



**VICKY LOPEZ** is co-founder and director of De-ice

I own and run a winter maintenance services company but I started my career as a commodity broker 30 years ago. I was one of three women on the trading floor and the youngest by far.

Rolling with the 'bants' was par for the course and it taught me to adapt and flourish. On a side note, women make up a higher percentage in the 2019 trading environment and they are getting the recognition they deserve.

More broadly, change is happening in the workplace, with strong and inclusive organisational cultures. Tomorrow's managers and leaders should do all they can to set the bar and to cement these changes.

Thankfully, I don't believe my daughter, who is currently

studying for A-levels, will face the same challenges I did when she enters the workplace – in whatever industry. Here's my advice to other career women.

### Always question, never doubt

I left the trading floor to start a garden landscaping business with my husband, Mark. Soon after, we provided winter maintenance services for a major supermarket chain. This proved successful and we decided to carve out a niche as one of the first winter maintenance providers. Many doubted our decision, but not us.

Since its launch, this industry has remained male-dominated, but I've carried the values I learnt from the start of my career and applied them to this role.

If you believe in something, focus and don't let doubt cloud your judgement or confidence. Look carefully at all aspects of

the business, and yourself, to face any difficulties honestly.

### 2 Know your onions

To thrive and flourish, you need to 'know your onions'. Be good at what you do and always present the best version of yourself. If you are being overlooked, then explore this with your manager in a constructive way. You might look to develop your skills further to add value to the business by, for example, taking on more responsibilities.

### 3 Find a mentor

If you have access to the right people and can find someone who is respected in their career this can be a golden ticket. There will have been women in your field who have trodden a path similar to yours, so seek them out. Invest in yourself, network and don't be afraid to ask questions. They will be more than happy to share their journey!

### 4 Find your passion

Love 'it' – whatever your 'it' is! If you are passionate and interested then you will succeed and perform at your peak. And, if you don't love it, make a point of trying to find a role that you will love. Be bold enough to seek out and ask for change.

### 5 Educate yourself

When it became clear that my future lay in this industry, I knew that to carve my niche I had to educate myself extensively in the intricacies of gritting and winter risk management so I'd be taken seriously.

To innovate and make improvements in any industry you have to take the initiative

and research new ideas, technologies and products. Make it a priority to keep learning and researching and stay hungry for new information and ideas.

### 6 Get your hands dirty

Success always comes with its own challenges. I've been 'on the tools' in all weather. It's the best way to fully understand all elements of the business, get involved with your employees, and keep yourself grounded.

### 7 On your way up, bring another woman with you

It is wonderful that I'm in the position to encourage more women to join the industry and see them getting involved – at all levels of winter risk and facilities management. From discussing ideas with other business owners, to visiting schools to teach girls and young women about the opportunities available, it's a blessing that I have a platform to share my experience and encouragement. Always look to find opportunities to help support those less experienced and ready to kick-start their careers – you could make all the difference. [f](#)

## EQUALITY

# SISTER ACTS

It's a male-dominated industry but **Vicky Lopez** offers advice to women looking to succeed in it

