitted for the Awards.

- **Has your career changed since winning the award? What is your current role?**

Since the awards I have been promoted to Senior Consultant; which means that I manage various projects and manage graduates and consultants working on these projects within the team and in other offices throughout the UK. At the moment our team is one of the best performing across AECOM in the UK. The types of projects I work on are constantly changing due the nature of my job.

- **Have you benefited from winning the award and from any subsequent publicity??**

Definitely - I have found that some of my clients now recognise me from the awards and I did receive quite a few comments from existing clients at the time. Within consultancy the main product you are selling is yourself, therefore anything that helps to publicise you can only be a positive.

- **What do you think were the key elements in your awards’ entry, which made it stand out, and help you win the award?**

I think the main factors were the large amount of team support that came through in the entry – my Director and Line Manager both wrote cracking statements. Apart from that you’d have to ask the markers but I think keeping it simple and honest helped.

- **Have there been any times where being a woman has been an advantage or disadvantage in your career?**

Most of the time being a woman makes very little difference, although as there aren’t many women in logistics (and were even less when I joined the company) it can make you quite memorable which is always useful. Saying this, however, there are certain segments of the industry that still refuse to believe a woman might know what she’s talking about and I’ve been to visit companies and met the classic assumption that I’m the secretary to whichever male colleague I’m with. Part of the job when I started with the company involved interviewing truck drivers and transport managers and this was an

interesting insight into the way a lot of industry members think, most were brilliant, however, there is still a vocal minority with some very set opinions on women.

- **Apart from winning the award, what has been the highlight of your career so far and why?**

Joining the Freight Team full time, because this was the point where a job turned into a career. Your team is the most important thing when it comes to job satisfaction and joining the Freight Team opened up a whole world of new possibilities.

- **Are there any areas of experience or skills, which you believe are vital to career success generally?**

- Willingness to put effort in, and to go the extra mile when needed. You get ahead by getting stuck in and giving your all
- Integrity – both with clients and colleagues
- Ability to use stress as a motivator to greater achievement when working under pressure and to tight deadlines (especially in logistics)
- Ability to understand what the client wants and translate that into the end product
- Team spirit and ability to have a laugh when the time is right – helps deal with the stress
- Reliability
- You should talk to people at all levels with equal respect – the truck drivers come up with some of the best ideas
- Understanding of the numbers – it's important to make a profit or there'll be no business left

- **Has networking played a role? (Informal groups and/ official gatherings) How has this benefited you over the years?**

As a consultant networking is very important in winning work (if the prospective clients don't know about you, you may never hear about the potential jobs). Due to this I regularly attend industry conferences in order to meet potential clients and other contacts that may be helpful for the jobs I'm working on. I am also currently the treasurer for the CILT in the North West and have made a variety of good contacts through this role.

- **How would you advise members of Women in Logistics to get the most out of their personal and professional networks?**

Always keep hold of a contact's details, as you never know when you might need it and never be afraid to ring someone up and ask them a question.

- **One of the areas that Women in Logistics members frequently ask about is mentoring? Do you have a mentor yourself or act as a mentor to others?**

We don't have an official mentoring system within the company; however, I would say that I look to Geoff Clarke and Jonathan James (my Director) as mentors. Geoff's enthusiasm for logistics is what got me hooked in the first place and he has a cunning knack for knowing the answer to any question, whereas Jonathan's strategic vision never ceases to amaze. I frequently provide advice and support to some of the more junior members of the team, particularly on projects requiring a large degree of mathematical analysis.

- **What is your vision for women in the logistics industry of the future?**

I would like to see a lot more women in the logistics industry as I feel that we have a skill set very suited to the industry's needs (ability to multitask, organise and work under pressure being just a few examples). Women currently working within the industry are leading very successful careers and I would like to see this continue with a lot more new entrants and hopefully the final death of any remaining male chauvinist culture

- **What are your career aspirations for the future?**

I am looking to remain within the Freight Team at AECOM for the foreseeable future. In five years time I see myself well on the way to becoming an Associate Director. In 5 years I will likely be line managing my own team and working on a similarly ridiculous number of challenging projects – and setting my team demanding and seemingly unattainable targets that they will all meet!