

PLUMBING – A REWARDING CAREER FOR WOMEN

Editor's Note: Plumbing has always been considered an all man arena since time immemorial, owing to the nature of work and the job requirements. But, lately since the last few decades, as the field diversified into various allied activities like Designing, Sales and Marketing, Backoffice and support, Structural Engineering, the sector has witnessed the entry of women.

On account of International Women's Day on 7th March, a day celebrated all across the world to give equal recognition and opportunities to women in every area, IPA came out with this special feature through which IPA aims to capture the experiences of women working in the Indian Plumbing industry. Along with this, IPA asked them on the opportunities available to budding women professionals and here we have a few excerpts based on their experience.



The industry needs women engineers who can bring in a different dimension in the field of plumbing

Vidya Veeresh is one of the Directors of ESVE Design Solutions Pvt. Ltd., a PHE consultancy firm. She also delivers lectures in architecture colleges like RVCA, BMSIT, PESIT on the importance of plumbing in the real estate projects.

Vidya Veeresh
Director
ESVE Design Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru

Our organisation is proud to have 40% of our employees/engineers as women, who are intelligent, dedicated, hard-working and always give their 100% at work, I see them no different than their male colleagues.

I started working in the field of plumbing as a design consultant with ESVE from the year 2003. Being a qualified and a practicing architect to change gears from architecture to plumbing meant a lot of unlearning and relearning. Plumbing as a subject is vast, complex and challenging. Handling projects at the design level, site execution, the various plumbing materials available and its handling at the site level all requires meticulous working. The opportunities to handle these situations by women has been largely positive and at times been better than the male counterparts.

The Industry needs more women to actively participate in all fields of plumbing, because only when there is a healthy ratio between men and women the society/industry can stay balanced. Women should also be encouraged to be trained hands on as plumbers, today with machines being available for pipe cutting, making joints etc. it is possible to have women plumbers on site.

I strongly urge women to pursue their careers in plumbing as it is not just lucrative as any other professional career, but it also needs minds which can engineer creative thinking. The industry needs women engineers who can bring in a different dimension in the field of plumbing and plumbing materials to the otherwise male dominated industry.



Plumbing Profession is rewarding for passion driven women

An environmental engineering professional with fifteen years of diverse experience in the fields of Plumbing, Fire Protection, and Environmental Management Systems.

Ranjini Venugopal,
Asst. General Manager
Associate Design Plumbing & Fire Protection System, Bengaluru

Plumbing Engineering is a non-traditional occupation and a tough job as we still have to combat with basic laws of nature's gravity and pressure, solve the mysteries of blocked drains, deal with the issues of water problems from abundance to its absence, and across varied temperatures. The job definitely holds great challenges and "Experience being the teacher, lessons are followed by examinations".

My journey as a Plumbing Engineer started in 2005, a fresher aspiring to soar high. Entering the industry as a newbie, initial years were dedicated to strengthening the fundamentals and the hitches eased with passing years. Getting hands dirty was always a sure way to learning and the final fruit of success tasted sweeter with every new experience.

Working for a customer centric organization, our profession demands smartness, teaches and tunes us to work smarter. Being in this profession for more than 15 years, I can confidently say that majority of the customers find smooth and clear interaction with women. Women, having better interpersonal skills than men, facilitate uncomplicated communication and provide a friendly environment for customers in connecting ideas, thus displaying their customer relationship management skills

in the projects they handle. Customers do greet with smile in the meetings and express their satisfaction and happiness which adds a sense of achievement, a sense of pride and acts as a great source of motivation.

Every day gives a way for new learning in this field. Although perfection is an ideal concept, experience drives towards expertise. Strength, commitment and determination will create a path to reach the goal. Always measure how far you have come rather than how far you have to go. To make a difference, think differently. Success is not final, failure is not fatal, and it is the courage to continue that counts.

Plumbing as a professional choice is lucrative, goes well when we have strong technical knowledge and its practical application on sites. It is definitely rewarding to passion driven women as it gives every opportunity to think, learn and grow socially, financially, mentally and also physically. It offers a perfect work life balance.

To give my career experience in brief, I say with all my heart:
Life is beautiful, when career and passion comes together. I am Proud to be in this Profession, I love Plumbing. I take pride of my work and enjoy getting my hands dirty."



A Women who believes Women have better understanding of Plumbing

Avni Sikka is an Electrical Engineer with more than 12 years of experience in field of MEPF design and has worked on varied building projects. She is proprietor of Ahmadabad based MEPF consultancy firm Artech Engineering Solutions.

Avni Sikka
Proprietor
Artech Engineering Solutions, Ahmedabad

It is a pleasure to share my experience, as a woman plumbing professional and an entrepreneur, with all the readers. With more than 12 years working in the plumbing profession, I have come across various interesting projects with numerous challenges which required engineering as well as analytical skills to resolve plumbing design parameters. I believe that all women deal with plumbing in day to day life for cooking, washing and other activities and so they have an added advantage

when it comes in understanding aspects like water quality, usage requirements, sanitation and location of drain points. With their analytical skills, education and support from organisation like IPA "Plumbing" is a very opportunistic career for woman.

