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COMMUNITY BUILDING WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION: GRASSROOT CAREER SUPPORT MECHANISMS







CURRENT CHALLENGES IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

- Shortage of labour and skills (Edge Foundation, 2026)
- Lack of attraction to the sector (Carnemolla and Galea 2021)
- Gender diversity (CITB 2022)
- Retention of the workforce

2% consider construction to be their current preferred industry, and most industries are considered more attractive than construction (CITB 2022)

Outsiders have limited knowledge of what construction can offer, while negative perceptions surrounding culture and behaviours persist (CITB 2022)

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

A grassroot approach

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- Interactions between current construction workforce and external to the industry

  - Mentorship and ambassadors (CITB 2023)
  - Real life stories – what is the sector really like?
  - Knowledge of pathways and progression
  - Career visibility
  - Small scale interactions (Owolabi 2023)

How does this happen?

What does the informal look like?

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THIS RESEARCH

A qualitative study implementing and analysing community building events

- A breakfast event for International Women's Day
- A women's leadership event
- Local organisations, industry and community attending the course sessions
- Professional bodies attending activities with students





RESULTS

The connection / links

- The richness of discussions within events
- The 'open forum' that is created in events
- Not just one School or Higher Education

'The access to real-life relationships'

The transfer of information

- Information about the day to day of the sector (& other roles)
- The pathways, promotion

'The great advice and stories given…the relatable information.'

A desire to be part of something

- Students want to understand the community
- Students want to learn how to network to be part of an industry, workforce and professional body

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RESULTS

Networking – the need for an informal environment

An open forum – value to the interactions and networking

A support mechanism - build relationships between industry, community and students

Many events build community and support…







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CONCLUSIONS

The attributes and skills developed in these events are essential to employability

The connections gained support the transition to employability and support current employability (retention)

The informality, comfortable environment is key to success

Events can vary. The plan is for inclusivity. The industry, students, staff, the community

An activity, short talk, break out session and feedback. Tailor it to the size of the audience.

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