

# Leader board

Prominent figures in the property and construction industry air their views on today's key issues



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## Diversity: does it matter?

Diversity – what does it mean when related to the workplace, and does it matter? In business it has come to mean the mix and nature of a firm's staff, and it is now on the agenda of many businesses within our sector. But how critical is it when it comes to the businesses we run and the services we deliver?

One assessment is to look at our clients – is it important to them? When purchasing goods, does it concern them who designed, manufactured and delivered the product? Probably not.

But that's not our business. We provide a service. Clients look for a technical and professional service. They want to feel confident and comfortable with these individuals and teams, who should understand their needs and deliver accordingly.

Historically, the sector's clients have come from a narrow stratum of our society. We need to acknowledge that this is changing and respond effectively. Surely the best response is to reflect that change in our own businesses.

Each member of staff brings different levels of knowledge, experience and perspectives. The more varied the mix, the wider the perspectives that can respond to the changing nature of our clients.

We need the enthusiasm of youth allied with the caution of age. We need a mixture of sexes, with their different perspectives and experiences, and of races, with their different cultures and lifestyles. Different types of training and ways of entering the profession also add to the mix of views.

In short, the society we live in needs to be represented in the property and construction industry if we are to deliver the services and buildings that our society needs.

And it is not enough to bring them into the industry, we need to support them so that they stay. RICS, with its Raising the Ratio initiative, and network groups like Women in Property are trying to make this happen.

One way Women in Property is making its contribution is through its mentoring scheme. Members have always valued the support they get from each other at an informal level, but our mentoring scheme offers a more formal and targeted approach. Feedback has been extremely positive and it is proving to be a real winner in encouraging women to stay in the industry and aspire to make their way up the career ladder.

Will the industry survive if it doesn't diversify? Yes, of course it will, but if it does diversify then it will surely thrive and prosper.

*This article represents the personal views of the author*

*For more information on the RICS Raising the Ratio initiative and the Raising the Ratio Task Force, visit the website [www.rics.org/ltr](http://www.rics.org/ltr)*