

Chairman's column

by Monica Green

When I took up my role in March of this year, I decided to focus my efforts on encouraging organisations to embrace flexible working, to help attract and retain more women in the industry.

A major obstacle for many people, particularly mid-career women with children, is the lack of flexibility in the workplace. The traditional 9am to 5pm should no longer be the norm when increased flexibility such as reduced or flexible hours, working from home and job shares can be just as effective and productive.

Little did I know that just a few weeks into my tenure we'd all be called into lockdown by the Government and flexible working would become the norm, albeit with the added pressures for some of the whole family also being at home.

Mission accomplished? Sadly, not quite.

They say, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." So, the proof that

flexible working is really working will be when furlough, full time working from home, and home schooling end and we are allowed to safely return to the workplace. Only then will we know if employees and employers have truly embraced flexible working for the long-term.

I've been overwhelmed by the sense of community and support that Women in Property has delivered during the past few months. We've taken everything online, delivering over 70 webinars, five podcasts, and even announcing the regional winners of our Student Awards programme via Zoom. I hope you've enjoyed the new virtual benefits and the advantages of being part of a diverse network that aims to help you to aspire, inspire and succeed throughout your career.



Monica Green,
Chairman of Women in Property



Are we diverse?

Women in Property has always championed diversity, believing that success should be founded on merit and expertise, rather than gender. In the words of our own website "we actively seek an industry that is balanced, diverse and inclusive." However, we don't define members by their ethnicity.

Over the past few weeks, we have been talking to a number of our members, to hear their thoughts on diversity in the industry. As you would expect from any group of animated, professional women, there were many different views and opinions but two common responses have emerged; 'give us greater visibility' and 'give the next generation their role models'.

So that is what we will do but we need your help. If you would like to be visible by speaking on panel discussions, taking part in webinars, being considered for media comment or writing a blog, please get in touch (publicrelations@womeninproperty.org.uk). We are thinking sector-specific professional topics, because that is your background but we listen to all ideas. We can't do this without you.

Celebrating our finalists

This year 124 students representing universities across the UK were nominated for the National Student Awards. Thirteen go through to the Final in September but, to us, all of these talented young women are winners. You can see their showcase videos on our YouTube channel here <https://bit.ly/31zRGi1>. As many of the judges commented, the future of the industry is in safe hands!



One size fits one

Karen Mosley, Managing Director, HLM Architects

At HLM, we've embraced the concept of agile working for many years. We've invested in technology, unleashed the emotional intelligence of our leaders, listened to the needs of our team, empowered and supported everyone to be at their best, wherever they might be located. We've acknowledged output rather than hours put in.

It's hard to believe now, that at the beginning of January our 9-day fortnight and agile working approach was still receiving raised eyebrows. A closed mindset by many, concerned that the wheels of a project might fall off if their team were not visible in the workplace, or available full time.

Then boom, radical change to how we work happened overnight. But what now? Will we be elastic bands and snap back to old ways of working? I truly hope not. Everyone is unique; different

circumstances, personalities, personal challenges, aspirations, changing lifestyles; and we must respect that individuality. One size does not fit all.

There are still leaders out there who can't wait to get back to 'normal', because they're blinded by ingrained assumptions; they've not grasped technology or too concerned staff aren't productive because they can't see them; or they long to be travelling for hours, because that makes them feel productive. This is no longer normal, it's the past.

The studio environment still has a huge part to play; connecting us with our brand and our colleagues, a collaborative space, an innovative hub; but it should be one of many places to work, rather than the only one.

There are certainly challenges ahead, but we have a golden opportunity as



an industry to grasp this moment; to be more diverse, inclusive and kind, if we keep our flexible working mindset truly open. And coupled with some thoughtful design around our future homes and workplaces; we have the ability to create spaces and places that will most certainly improve peoples' lives.

Let's not bounce back, but bounce forward and take what we have learned over the last three months to make what we do even better for our people and our planet.

"If you try to be someone else, you'll fail"

Emma Porter,
Managing Director,
Story Contracting

Emma Porter is Managing Director, Construction, of Story Contracting and appears to be a confident and natural born leader, but she hasn't always felt so confident in her leadership style.

"Many people's idea of 'a leader' is the stereotypical 'alpha male'; dominant, direct and decisive. In reality, true leadership needs more than this; vision, empathy, compassion, good communication skill and the ability to take advice and learn from others.

"My confidence in myself as a leader came through a MBA I studied at INSEAD Business School near Paris, where I learned that leadership is about empowering people to think for themselves. You work for your team, feed them with the right environment, with what they need to succeed, allow them to work hard and be the best they can be.

"As part of my MBA I did a course in negotiation. The UK style of negotiation in construction is hard hitting, out to win, which I really didn't like. The course

advised on how to hear different points of view, how to allow people to 'leave' without losing face and, of course, the different sorts of leadership style including kindness and empathy. This gave me confidence in my own style, which I have built on over the years. I am passionate about building long term relationships, understanding my clients, their challenges and aims.

