



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

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What was your ambition when you were at school?

To be an Optician. I loved chatting to people and at school I enjoyed maths and science so thought it would be a good mix.

How did you get into finance?

I had worked at px for 8 years in ICT then in our commercial department. During that time, I worked with the Board Directors and enjoyed understanding how the whole business fit together from the engineering divisions to the trading division through to finance. When I came back from maternity leave, I was looking for a change of direction and an opportunity to increase my skills. Within two days of discussing it with our Finance Director, I was enrolled on the CIMA programme and I enjoyed every bit of my college course (all 3 years!) and have never looked back.

Have you always worked in the industry? If not, how did you arrive at px Group?

Since leaving university in 1997, I've always worked in the engineering industry. I started writing gas pipeline leak detection systems for a local software development company. Six months after leaving university, I spoke to the px COO, I was offered a job in ICT but I quickly moved into a commercial role then onto finance. My current role is an interesting mix of commercial and finance but I also have lots of opportunity to ask questions about the engineering aspects of the business (including going on site tours).

How does working in the engineering industry compare to other industries you've worked in?

Since finishing university, I have worked in the engineering industry but in my spare time I am Vice Chair of Governors at my local secondary school. Whilst the two environments are very different, I have been able to apply a lot of the principles and skills that I have acquired from my 'day job' to my governor role. From a financial perspective, there is more scope to consider projects that will add value in the engineering industry compared to the education sector. Whilst both sectors require strict management of spend, there are less opportunities to influence income in education.

You've been with px Group for 22 years now, how has the business changed since you arrived?

When I originally started, px was an Enron company (voted America's most innovative company for 6 consecutive years). Enron went into Administration in 2001 and px Group was created by the directors on Teesside.

Initially px was a tiny company, only operating two plants on Teesside (a large power station and a gas processing facility). It has been lovely to see and be part of the growth that now has px voted 53rd fastest growing company in the UK now operating 8 sites.

px Group has experienced strong growth over the past few years, and has been recognised recently by the Sunday Times, what do you put that down to?

px Group has a strong culture centered around its people. px has been very selective about recruiting people and the sense of ownership by its staff is amazing. Through its current business model, px provides clients with excellent service and aligns its own success with that of its client hence achieving that win-win. The combination of business model and dedication of staff is at the center of its success.

QUICK-FIRE ROUND

FIRST JOB: Weekend job in local bakery

FIRST CAR: Fiesta

FAVOURITE TV SHOW: Friends

BOOKS OR PODCASTS: Books (anything girly!)

FAVOURITE MUSIC (ARTIST/BAND): The Killers/Coldplay

FIRST HOLIDAY DESTINATION AFTER COVID-19: Italy

How has the Coronavirus pandemic changed your role and responsibilities and how have you adapted?

Since the coronavirus outbreak started, I have been working from home and I must say it has been a little strange not seeing colleagues on a daily basis. I have spent a lot of time reviewing the financial performance of the business and considering the impact that coronavirus may have on both px directly and on its customers. I have two teenagers at home so there has been lots of healthy debate about the most appropriate use of the Wifi bandwidth!

What's your favourite thing about working at px Group?

My favourite thing about working at px is the open culture and the fact that I can get involved in such a variety of aspects of the business in my role. I have been very lucky to be involved at a senior level since early in my career and have been able to exploit so many learning opportunities along the way. px allows its people to respectfully question decisions. It is this culture that promotes ownership within the workforce.

Obviously finance and engineering are two male-dominated fields, what tips would you give to women looking to enter these fields?

Growing up my parents, teachers and friends didn't distinguish between males and females on a personal, academic or work level. I have never viewed myself in any different way to male colleagues and have full confidence that I can do anything that a male colleague can.

What are some of the challenges that you have overcome during your career? Is there one that sticks out?

On a personal level, I think my main challenge has been achieving a work life balance to allow me to spend time with my children but still have a fulfilled career. I am lucky that px has offered me opportunities to work flexibly and I have a supportive husband and family that have allowed me to exploit opportunities as they arose.

From a work perspective, I really enjoyed working on the acquisition of Saltend Chemical Park into the px portfolio. Whilst it was a very busy period, it allowed me freedom to think in different ways, understand the commercial contracts and model the financial opportunities. The acquisition of Saltend pulled together a lot of experiences that I have built up throughout my career.

How can the engineering industry make itself more attractive to women?

Whilst the engineering industry is currently male dominated, I don't see this as a blocker to stop women entering the industry. I think the key is to promote the industry differently with school age children. Schools encourage parents to support careers talks, many engineering talks are led by dads and I think this reiterates to girls that it is male dominated. I would like to see more female engineers working with schools and promoting the industry as gender neutral. This approach has worked in medicine and law.