Empowerment Award Entrant: PrefabNZ

Women are the answer to resolving New Zealand's skilled primary industry, manufacturing and production workers shortage, and could help alleviate the housing crisis, PrefabNZ believes.

The organisation is keen to see more women represented in the building and construction industry, which has traditionally been a male workforce, and has produced a five minute video to raise awareness of what women have to offer.

PrefabNZ is a non-profit membership organisation that informs, educates and advocates for prefabrication and new technologies to achieve a better built environment. Its members are designers, architects, engineers, manufacturers, developers, builders, suppliers, project managers, researchers and building officials.

It is well known that New Zealand is facing a skilled worker shortage. About 64,000 new people are needed by 2020 in the building and construction industries. Statistics New Zealand estimates a growth in employment of 107,800 jobs in primary industries, manufacturing and construction by 2023.

PrefabNZ, in collaboration with Carter Holt Harvey Woodproducts, BCITO and CareersNZ, has produced the logs4jobs video to:

- Normalise seeing females in primary industry, manufacturing, design and construction by providing imagery and role models to use in recruitment material.
- Raise the awareness of young people, especially females, of the work opportunities.
- Alert employers to the ability and value of female workers by highlighting the range of rewarding jobs involved in turning logs into houses.
- Demonstrate that natural resources – forestry, can become a higher value product by undergoing innovative construction methods.

The video features four strong female role models from processing, manufacturing, design (architecture) and construction talking about their role within the building and construction industry, how they got there, why they enjoy their jobs and how the job fits into their lifestyle and future advancement plans.

PrefabNZ CEO Pamela Bell says typically women have been shut out of industries dominated by physical labour. "Now technology (digital, CAD, file-to-factory) is improving so are the opportunities for women to be involved."

The impetus for the video came after PrefabNZ CEO Pamela Bell was awarded the Helen Tippet Award by the NZ Institute of Building in 2016 for actively promoting women in the construction industry. Inspired to do more, Pamela devised the initiative and has remained a key driver, bringing the partnerships and communications staff members on-board to help tell the story once the video was created.

Logs4jobs was formally launched at the annual CoLab conference in Auckland in March, by Warwick Quinn, CEO of Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation and Rachael Newfield, CEO of Carter Holt Harvey Woodproducts.

PrefabNZ has presented the logs4jobs video project to the Construction Industry Council with the goal that that it will act as a 'pilot' or 'template' for other associations. It is hoped that other CIC associations will create their own videos that showcase women to create more interest from smart young women wanting to make a difference in NZ's built environment.

Industry leaders and organisations have supported the initiative by sharing the video. They include The Wood Processors and Manufacturers' Association Zealand, CompeteNZ, (forestry and manufacturing industry training organisation), the National Association of Women in Construction and the Building Officials Institute of New Zealand

There are plans for continued collaborative social media campaigns utilising existing networks of the project partners throughout 2017.

Follow-ups with Construction Industry Council (CIC) organisations are also planned through presentations at quarterly CIC meetings around the country.

Pamela Bell says: "It is heartening that so many related industry groups have picked up on the work that PrefabNZ has volunteered to date - we hope to build a greater movement using the collaborative force of our peer industry groups."