

# PEOPLE & PASSION



## RHONDA BARNET, PRESIDENT & COO AVIT MANUFACTURING

People say it's her tenacity that ensured Rhonda Barnet would succeed in an industry where there are few women working in it, let alone running a successful company. As the Co-President and COO of AVIT Manufacturing, Rhonda would say, she had great mentors that wanted her to succeed, and when they would put her in front of the next opportunity she just worked hard and made the best of each one that was given to her. It's obviously a lot of both, you realize when you sit down and talk to her.

As the co-founder of her business, Rhonda has faced many of the typical challenges many working women face. Work-life balance being just one of them. Having a blended family of five children, she felt the guilt of trying to balance the needs of the company with the needs of her family. And although she had to make many sacrifices, she feels that her children would say she made the right choices.

On top of her running her business and raising five children, Rhonda was also elected as Chair of the Board of Directors of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) in 2017. As the first female chair in the association's almost 150-year history, she also did not want to be the last. Both her and the Board saw this as an opportunity to start a discussion about women in manufacturing, and the more they talked, the bigger the idea grew. As the discussion grew and more information came out, the Women in Manufacturing initiative just made sense, and CME's Women in Manufacturing Working Group was created.

Rhonda is passionate about investing in people, and she is passionate about her industry. With the Women in Manufacturing initiative Rhonda found a way to put both her passions to good use. Being a woman in manufacturing herself and knowing the barriers women face when trying to pursue a career, as well as the challenges that manufacturers are facing, Rhonda is uniquely qualified to also see the opportunities available for both.

Her insights and passion for people and the industry drive her to help educate the public and change the perception of manufacturing. When asked why she is so passionate about women and manufacturing, Rhonda says, "I really believe that Canada is a nation of makers. Agriculture and manufacturing are being re-made with innovation and technology. To participate in inventing, creating, and making things is just so rewarding. I want people to see what I see."



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