

EDITOR'S PICK | 83,513 views | Nov 19, 2019, 05:00am

# Weld Like A Girl: A Millennial Woman's Success In A Man's World

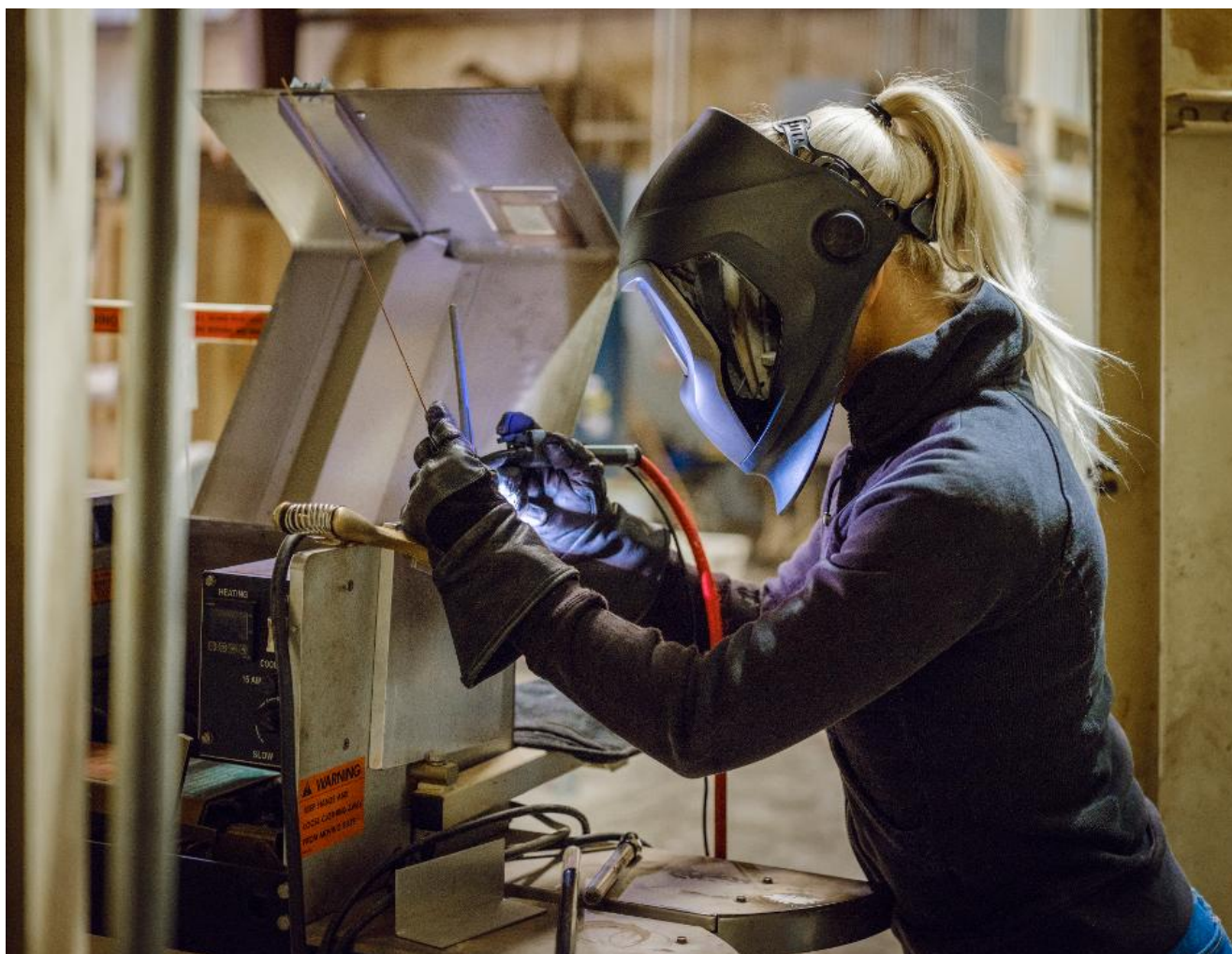


Mark C. Perna Contributor

Careers

*I explore Millennials and Gen Z in careers, education, and the workforce.*

*A new generation of women welders is rocking a male-dominated industry.*



A woman tig welder works in a production facility to repair a piece of equipment. GETTY

In 2010, women made up just **4% of the welding workforce**. Eight years later, that number that had only increased by **1%**, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But

new generation of women welders is looking to change that statistic—and the face of the industry.

Megan is one such woman who found a career in a man's profession. As a high school student, she didn't set out to defy longstanding gender stereotypes. She just wanted to gain a lifelong, marketable skill in the high-demand field of welding. "My dad was very supportive of me learning a skill that most women don't know and 'back in the day' wouldn't even want to learn," she says.

Today In: [Leadership](#)



Unlike other manufacturing positions that can be sent offshore, welding is most often done on site. As a result, the welding industry in the U.S. is expected to grow **6% by 2026**—and there aren't enough skilled welders to meet demand.

While previous initiatives to attract women to the field focused on career benefits like high wages and job security, newer programs like [Women Who Weld](#) provide women-only training programs that make the craft accessible and affordable to an untapped female workforce.

### **Going against the flow**

Megan first discovered her affinity for welding at Iowa's Davenport West High School. "I love working with my hands, especially fabricating fascinating works of art and things people could use," she says. She now works as a welder at John Deere Davenport Work Center. "When it comes to production welding, I can look at a Motor Grader passing by my house and proudly say, 'I built that.'"

Though welding was a skilled and lucrative career, Megan knew it was an unusual choice for a young woman. "When I went to high school, society wasn't really used to women welders. I've had to overcome a lot of obstacles in this industry being a female and I've had to prove myself ten times as much as others, but that's where I get some of my pride."

## I can look at a Motor Grader passing by my house and proudly say, 'I built that.'

Welding may have a male-dominated history, but things are changing. As one of the new generation of women welders, Megan is passing on her expertise. “The best thing for me is the changes I’ve seen in manufacturing, specifically welding, from when I first started to where we are now. I was one out of two women welders for a while at John Deere Davenport Works and I’m grateful to have helped train many more women welders in the past couple years.”

To other women looking to break into this field, Megan says, “put the work in and give your all. There will be struggles, but don’t ever stop trying to be better than you were the day before. Try to be as independent as you can, because at the end of the day, you are your best friend. You’re going to have to prove yourself time and time again, but times are changing.”

A sense of humor doesn’t hurt, either. “Ladies are much more welcomed into this trade than most people think, so don’t be afraid to jump in and show the guys how it’s done. I think they’re finally starting to realize how awesome we really are. Ha-ha!”

*Next up:* Megan’s story is not just about a woman succeeding in a male-dominated industry. She’s also an inspiring example of how to combine academic, technical, and professional skills to gain a competitive advantage in today’s workforce. [Find out how she did it.](#)

---

### Forbes Careers Newsletter

Climb the ladder with Forbes' expert career advice, sent weekly.

Sign up

You may opt out any time. [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

---

*Follow me on [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#).*



**Mark C. Perna**

I write about unleashing passion, purpose, and performance in younger generations and how that intersects education, career, workforce development, and the new multigen... **Read More**