

Quiet Mentoring, Polymers and Me Time: Bridget's Story

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As the Associate Director of Research, Innovation, Technology and Global Sustainability, Bridget Confait Smith leads the Westlake Global Compounds team responsible for delivering PVC formulations and compounds for customers. These projects span the globe and can last anywhere from a few months to 10 years or more, and play a major role in Westlake Global Compounds’ sustainability efforts. She shares,

“ Sustainability is where innovation and technology come together for the benefit of our customers and the planet. It's here to stay.

Growing up, the idea of change never bothered Bridget. When everyone around her was worried about the unknown, she embraced it. This is very likely a huge contributor to her success. In the ever-changing world of a dynamic organization and the ever-evolving industrial climate, change has been something she's not only comfortable with, but excited about. So how does she share that excitement with her team?

“ It's just my energy. It's the approach - we're all in this together, so let's go.

Bridget also attributes her success to the education and mentoring she’s received along the way, even starting in high school. She knew from a young age she’d go into chemistry, but after a few summer internships focused on polymers, she really fell in love.

“ With my passion for chemistry, that passion turned into a drive to learn as much as I could about polymers ... this is why I went to graduate school. And looking back, this is where quiet mentoring really showed up.

But quiet mentoring isn’t the formal mentoring one thinks of when they hear the term.

“ It was the gentle push from a teacher to do my assignment again because they knew I could do better. Or being put on a project I didn't believe I was ready for, but my leader did.

Now in her adult life, she carries forward the mantra of quiet mentoring. She is particularly passionate about challenging those around her to practice positive self-talk, to take risks when they feel unequipped, and to simply be a confidence booster when needed.



She not only practices this with her team, but she finds it just as important to teach and guide, in the same way, at home with her children. In the time she's been a part of Westlake since joining in 2010, Bridget has not only grown in her career, but has also grown her family. She is a proud mom of a 11-year-old son and two daughters, 4 and 8. Bridget shares,

“ Westlake never made me choose between my career and my desire to have a family. It's not just words, though, it's the actions of this company, that have encouraged me to do both. My motherhood and my career are both important to me, and Westlake gets that.

Bridget admits, however, that even though she is still excited for what each day will bring, because each day is completely different and unpredictable, she struggles with putting herself first. She stresses the importance of self-care. For her, that may be reading a book or learning a new language. She is a self-proclaimed early riser, and uses the quiet time in the morning to prepare herself for whatever the day may bring.

With the unpredictable nature of her role, she is keen to be as prepared as possible, and for her that means being in a constant learning state of mind. When Westlake Global Compounds entered the European market, she was confident in her and her team's technical capabilities, but her passion for connecting with those around her drove her to learn as much as she could about the European culture.

“ I wanted to learn the ways of the country we would be entering. I wanted my new colleagues to feel respected when my team came to visit. We learned customary greeting practices, dining etiquette and many other nuances.

But her team wasn’t the only group getting familiar with the other. She was quick to give kudos to her new colleagues as well. It turns out, they were thoughtful to learn American customs to put their guests at ease. Bridget cites this experience as a prime example of why she is excited to continue her career with Westlake: global scale to modify projects with a focus on the people who execute them.

Bridget is excited for what's in store for Westlake's future, and how she and her team will continue to bring customers products and solutions that are essential every day life.