

# ENGINEERING UPDATE

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*Kelli Dahl – Engineering Manager, GRD*

## A DEDICATED AND TALENTED MENTOR TO YOUNG WOMEN IN STEM

By Sarah Gagne

Each volume of the E-Update, we'll be profiling a "person of Price" to give you a glimpse at the man or woman behind all those emails or the voice at the end of the phone! This issue: Kelli Dahl.

### What is your current title and role at Price?

**Kelli Dahl:** I'm the Engineering Manager for the GRD group, overseeing the Applications and Design Engineering teams. Our teams assist customers and sales reps with custom applications, product support and service questions. We also help facilitate communication between Price departments during the development of products, ordering procedures, special diffuser designs and customer visits.

The teams also help to support the factory and drive new product development and continuous improvement initiatives. My primary goal is to drive GRD sales and make strategic decisions regarding targeted markets, new product design and sales initiatives to achieve these objectives.

### How long have you been with Price, and what other roles have you worked in here since you started?

**KD:** I started at Price as a summer student more than a decade ago in the Application Engineering department supporting the GRD and Critical Environment lines; I've also

helped to support the Displacement and Underfloor product groups.

To start out as a summer student with only one class in HVAC design and suddenly become fully immersed into the HVAC world was a bit of a shock! It's truly incredible how many different people and disciplines are involved in HVAC; every year I learn more.

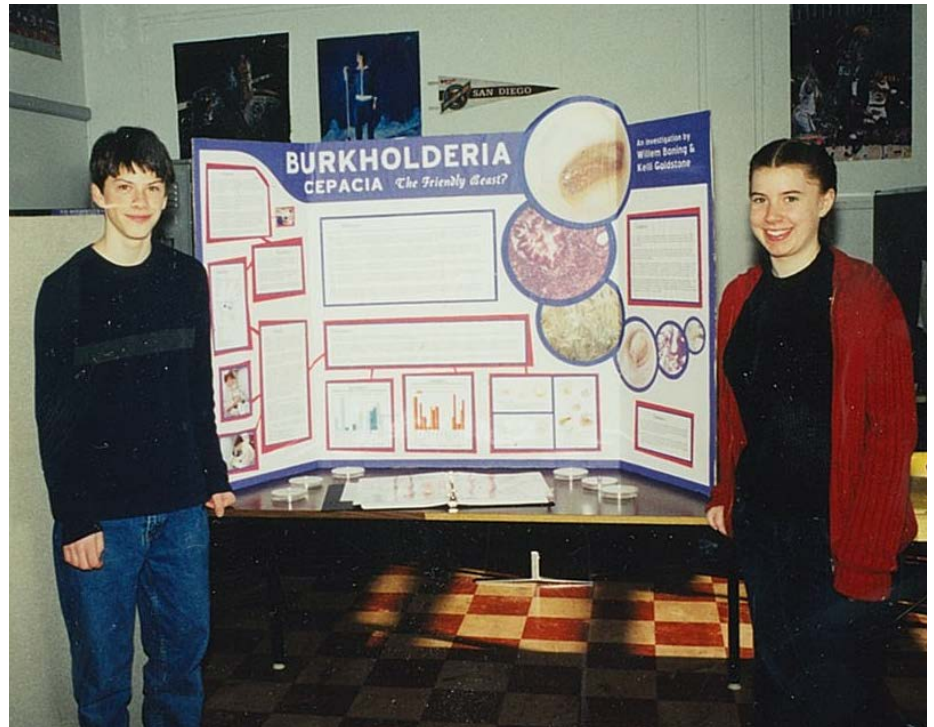
Most people outside of the industry don't really understand the effort that goes into building these buildings – it's a fairly new industry and the complexities can escape us. We went from simply opening windows to ventilate spaces just a century ago to very complex systems and controls.

**How did you find yourself in the engineering field – was it a lifelong interest and aptitude, or did it evolve later in life?**

**KD:** I've always loved math and science and learning how things work. In fact, one of the first books my parents bought me was literally called "How Things Work" and I don't think I knew at the time how much this would shape my future!

In Grade 11, a fellow student and I entered a prestigious science fair where we won the provincial competition to compete in the Nationals. Our project focused on bacteria called *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, found in wet soil and decaying plants and causing life-threatening infections in people with Cystic Fibrosis. It gave me great insight into the world of laboratory science, and the presentation skills learned through this project and my high school debate team experience still serve me well in my current role presenting to customers.

I considered a number of different career options as I neared the end



*Kelli and her teammate were awarded First Place for their provincial science fair project in 2003*

of high school, the first of which was medicine, which I quickly realized I wouldn't have the stomach for. I reached out to a large accounting firm to investigate actuarial studies – I'm so glad that didn't turn out! – and even ended up taking the SAT (unusual for a Canadian). The more I researched, the more I realized that I was better suited to leveraging my people skills and discovering hands-on solutions to problems, and less geared towards sitting at a desk all day long.

**What was it about Price that inspired you to join this team?**

**KD:** I think the greatest asset that Price offers from a career standpoint is the community – you really feel valued and inspired by the team all around you. The executive team makes an effort to get to know each of us and say hello in the hallways. I've had a fairly turbulent year with some major life changes, and I've received nothing but support and unity from my colleagues.

I believe that this culture of service and community cultivated throughout the entire organization is what sets Price apart from our competitors. I am so proud to work for Price and to have seen it grow and prosper.

**What are some industry developments that you've seen in your time within the field that have changed the way you think and work? Are there any developments in the works that you are particularly excited about?**

**KD:** I've seen a drive from within the engineering community, particularly the new, younger engineers, to really understand these systems and ask more fundamental questions about how the products work.

In the past, with only a few products to choose from, engineers had their

go-to products that they would use over and over again regardless of application. With a slew of new products and technologies in the market, the choices have drastically increased, driving the need for education on how to properly apply the products and ensure thermal comfort and performance in the space.

I'm particularly excited about the new partnerships we've created with multiple vendors to try to maximize best results for customers. In the past, I've seen silos between engineers, architects and contractors. It's really

encouraging that we're starting to break down these barriers and have a larger discussion about what is best for the customer and future users for these spaces. The more we can communicate between areas of expertise, the better the end result will be for all.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to make to the engineering community?**

**KD:** My mother has always been a very adept woman and was handy around the house when I was growing

up. I always looked up to her as a role model, and as such I always felt like a STEM-based career was a viable path for me. However, engineering is still a predominantly male-dominated industry that can be incredibly intimidating to skilled young women looking for their place in the world.

I hope that my biggest contribution to the engineering community will be in serving as a mentor, showing that women can be proficient and skilled workers within this community and encouraging other talented women to follow this path where they can contribute so much.

Over the last six years, Price has been generous enough to sponsor Make Your Move, a fundraising design competition centered around National Women's Day which I am so grateful to be a part of. This event is one of many organized by WISE (Women in Science and Engineering), which is based in the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Engineering and focuses on increasing the participation of women and underprivileged youth in the STEM world.

Make Your Move reaches out to Grade 8 girls to introduce them to the design and problem solving skills potentially involved in the STEM field. My role has been mentoring a team through the design competition and my goal is to let them know that engineering jobs can be multifaceted and involve a range of skills.

While working with a group of 13 year olds will always have its unique challenges, the experience has always been incredibly rewarding. I'm very lucky to be part of Price's supportive engineering community within my area of specialty along with supportive male and female colleagues to help me on my journey.



*Kelli with her Make Your Move team in 2016*