With booming infrastructure development in the world, women can look forward to Plumbing as a stable, growth oriented and satisfied career option.



Women always have creative inputs for water conservation to improve Plumbing practices says Trupti Desai

Trupti Desai (BE – Mechanical) is a Plumbing Consultant and Proprietor of Techno Engineers which deals in PHE and Fire Protection. She is involved in bulk and regional water supply projects in Gujarat for AMC, AUDA, GWSSB and has experience in various projects.

Trupti Desai
Proprietor
Techno Engineers, Ahmedabad

A woman's role in plumbing is not only very special but it is unavoidable. Generally, plumbing deals with water and drainage which all women, either professional or housewives, deal with every day. Women are constantly contributing to the plumbing industry by attending the small domestic issues in their own ways. During project site visits I came across many women, who were housewives, who had many creative inputs related to plumbing that would ease their daily work at home. They are always concerned about how to save water; how to reduce wastage of water and how to deal with solid waste. They even ensure that the kitchen floor drain grating (jali) is properly sealed so that the domestic help cannot dump any kitchen solid waste into the floor drain. I noticed that in many bungalows, instead of draining RO reject water, it is collected into a tank for use for activities like moping, flushing, etc.

However, this awareness is still required at the micro level. Seminars and conferences help technical people but to interact with the common man, a door to door strategy will definitely help. For example, small household products like detergents and aerators can be sold through door to door marketing. A salesgirl can educate the lady of the house of every class and can also contribute to water conservation. A good society committee can hire a plumber on daily basis to attend to tenant's routine complaints. This can be a part of the maintenance cost for every tenant. This system is already being applied in some societies in Mumbai.

In a developing country like India, huge opportunities are available in the plumbing industry. Government as well as the private sector must introduce special courses to train and educate people thereby giving them employment in this industry. To be a good plumbing designer or an installer means to build happy and healthy communities.



Nuthana believes that Women are better equipped to understand customer needs and solve problems

Nuthana Ramanand is working as Design Engineer - M&E division at Sobha Ltd Bangalore. She is a Graduate in Civil Engineering with 12 years of experience in Plumbing Design for Residential and Commercial projects

Nuthana Ramanand
Design Engineer
Sobha Ltd, Bengaluru

I never imagined that I'd get into plumbing design, but somehow, this stuck to my mind and when I joined Sobha in late 2004 in the MEP department, I was still doubtful whether this was indeed the right place for women to be. With a very strong team of experts, Sobha was already the leader in quality plumbing solutions in the construction industry. I slowly learnt many things by working on various projects at Sobha.

Plumbing, in general is considered a male dominated field. It was embarrassing initially at times to be the only woman member at critical meetings. Although I haven't

done actual plumbing work at site, that requires much more strength and stamina, I believe I have been able to contribute well in the space of plumbing design.

I think one of the major traits required for any person in this field is the ability to understand the situation and provide a good solution under the given circumstances. Although there are limitations at design level, I think women are better equipped to understand customer needs and solve problems. There were many complicated technical issues that came up during various projects at Sobha and I have managed to address them successfully.



Promoting practices to encourage more women to work in the plumbing industry

Neha Bhavsar is Associate Director at Aqua Utility Designs and Management Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad. With a B. Tech Construction from CEPT, she has a Project Planning background working in the UK and India

Neha Bhavsar
Associate Director
Aqua Utility Designs and Management Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad

To encourage female employees, we have always allowed them to work with flexi working hours and even 'work from home' options are allowed. We strongly believe that women are great at multi-tasking and can bring great value and loyalty to the organisation. We always give every female staff member an equal opportunity in terms of growth and responsibilities.

Plumbing as a utility service is becoming one of the very important services in building design and construction as most of us are becoming more sensitive about living in a green environment. Since our construction industry is still undergoing a process of adopting systematic approach, females working in the plumbing industry will have more opportunities to be part of this process. They will be able to take up more responsibilities while also keeping work-life balance and have more opportunities for higher positions.



Know what you're good at and do the work to serve communities: Swathi Saralaya

Swathi Saralaya is Project Manager, IAPMO India and IWSH with a Bachelors Engineering Degree in Environmental Science

Swathi Saralaya
Project Manager
IAPMO India and IWSH, Bengaluru

During the initial years in my career, I worked on Planning and design of plumbing services, concept design based on evaluation for various options in coordination with architectural, structural input and other building services.

In 2012, I joined IAPMO India and the career I started here gave me a different exposure to the plumbing industry. Plumbing Codes and Standards Development, Product Testing & Certification, Skill Development and Vocational Training, Community Sanitation projects are few of the areas I am currently working on and these job roles have taken me across the globe! When I received the 2018 World Plumbing Council (WPC) Education and Training Scholarship, I was more than thrilled. The plumbing industry has opened so many opportunities to collaborate, innovate and learn and to be within the plumbing industry for me. And thus, I could carry a vision – To improve water and sanitation in communities in need.

