

Women in Plumbing: Kate Olinger, director of Industry and Regulatory Affairs at Uponsor

By Nicole Krawcke, Chief Editor



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PPN Special Feature - Interview with Kate Olinger

Meet Kate Olinger, director of Industry and Regulatory Affairs at Uponor

What made you choose a career in the plumbing industry?

KO: When I left the United States Air Force, I wanted to use my degree in chemical engineering. I was looking for a career in manufacturing. It was really by chance that I found a plumbing company. I guess the bigger thing for me is why I have stayed. I have stayed because I found a place that is committed to helping to bring clean water and comfortable heating to people. It is also about the people I work with every day and the people I have met along the way. Everywhere I go, I find that those in the plumbing industry are a committed and passionate group of people, wanting to innovate and have a positive impact on the world.

What has been the most rewarding/proudest aspect of your career in the plumbing industry?

KO: It is really the opportunity to work with people across the industry who are passionate about what they do. I also enjoy finding solutions for our customers that will make their lives easier. I consistently meet people who have not heard about our solutions and the ways they can help them meet their sustainability goals. In my role, it is great to see people from across the industry come together to drive positive change.

What challenges do women face in this profession? Why aren't there more women in plumbing? How can we increase the number of women in the industry?

KO: I think it is probably intimidating and many women don't feel welcome. Oftentimes, women are maybe unsure if they can meet the physical demands. From a physical standpoint, I think that is where manufacturers can help by continuing to create innovative solutions that reduce the impact on people's bodies. This not only reduces the hurdles for women, but it is also a positive impact for men by reducing the strain on all people and increasing health, well-being and longevity in the workplace. As far as welcoming women, I think that starts in the schools by exposing girls to work in the trades. It is sharing and promoting the benefits to the parents of these girls and continued work by trade schools and community colleges to recruit more women.



What advice do you have for prospective women considering entering the plumbing industry?

KO: Find your home. There are great plumbing companies out there looking for talented, motivated people, including women-owned businesses. Often these companies are willing to help train people. I also recommend the manufacturing side. I love working for a manufacturer because there is such a variety of people and talents needed to make a manufacturer successful. Also working in the manufacturing facility is a great job with good pay and benefits.

What's one thing nobody knows about you?

KO: I spent four years as an officer in the United States Air Force, leaving as a captain. I worked with the F-16 at Hill Air Force Base in Utah, and the B-2 at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. I wouldn't say no one knows, but very few do. It isn't something that usually comes up in casual conversation.