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How did you get your start in the Plumbing & Heating industry? I began my career with Emco approximately 4.5 years ago. A colleague from my previous company knew about a specific role within Emco and reached out to see if I was interested in applying. Fortunately, I was the successful candidate and I have loved every moment of my experience so far!

What is your current job and what do you love about it/why have you stayed? I am currently a National Vendor Relations Manager, working mainly with our Plumbing, HVAC, and Waterworks Divisions. It is difficult for me to narrow down what I specifically love about my job, as there are so many aspects of it that I enjoy. I would say the common theme of all these aspects comes down to the culture of my team and the companies we work with. Each day I meet with many different people, both inside our company and out. Building strong relationships is a key part of my role and developing these relationships has been fun and felt very natural, due to the incredible people I have had the opportunity to work with.

What is the best career advice you ever received? The best piece of career advice I have ever received is to become comfortable with the uncomfortable. Sometimes the only way to move forward is to move. I think this advice enabled me to change my mindset for the better, have a clearer understanding of my weaknesses, and ask for guidance on how to better handle a situation. This advice can be applied no matter where we are in our careers, and in every aspect of our lives.

If you could go back in time and give your younger self career advice, what would it be? Say yes to the things that scare you. Saying yes to something you're afraid of will help build confidence and can teach you a lot about yourself. Self-awareness and reflection will help you discover why your fears exist and can help you find the right methods and coaching required to overcome them. Saying yes will help you grow in ways you never thought possible and will lead you to bigger and better things.

What is the most unusual job you have ever had (in any industry)? Growing up in Chatham-Kent, it's very common for children to spend their summers corn detasseling. This involves many hot days in the fields,

spending time with spiders and snakes, getting corn rash all over my arms, and wearing garbage bags in the morning to keep yourself dry from the dew! While I personally do not consider this job to be unusual, I am always amazed at how many people have never heard of corn detasseling before.

What do you look forward to professionally/where do you see yourself going? It's been just over a year since I joined the National Vendor Relations team, so I consider myself to be in the early stages of my career with Emco. There is still so much for me to learn about our company and industry, and I look forward to spending face-to-face time with my teammates and Vendor Partners post-Covid.

What energizes you outside of work? My response to this question is what energizes my life - not just my life outside of work, and it is my two daughters. While I'm aware this is a common answer from a parent, it cannot be truer. They give me the motivation to do better and be better because I know they are always watching. Spending time with them and just hearing their laughter always brightens my day.

Do you have personal goals/dreams that you're working towards? Run a half-marathon. I am a terrible runner and can be very creative with my reasons to avoid running, but I am slowly working towards this goal. Running a virtual race is not enough to push me, so as a start I've registered for a 10K race in Ontario's "cottage country" this fall.

What is the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome? Prior to joining Emco, I worked at TD Canada Trust for over 17 years. In 2015 my role was made redundant, and I found myself at crossroads with what to do next. I was given the opportunity to apply for other roles within the company, however, I decided to take the leap and see what options I had available to me outside of TD Canada Trust. It was scary, as I had started my career with them right out of university and it was all I had ever known. Looking back, I am glad I took the opportunity to take my time and find a role that is a perfect fit for my skills and experiences.

What is your "superpower"/what are you really good at? My superpower is talking! Building relationships and developing rapport comes naturally to me. I enjoy meeting new people, hearing their stories, and learning from their experiences.

How do you challenge & inspire yourself to grow? My answer to this is the same as what energizes me, and it's my daughters. I want my children to grow up knowing they are capable of anything and able to handle whatever life throws at them. As I live my life, make decisions, and choose my own path, I know they are watching and learning from my experiences. That alone encourages me to continuously challenge myself and work hard because I know this is shaping their future.

How would you/what would you say to attract other women to join our industry? The perception of the manufacturing industry needs to change, and as women currently working in this field, a large part of this responsibility falls in our hands. We need to claim our value with our peers, our leaders, and our partners. By doing so, we can reshape the perspective of others. It is important to build a safe culture, find strong mentors, and share information about the opportunities we are given. Sharing our passion, positive work stories, and our willingness to drive change for the future will help other women look at our industry in a different light.

Are you willing to have readers connect with you? Yes: athorne@emcoltd.com