

woMEN in Parking

From a male perspective

As the parking sector is inherently male dominated, the likelihood is that the vast majority of those reading this will be male too. And most will already have dismissed Women in Parking (WIP) as a community to which they don't belong.

Understandable.

But incorrect.

This isn't a coup!

My involvement in WIP came quite by chance, when in June of this year I was asked to chair a WIP panel at ParkEx.

Although my early acknowledgement of the irony quickly turned to intrigue – it would appear others had the same initial reaction:

“why is a man chairing a women's event?”

“surely that's going to p*ss everyone off?”

“isn't that just for women though?”

My involvement led me to carry out some research into the acute topic I was involved in – “Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls” – with a natural focus on incidents occurring in car parks.

In addition to the main theme, I took the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the WIP group and more generally evaluate my own relationship with ‘diversity in the corporate world’.

Women in Parking - The Background

The group started as an idea emerging from a general discussion on how the parking industry appeared from the outside to be a “male-dominated” industry. There are now many more women moving up through the industry into senior and management roles which is particularly noticeable in the public sector.

WIP was launched in October 2020 and at the time of writing there are 333 registered members of WIP – over 70% of which are women.

Within 12 months the membership numbers ought to have doubled – and with the help of this article, I hope the numbers of men enlisted grows too, as whilst there will naturally (and understandably) be exclusive “women only” conversations to be had, the presence of men will usefully support the objectives.

Those interested can start here - [BPA Women in Parking - LinkedIn](#)

What is Women in Parking?

Like others, I questioned;

- What is WIP?
- Is it about women in car parks?
- Or, women working in parking?

I was also sincerely asked *“is it about how women can improve their parking?”*

In actual fact, Women in Parking aims to promote, represent and raise the profile of women in the UK parking sector through the advancement of knowledge, training, exchange of views via networking and ongoing support.

And the topic I was to chair at Parkex extended this to the physical presence of women and girls in car parks! Their safety. Their fears. Their concerns. And more.

Absolutely none of which had ever crossed my mind.

I’ve **never** had to worry about parking next to a white van

I’ve **never** had to consider where to park based on which route to my destination is safest

I’ve **never** had to pick a bay based on the lighting in the area

It provides some food for thought! And men - perhaps try to view this through the eyes of your female colleagues, or family members.

Diversity and Inclusion

On the wider issue - I learned about the important role of diversity in decision making positions.

I’m pleased to say, in my short preparation period in the lead up to Parkex I’d learned more about diversity than in my entire career. And to my knowledge, with the conversation becoming the most attended Parkex panel to-date, I trust it may have allowed others to think a little deeper on the topic.

To those who wish to know more, these links are a great place to start – and I would particularly implore anyone with dissenting thoughts to give them a go –

- Short read: [Gender Diversity at Leadership Tables: It takes more than good optics](#)
- [Top 10 books about diversity and inclusion every leader should know about](#)

Final thoughts

If you’ve made it this far - thank you.

If you’re male - good for you.

Either way – as a close parking community, I would urge you to continue the conversation and recognise the opportunity you have to make a difference.

“Knowledge is not power - it is only potential. Applying that knowledge is power”

Listen to what’s being said

Engage with what is being done; &

Spread the word

A word from the WIP

I have submitted this informational article with the permission of Jade, Hannah and Michelle – the three of which created this community. In view of this, I wanted the final word to come from them;

“Women in male-centric environments can experience belonging uncertainty even in normal work conditions. Many women receive subtle — or sometimes overt — signals that they are not part of the team. Women in parking offers the opportunity for all people to come together to share perspectives with transparency and ensure women’s voices are heard in the working environment.

We would encourage any women in parking who don’t currently participate in the group to join. And equally as important would urge the men in parking (particularly those in senior & decision making roles) to raise awareness of WIP to their female colleagues so that they can start being a more active part of the industry. This in turn will ensure as an industry we continue to retain great talent.”