

MARIJA JAKOPIN

ROLE MODEL IN FORESTRY SECTOR

ABOUT MARIJA

Marija is a CEO of a company that manages estate of 300 hectares that mainly consist of forests, grasslands and logger houses. The forests are mixed (beech, spruce, fir and maple) and are managed according to Slovenian approach of imitating the primeval forests. Her focus is on delivering profit to the owners and finding ways to cope with the accelerating effects of climate change on the forest. In her private time, she likes to chase her kids around the forest, write crime novels and contemplate while knitting wool projects that always turn out a bit different as planned.

HER CAREER

After her study of applied mathematics, Marija started her career in the IT sector. At the beginning she worked as a software developer and later as a manager of marketing and regional sales department for an international company. In early spring 2017 a sudden illness has struck in her extended family, so she immediately started assisting in managing a forestry business in need. The beginning was rough, as she had to run her day job and also work the evenings and weekends for the company. In August 2017 she quit her full-time day job and has dedicated herself to a job in the forestry sector. She also got formal education in both, management and forestry. Today she is a CEO in Gozdno gospodarstvo Les d.o.o.

PERCEPTIVE ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY

Women in forestry - why is talking about it still a thing? Having a gender mixed team is similar as having a mixed forest – the more diverse, the more resilient. To a certain extent, women think differently than men, have a different approach and by inclusion in distinctly male collectives, they contribute to a better balance in all areas, including forestry. It is true that the forestry sector is more traditional, with most of the positions filled in by men. Surprisingly, experience of accepting women to the forestry sector is not much different from the one she had in the IT sector: in Marija's opinion, women in Slovenian forestry are usually (but not always) well accepted and evaluated according to their merits and not their gender.

EXPERIENCES WITH WOMEN WORKING IN FORESTRY SECTOR

All the experiences with women in forestry sector were positive for Marija. From district foresters, inspectors, researchers all the way to round wood buyers they all did a good job, they were competent and, in all respects, comparable to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, Marija never met a "lumberjane", as felling and harvesting are less suitable for women due to the physical predispositions. But it needs to be said, there are still less than 5 % of women in forestry sector on positions that are not in administrative part of the sector.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR BETTER INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY SECTOR?

As nature is getting recognized as the office with the best view, along with the awareness of the health aspect of having a physically dynamical job, there is an increase of interest for forestry also within female part within the young. As there are already several women in leading positions (chiefs of Slovenia Forest Service local units, owners of the larger forest estate who manage their forests), the ground has been paved for the entry of more women into the forestry sector. The only missing part is a general issue of raising girls into self-confident women, who are aware of their capabilities and wishes without gender related limitations.



WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO WOMEN NEED IN DEVELOPING THEIR CAREERS?

Understanding and accepting the differences between the two genders is a key to a fulfilling and successful career. When having children and raising them in early years of their lives, it is important to offer women support of the whole society as that time is physically and mentally hard, but plays a crucial part in terms of creating a stable and capable future society. When (and if) we will have this ability, there will be no more obstacles in having women fully operating in any position. Compared to many other countries, we have it very well in Slovenia: we have long and 100% paid maternity leave, affordable and quality state sponsored child care and a good health system for children. This is not a given and we must make sure that this does not get worse in the future.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG FEMALE IN EARLY CAREER

Looking back, there was one thing that kept Marija enthusiastic about her new career in forestry: motivation - the forests have always been very fascinating to her. When one is motivated, there is nothing that can stop a person, no matter hers or his gender. When talking about her switching from IT to forestry sector, there were three crucial things that made her feel capable enough to accept the responsibility of running a company that manages a substantial amount of forest: love for forest, sales and leadership skills and experience she had from her previous positions and the fact that the lumberjacks truly look terrific.



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