"And what does good leadership look like now? In a time of Covid, it is the authentic leaders who have shone through in the popularity stakes, demonstrating a well-rounded, compassionate, practical approach. Consider New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, the Nordic prime ministers of which four out of five are women, even Germany's Angela Merkel, compared with Trump, Johnson, Bolsonaro. My advice is to be confident and authentic, if you try to be someone else, you'll fail".



When nothing is certain, everything is possible



Jules Wyman, Confidence Coach

"The thinking mind is desperate for certainty. When we are plunged into a situation we don't understand, certainty goes."

This was confidence coach Jules Wyman's opening statement in her webinar, 'Dealing with Uncertainty', the first from Women in Property, as part of our virtual events calendar.

Jules quickly followed up with "But when nothing is certain, everything is possible", which has to be the most reassuringly positive take on the current global state of play that most of us had heard.

The presentation set out to build resilience, courage and confidence, using tools that teach us how to be in control of those insidious emotions, including confusion, anxiety and fear, that can too easily take over. Apparently over 90% of our thinking happens automatically, so the aim is to encourage more conscious thinking. Jules introduced us to three core concepts, Focus, Language and Physiology, which are interlinked and impact our emotional state.

What we focus on, expands in our minds, meaning that that one factor adopts a disproportionately big emphasis.

"Your thinking works like a search engine" said Jules. "If you think 'don't search for pink elephant' your mind will automatically focus on the very thing you're supposed to be avoiding. The same is true of the things that make us anxious or stressed. If you're thinking 'I don't want to feel stressed', stressed is where your mind will focus! If your brain is programmed on stress and anxiety, it needs to be reprogrammed, giving it a new choice. So, let's all think 'I want to be calm!'"

Language has a major part to play in how we feel, because it is so emotive. How we interpret words, the meaning they lend, is all important. Jules urged us to think clearly and ask ourselves "is what I'm about to say going to help me experience what I want to experience?" Remove the emotive language and remember the search engine analogy. It is more helpful to think I am safe, I am OK, I can do this, I will find a way, as the

thinking supports a possibility mindset. The final part looked at Physiology, how we hold our body will impact how we feel. e.g. notice the difference between 'slumping' despondently, versus imagining a thread pulling up through the spine and shoulders. Add a few deep breaths and a smile and you will feel the physical AND emotional difference.

Jules then introduced the ladder which addresses Fantasy, Fiction, Faction and Fact. Fantasy is based on assumptions, 'mind reading', past experience, memories and imagination. The thinking mind will go back to the past, project these experiences into the future alongside assumptions and imagination, with the potential for ensuing emotional catastrophe.

Where is our thinking on the ladder and how is that impacting our thinking? Are we being rational and factual or assumptive and imagining? Jules advised us to write down all our assumptions, which in itself helps create perspective, as the majority of human thinking is fantasy. Then, write down what we actually know – the facts. The 'fantasy' list is usually considerably longer than the 'facts' but the shorter list is far more manageable, rational and easier to deal with. Better to focus on the helpful facts than the list of imagined assumptions. Remember "when nothing is certain, everything is possible" and "I will find a way".

Finally, Jules urged us to prepare for the best case scenario. In times of crisis we all focus on the worst case scenario but if we invest the same amount of energy into both, we will ultimately be more confident, resourceful and better prepared to deal with our own anxieties.

Success stories

Congratulations to all our members who are achieving great things.



Ann Allen MBE, has been appointed CEO of the Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors.



Kate Girling has moved to Rural Solutions as Senior Planner.



Lorraine Hughes has moved to the Cabinet Office, as Estates Transition Manager, working in the Office for Government Property.



Amie McCabe was awarded the 2020 We Are The City Rising Star Award in the Property, Construction and FM category and was also announced as a UK Construction Week 'Class of 2020' Role Model.



Mairi Murray has joined BakerHicks as Principal BREEAM Assessor.



Heather Powell, has joined Blick Rothenberg as Partner and Head of Property and Construction.



Siobhan Ryder has joined Great Places Housing as Head of Partnerships.

Have you heard #TheWord?

Thanks to the support of BECG - Built Environment Communications Group - Women in Property has published a series of podcasts, with more in the pipeline. Visit <https://bit.ly/2C3Y6eg> to hear the series, including the latest with Sandi Rhys Jones, Eva Mills and Samantha McCabe on the benefits of mentoring. Coming up, we will be talking to Louise Wyman, who recently joined Manchester City Council as Strategic Director of Growth and Development and Eddie McAtomeiny of BECG, who will be discussing hyper localism.



WiP Webinars

Since Lockdown, Women in Property has 'screened' over 70 webinars, with subjects ranging from PropTech to Passivhaus and Yoga to Mental Wellbeing. A big thank you to our branches who have risen to the virtual challenge, creating an eclectic programme of free and paid-for events. There is lots more in the planning so keep an eye on <https://bit.ly/3gfnzpz> for details.

