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Members' Corner – Danish installers are looking for more female employees

Several installation companies are currently working to attract more women to the industry to both provide more skilled workers and because increased gender balance benefits the entire business.

[TEKNIQ Arbejdsgiverne](#), the Danish association of installers (including electricians and plumbers), reports that more installation companies are working actively to increase the share of female employees in the industry.

One of them is the engineering contractor Poul Sejr Nielsen a/s, which is headquartered in Birkerød. Jonas Bach, director of service, says that the company would really like to increase the number of both female professionals and apprentices: “As a company, we are turning away from a large part of the workforce if we do not include more women in the industry. In the plumbing industry, it is already difficult to get enough skilled workers, so we simply need a larger recruitment base”.

Diversity strengthens the business

He also points out that more women in traditional male roles – such as electricians and plumbers – means that new values come into play in everyday life. “When we hire more women, it creates a completely different dynamic, tone and professionalism in the installation industry. The women have an ability to break the perhaps slightly old-fashioned tone, while at the same time being extremely meticulous with the work they perform”, says Jonas Bach.

Søren Østergaard, CEO of the Copenhagen electrical contractor Høyrup & Clemmensen, also wants to attract more women to the company. He also believes that a more mixed group of employees provides great value.

“The female electricians we hired into the company have made an active, considered choice to become electricians, and the quality of the work they perform is really high. They take responsibility, bring results, and sometimes question some other things than their male counterparts. It is really good for the company”, says Søren Østergaard.

Cultural change needed

Poul Sejer Nielsen has the ambition to reach 10 percent of female apprentices and professionals. But it can be difficult to reach that goal if there are not enough women to recruit. Therefore, according to Jonas Bach, it is important that the company is attractive to female applicants: “We try to use the women we have already hired as role models, so that potential female apprentices and professionals have someone to inspire them. That is why we have made recruitment videos with our female employees, but it is still very difficult to convince more of them that becoming a plumber is the right choice. It takes luck, skill and chance to succeed.”

Søren Østergaard has the same view on the challenge: “We have just received an application from a new female apprentice because we could show that we already have female apprentices. Indeed, women attract more women. This is the virtuous circle we must set in motion.”

However, the Høyrup & Clemmensen director does not believe that companies in the industry alone can ensure that the share of women increases. There is also a need for help from, among others, the Vocational Schools.

“The learning environment in vocational schools needs to be made more attractive to girls. There needs to be a feeling of a pleasant campus rather than an old-fashioned technical school. And the culture must change so that it becomes completely normal to be a female student”, says Søren Østergaard.

Jonas Bach also sees it as important to create an attractive alternative to high school.

– There’s just more prestige in high school. It is so ingrained. And if the girls see the alternative as a run-down vocational school with worn-out safety shoes, the choice is not that difficult. That is why it is important to make it clear that there ARE women in our professions. For this we use social media. But if we really want to make a difference, we need to start somewhere else: in the early years of primary school. We need to have the craftsmanship and construction topics back into school”, he states.