

# An Early Careers Perspective - Women in Geospatial 2018



I kicked off International Women's Day 2018 in the best way possible by taking part in the "Women in Geospatial" breakfast, a discussion on careers and challenges that women in the geospatial profession face.

Opportunities like these are a great way to network and share successes, fears, and experiences with an open-minded group. Sometimes, forums like this can be dominated by high-flyers – confident people, natural networkers – which may be intimidating to someone who's just starting out in their career. This wasn't at all the case at the Geovation Hub: as an empowering experience, it was exactly the kind of event I'd encourage anyone setting out on their careers to look out for.

Thanks to some excellent organisation by Denise McKenzie, Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), two fantastic speakers shared their career tips and struggles with a room of around 25 women (and men!). Kate Royse (British Geological Society) and Marie-Francoise Voidrot (OGC) talked about career progression, struggles, and things they have learned throughout.

A key topic was a need for real role models in our industry. We all know that people at the top of their careers – people who seem to have achieved everything – can be inspiring, but sometimes those levels of accomplishment can be overwhelming. The advice? Keep your eyes open for role models at all stages of your career; it doesn't have to be someone right at the very peak of theirs.

And at the other end of the spectrum? Remember, you may be a role model to someone and not realise it. Just because you are not the CEO doesn't mean you are not successful. People still look up to you. This is relevant to all stages of a career, even in the early years.

Success was also a key theme in the discussion. Success is what is right for you, not what looks right to the outside world. Make choices that are right for you and your life; choices that make you happy. Value your own decisions and successes: if you don't, no one else will. This is really important, especially in the early careers as we may fall under the radar when it comes to being valued in work. Be proud of your work and value yourself, and don't be scared to 'big yourself up' occasionally!

On the other hand, don't be afraid to fail: if you are going to push yourself, it's likely that you won't succeed all of the time, but those 'near misses' may well be out of your control anyway. Learn to recognise what's what, and don't beat yourself up when perfection seems just out of your grasp.

Kate told a story of applying for her 'dream' job but not getting it, and being frustrated at not knowing why. She said "Years later they told me I didn't get the role because I'd have changed the world. They weren't ready for me." Things may be out of your control, so don't hold onto failure for too long.

Many of the people at the event mentioned they did some sort of volunteering outside their main work. From youth groups to the AGI committee, volunteering is a great way to gain skills you won't necessarily pick up in your day to day work. I volunteer for the AGI Early Careers Network (ECN) and with the RSPB, gaining skills such as outside conservation work and communicating with my peers (via magazine articles!) – both of which wouldn't normally fall into my everyday job.

Volunteering is a great way to meet like-minded people and to develop a professional network. As a bonus, I can vouch for the fact that it's also great fun! In this regard, if you're looking for an opportunity, and you'd value working alongside people who are still, like myself, at the early stage of their career, why not drop me a line (@hollynws; @AGI\_ECN; ecn@agi.org.uk) and volunteer with the AGI Early Careers Network?

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