

In conversation with...

Tiffany Reynolds,

engineer at Electrotech Controls
in Napier, New Zealand

A Reliable Controls Authorized Dealer since 2011

Tell us about yourself.

I live in the small town of Napier, in New Zealand. I always knew engineering was my passion. I'm 25 years old. Four years ago I graduated from the University of Auckland with a degree in electrical engineering. I mainly focused on wireless power transfer for charging phones and the like. During my first year at university, programming and R&D—playing around with circuit boards—sparked me to go that route. In the summers I'd work at Electrotech Controls to become more familiar with the industry. I now also have a part-time job as a group fitness instructor. I enjoy having the separation of health and fitness from this job, where I'm a programmer and spend a lot of time sitting and thinking quietly. We also have so many amazing national parks around here, so I love getting out hiking.

How did you find your way to building automation?

Via my dad, actually. He worked here originally. I had the opportunity to work on exactly the kind of projects I was interested in. I love doing industrial automation and working with our winery and hospital clients. Being exposed to older technology—things I didn't even know existed—is really interesting; it deepens my understanding of how things have progressed. Things were way different 10 years ago than they are now.

I really enjoy working with programmable controllers; there are so many possibilities! It's just fun to hook everything up, then talk to it. Whatever you want a system to do, you can design it and program it to do absolutely anything.



Tiffany Reynolds

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What does success mean to you?

When I achieve what I set out to do, to the absolute best of my capabilities, and I'm proud of what I've done. I'm always setting myself small goals, but I have high expectations of myself. If I'm not 100 percent happy with my work, it will weigh on me, and I'll want to improve it.

What's your job at Electrotech Controls?

I'm one of three automation engineers. I do a bit of everything—the design, drawings, and programming, and then I go on site and install the controllers and sensors. We all take on our own projects and help each other where we can when someone is more familiar with certain things. For example, I'm quite confident with SCADA systems and programming HVAC systems.

Do you encounter any challenges in the industry as a young woman?

Not here; we all get on really well, and it's nice that I do feel accepted. Some clients aren't quite so open minded. There's a lot more of a challenge to convince them I know what I'm doing and they should trust what I say and not undermine me. I've learned I need to be confident—in how I speak, my demeanor, and how I approach jobs. That helps a lot.

How do you see your career evolving?

I'd like to branch off into R&D. At university I focused more on designing circuit boards, and I found it really interesting to get into that level of detail. Now that I'm working with products that are fully created, working with them in the field, I'm discovering what features I'm missing and how I would do things differently. I have a better understanding of why I want things a certain way and how important the applications are.

What advice do you have for up-and-coming industry professionals?

Ask a lot of questions about everything. If you're installing a controller, even if the setup is easy, ask your supervisor, "What if it were like this or if I wanted to do that?" The general understanding will help you in the future. To the women thinking of joining the industry: take the leap! You can do the job just as well, so be confident.



Tiffany and partner hiking at New Zealand's Tongariro National Park

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How would you like to see the industry develop?

In terms of technology, the advancements over the past few years have been incredible. I'd like to see corporations with big buildings become even more conscious of environmental impacts and adopt more sustainable ways of thinking. Find different ways to harvest energy. Do more monitoring. We need to change the way everything operates. Reliable Controls definitely stands out with their marketing efforts around sustainability. Especially now, with all the extreme weather events happening, sustainability should become a lot more important to people.

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You recently completed the Reliable Controls Authorized Dealer training. What did you think of it?

At first I was a bit worried I wouldn't get much out of it because it was online, and I always find virtual meetings hard. But I learned a lot! It was really good to hear the instructors set out how they would do things. Before, I did what I thought was right. It was good to learn the standard way; the structure definitely helped me program things a lot better. I had a lot of technical questions, so it was really good to just have a conversation about the specific problems I had on a project and have the instructors right there to explain things. They really knew their stuff! The eLearning modules are useful. Networking and connecting things is the hardest part [of the job] for me, so it has definitely helped to have that resource so I can go back and look things up.

What sets Reliable Controls apart?

RC-Studio® is quite powerful for me. Once you have everything set up, it's so easy to go to one space and be able to see everything so clearly and work with it there. Even if there's a third-party controller, I think it's great how it all works well together.

I really love RC-GrafXSet®. It's quite hard finding really nice graphics to work with. I really like how clean they are. Using them, everything looks so much more professional and much clearer for clients. They love being able to look at that—it's really impressive.

Is there anything you wish Reliable Controls would make?

Yes—a more robust wall sensor with SMART-Net capabilities that could be used in an industrial setting. We have quite a few industrial projects, and a wall sensor would be really good to have instead of a duct sensor.



How has Reliable Controls come through for you?

Jason Duncan [Australasia regional sales manager]. His support is amazing. Especially if I have a question that is quite time-pressing, I can email him directly, and he'll get straight back to me. I probably also wouldn't have done the Authorized Dealer training so soon had he not created that opportunity for me. He's very encouraging of women in the industry.

What do you like most about working with Reliable Controls?

The team feeling and being kept in the loop about things. I always get the newsletters and emails and like knowing what's going on. I think the coolest part is how everyone tries to keep that connection, one way or another. That whole focus on feeling like a team is what really makes Reliable Controls stand out.

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Electrotech Controls Automation Engineering team, from left to right: Paul Reynolds (manager), Tiffany Reynolds, Alfonso Quilaton

