

Claims Apprentice champion reveals women who inspire her



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Indicative reading time: **2 minutes**

To mark the theme of this year's International Women's Day, which is #InspireInclusion, Safa Saeed, claims handler at Zurich and 2023 winner of Insurance Post's Claims Apprentice competition, shares the role models who helped guide and inspire her career so far.

Since I started working in the insurance industry, I've heard many stories about how life used to be for women in the sector, back in the days when conversations around diversity and inclusion were never raised.

It was assumed that insurance was a man's world, and female representation in leadership positions were few and far between.

I'm a fairly new starter, joining Zurich three years ago as an apprentice straight out of college.

My story is slightly different, in that I've joined at a time when the sector is in the middle of a conversation about itself, and about how to encourage more female representation in decision-making roles.

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After Zurich started offering every role with these options, as well as using gender-neutral language in every job advert, we saw a 16% increase in the number of women applying for roles.

This is important, as the more women that are in the workplace, especially in senior positions, the more role models will be available for young women like me looking to enter the sector.

Inspire inclusion

Personally, I've had many role models to help guide and inspire me in my career journey so far.

Women like Harpreet Kaur, who won The Apprentice in 2022, was one whose experience tied in with mine, when I competed in and won *Insurance Post's* Claims Apprentice competition last year.

When I started in insurance on the apprentice scheme, I had two mentors in the teams I was working across – Rose Sutton and Danielle Lindsay.

They were really helpful, and whenever I had questions, they were my go-to people.

Beyond that there were female senior claims adjusters showing me how it's done. I would say they shaped me into who I am now.

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Mentoring schemes like this are a fantastic way to help people grow and develop in their roles, and the experience it gave me was invaluable.

I've also had female line managers – Rosie Wilson and

Kelly Richards. Having them in their positions inspires someone as young as me to aim for that trajectory.

The same goes for the female executives – hearing about their journey, and how they've got to where they are today, is really inspiring and encouraging to young women looking to carve out a similar path for themselves.

But this isn't just about female role models; James Nicholson, our head of claims, has been a huge cheerleader of mine, personally posting a video on *LinkedIn* when I won the apprentice of the year award.

Having him believe in me has added fuel to my progression fire.

Finally, I have always been inspired by the suffragette movement and what they went through to effect change for themselves and future generations.

We owe them a huge amount of gratitude, and their courage continues to inspire women everywhere to reach for more.

A lot of change still needs to happen across the industry. While our sector is moving in the right direction, it needs to be faster.

Hopefully, as more leadership positions are taken up by women, more young women will be encouraged to enter insurance, leading to a snowball effect. For me, personally, I hope too one day to inspire young people to enter the industry.

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