Plumbing is a profession with direct relevance to the health and safety of the citizens. We all must realize that as humans we all have a role to play in this industry. It's about various human skills which makes us human and it's not about a male job or a female job when we are solving issues like water and sanitation. Know what you're good at and do the work to serve communities.



Various verticals in Plumbing like analysis, designing, tendering, managing projects have a lot of scope for women, says Megha Bhatt

Megha Bhatt is Principal Associate at Electra Techno Consultant & Associates - PHE & FFTG Consultant, Ahmedabad. She is B.E. CTM (Civil); Master's in water resource management. Designing, Tender and project management are a part of her key responsibilities.

Megha Bhatt
Principal Associate
Electra Techno Consultant & Associates, Ahmedabad

In my consulting practice, I work with mid to senior level professional women in both the corporate field as well as in entrepreneurial, small business and private practice ventures in various engineering fields. The scope of what establishes traditional versus non-traditional careers for women is distinct both through perception and through reality. There are various advantages of looking beyond a traditional career path and one of the very interesting fields is plumbing.

People around us, and many of us also, debate whether girls should do civil engineering or not. Most people around us give their recommendation to female students that the Civil Engineering field, and specially plumbing, is field engineering and girls would have a difficult time in working with site teams and also battle numerous other site problems. But we do not understand that civil engineering, and especially plumbing, is not limited to field work. There are many verticals in plumbing like analysis, designing, tendering, managing projects and many other office jobs. Women are underrepresented in this field, just as they are in many other professions, as has been the case since long.

Women are taking speedy steps in all other fields then why not in plumbing? The field gives equal opportunity to women in design and in innovation of plumbing installations which are critical for survival of mankind and where scarcity of water is the biggest challenge.



Plumbing Profession gives you an insightful experience, says Latha MS

Latha MS is a Plumbing Engineer with ESVE Design Solution from past 3 years and has a Graduate Degree in Civil Engineering

Latha MS
Plumbing Engineer
ESVE Design Solution, Bengaluru

My experience at ESVE has been very insightful in plumbing service. I choose to work in the plumbing department to get a better idea of how to design the in and outs of plumbing systems plumbing systems of a building, including:

1. Storm water design
2. Sewer waste disposal
3. Domestic hot & cold-water distribution system

We all say that women can do anything that men can do, so why aren't the numbers demonstrating that in all workplaces. Across the nation, there are only around 9,000 female plumbers out of whopping 564,000, that means that only 1.6% of people working in the plumbing industry are women.



The Key to delivering successfully is by understanding customer needs

Divya is a Design Engineer with ESVE Design Solution since the last 6 years, with a Degree in Environmental Engineering

Divya T R
Design Engineer
ESVE Design Solution, Bengaluru

As a design engineer, I've been working on different kinds of projects like residential apartments and commercial buildings. The key to delivering projects successfully is to understand the client's needs & work together with the other services in a respectful manner.

There are thousands of women working in the plumbing field, and they'll be the first to tell you that it's a rewarding job where they are treated extremely well by both clients & co-workers.



Plumbing which I started accidentally shaped my career with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity.

Lakshmi is a Public Health Design Engineer with more than 20 years of experience in preparation of engineering design including calculations, layouts, schematic & specifications for Residential, Commercial, Malls and infrastructure projects across India.

Mrs. Lakshmi M.
Sr. Team Lead – Plumbing Services
DesignTree Service Consultants Pvt Ltd, Bengaluru

My journey in the plumbing field started in the year 1997 accidentally. Later it became my professional career as my interest towards environment and public health engineering was something that I was always fond of.

Also, I found there is always a demand for plumbing as it focuses on natural systems like water & waste, health & hygiene, which are major prerequisites for mankind. Plumbing is not only related to water & sewage but it is also about storm water drainage, hot water, gas system, garbage treatment and many other applications.

Earlier the plumbing systems were done in a rudimentary manner. But, now, modern plumbing is defined with the requirement of codes like UIPC - I, NBC & IS codes. This strengthened me to continue my profession in plumbing. With my interaction last year in IPPL, a code-based education enlightened and reinforced my thoughts and clarity in plumbing design requirements.

Plumbing became a passion in my career because a Plumbing engineer is the one who closely works with owners, architects, contractors & other services to ensure each project is completed efficiently & effectively.

I am totally satisfied choosing plumbing as my professional career because with this choice I can interact with different people every day not only for design co-ordination but also with the site team serving their needs, educating them about plumbing. Customer satisfaction is the key point for our achievement & success. It is a different job for me every day and I feel joyful working all the time.

Plumbing which I started accidentally shaped my career with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity. I worked as a Plumbing design engineer in Potential Services Consultants until 2011 and later joined DesignTree Service Consultants & rose to Senior Team Lead.

I love plumbing & feel proud to continue in the same profession. I would like many more women to choose plumbing as their professional career.