

59^{of} 100Tracy
Wessels

Here to be Versatile

From the mill floor to investor relations: Tracy Wessels on making space for women in industry.

Tracy has built a career across science, manufacturing, sustainability and investor relations. Her journey shows why giving women a voice across industries matters, from the operational heart of a business to the rooms where its future is shaped.

When Tracy Wessels joined Sappi more than two decades ago, she entered an environment where women were still very much in the minority. With a PhD in Organic Chemistry, she began her career at Sappi's Saiccor Mill, working in research and development and customer technical services.

Those early years were spent close to the operational side of the business, building an understanding of the science behind woodfibre

and how a large industrial operation works. Today, as Sappi's Group Head of Sustainability and Investor Relations, her working environment may look different, but that technical foundation continues to shape how she approaches her role.

"Women bring different experiences and perspectives to industry, and it is important that those voices are heard at every level," she says. That means creating opportunities for women not only in leadership, but in the technical and operational parts of the business where knowledge, experience and confidence are built.

Her own career is an example of how those opportunities can evolve. Moving from science and manufacturing into sustainability and investor relations has allowed Tracy to experience different parts of the same value chain, from understanding the processes inside a mill to engaging investors on the long-term direction of a global business.

That perspective is particularly relevant as the bioeconomy grows in importance. Forestry, renewable materials and the transition towards a lower-carbon economy are creating opportunities that extend well beyond traditional perceptions of an industrial career.

"We need women participating in the bioeconomy as scientists, growers, entrepreneurs, operational leaders, sustainability specialists and investors," she says. "If women are part of the conversations and decisions shaping these industries, we are also more likely to build an economy that reflects the communities it ultimately needs to serve."

For Tracy, increasing representation is therefore about more than the number of women who reach the boardroom. It is about ensuring women have the opportunity to develop expertise and contribute throughout an industry.

Her journey from organic chemistry and the mill environment to sustainability and investor relations is a reminder that careers do not have to follow predictable paths. The experience built in one part of a business can open doors elsewhere, and women should not be discouraged from entering a field simply because it has historically been dominated by men.

Your
story
matters

