

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AT ALGAR AIR

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It's International Women's Day. So let's make today the day we all leave our preconceptions at the door, says Algar Air Director **Simone Kidd.**

I've been working with **air compressors since 1999**. I love doing what I do. I enjoy the people I work with. But it's international Women's Day, a day when the world shares its stories of how women are more empowered than ever before. So I thought I'd take a moment to share my experiences, because it hasn't always been a very positive story of female empowerment.

Algar Air is based in Sheffield. As far as I'm aware, no other **local air compressor engineering company** (or any engineering company, for that matter) is led or co-led by a woman, with just one exception – one of our suppliers.

Perhaps that's why I've lost count of the number of conversations I have that go something like this:

- A customer walks into the office and, seeing only women in there, looks right through us and asks, 'Is there anybody here who can help me?'
- A phone call asking, 'Can I speak to the managing director? Is **he** in?'
- A request for advice, and then being really surprised when I'm able to give it.
- A request for advice, which I respond to. But then the customer disagrees with me until a male engineer comes to the phone, says exactly what I said, and then the customer reacts totally differently.

To be clear, all the above happen **a lot**. They probably happen almost as much now as they did when I first started 23 years ago. And, before you think this is a piece that's just male bashing, it's a trap anyone of any gender can and does fall into.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

What do we do about it? Well, even though I think we still have a hell of a long way to go, there is lots of room for optimism.

Serious experience: Between us, Algar Air's office team of myself, Emma and Jenny have more than 50 years' combined air compressor experience. We're not engineers. We don't pretend to be. But you can't spend that long doing what we do without getting a feel for problems and being able to give some indication of what

the issue might be. Then we can call out an engineer to check. The more often we do that, the more customers know that they can rely on what we say.



A new generation: I realise I sound horribly ageist here, but the younger generation almost never make assumptions about what a woman can/can't do. It's always people with as many miles on the clock as their air compressor. We can at least have hope that the younger generation will continue to force the pace of change.

Real expertise: Without wishing to blow my own trumpet, when it comes to food safety and compressed air, I know my stuff at least as well (if not better) than any of my colleagues. The other women in the office have their specialisms too. So don't be surprised that you've been given engineering advice by a woman. And if you are, that surprise doesn't usually last for long as we quickly become trusted sources of information.

TAKING A MOMENT

There's not a person at Algar Air who doesn't know their stuff when it comes to **compressed air**. Come into the office and ask if anyone can help you and the answer is, without doubt 'yes', whoever's stood there.

So this International Women's Day, let's drop the casual assumptions. Let's drop the preconceptions that advice from a bloke is good while advice from a woman might not be. And let's take a moment to remember that, as 51% of the planet is female, there's a fair chance that over the next few years, many more women will be running engineering companies.

Got a compressor problem? Call us now on **0114 243 2347**. And if a woman answers, remember, she's not the secretary...