

Engineering Excellence: A Conversation with Roselyn Unegbu

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A Conversation with Roselyn Unegbu, Delivery Director LNI at Thames Water and Founder of [Projects In Prism](#)

As a leading figure in the UK's project community, few names resonate with the authority and insight of Roselyn Unegbu. Roselyn's career trajectory has been marked by strategic acumen and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Today, as one of Thames Water's infrastructure directors, her role is pivotal in helping to ensure the continuous supply of safe drinking water and the sustainable management of wastewater for one of the UK's most critical regions.

Since her appointment in November 2023, one of Roselyn's key priorities is maintaining the delivery of essential services in parts of the London area. Thames Water is the utility provider for millions of residents and businesses across the Thames region, a hub that is both the economic pulse and lifeline of the UK. Thames Water, a public sector entity, operates within a unique project management ecosystem where success is measured not by profit margins but by stakeholder satisfaction and strategic outcomes. The repercussions of falling short in these areas can be severe, underscoring the complexity and importance of the role.

A Career Shaped by Challenges and Strategic Vision

When asked about her decision to join Thames Water, a new sector for her. And during a period when the industry is facing significant challenge, Roselyn's confidence shines through. "Sector transitions are always

challenging,” she notes, “but these challenges drive personal growth and expand one’s expertise beyond familiar thresholds.” Her toolkit, honed over a 20-year career, equips her to face the multifaceted demands of her current position. Her approach is resolute: setting clear objectives and expectations for herself, her team, and her organization.

The Nuances of Programme and Portfolio Management

Roselyn articulates the distinctions between programme and portfolio management with the precision of a experienced professional. “Portfolio management is inherently strategic,” she explains. “It involves balancing priorities, managing risks, and ensuring that all components are aligned for maximum impact.” Her ability to manage these dynamics ensures that the outcomes of her programmes and projects not only meet but exceed expectations, fostering transformational results for the community.

Overcoming Legacy Challenges

In the past six months, Roselyn has focused on resolving deep-rooted issues and building the necessary relationships to overcome past negative cycles. “Complex change requires a clear vision and the right team,” she asserts. Her mission is to effectively navigate the strict regulatory environment of the UK water industry, funding and investment cycles governed by the Asset Management Plan (AMP), and to meet the stringent technical and procedural standards required. Communication and relationship-building skills are paramount in this endeavor.

Public vs. Private Sector Dynamics

Discussing the contrasts between public and private sector project management, Roselyn highlights the commercial focus of the private sector versus the stakeholder-centric approach of the public sector. “In the public sector, success is multifaceted,” she says. “It’s about achieving the right balance between community outcomes and stated objectives, often under politically charged conditions.” This complexity demands an effective blend of technical proficiency and emotional intelligence.

A Leader’s Journey

Reflecting on her path to leadership, Roselyn describes it as a natural progression fueled by her drive to embody the leadership qualities she has often found lacking in others, on her journey to senior leadership. Today, she champions a leadership style that is empathetic, inclusive, and service-oriented. “Great leaders listen as much as they speak,” she advises, recommending Daniel Goleman’s works on emotional intelligence as essential reading for aspiring leaders.

Fostering the Next Generation of Project Leaders

Roselyn’s commitment to the profession extends beyond her current role. In 2023, she co-founded Projects In Prism, a community aimed at supporting the professional development of project practitioners, particularly women from the global majority. “Projects In Prism was born from the need for a safe space where diverse perspectives are valued and nurtured,” she explains. The organization collaborates with various groups and champions allyship to break through the “concrete ceiling” that often impedes the

progress of black and brown professionals.

Advice for Aspiring Project Managers

Roselyn's message to young project managers is clear: "Be genuine and relentless in your pursuit of success. Build networks and be open to different paths to achieving your goals."

Future Challenges and Innovations

As we conclude our conversation, Roselyn addresses the future challenges for the project management industry. "AI will revolutionize our field," she predicts. "The key will be integrating these technologies while maintaining the essential human elements that drive successful project management."

Roselyn Unegbu's insights are a testament to her expertise and dedication. As she navigates the complexities of her role at Thames Water, her strategic vision and leadership will undoubtedly continue to inspire and elevate the standards of the infrastructure sector.

Roselyn Unegbu is Delivery Director LNI at Thames Water and Founder of Projects In Prism. Based in London, she has worked in public sector, capital projects delivery for more than 20 Years. She holds an MBA from Henley Business School and is a Fellow of the Association for Project Management.

