

**Tell us a little about your professional and educational background that led you to a career in the life sciences industry.**

Growing up, I always had a knack for numbers and a love of science. I attended Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, and earned a Bachelor's degree in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering with a minor in Math. So, it was a rather direct path to the life sciences industry. My first job introduced me to GMP practices, and I apply a lot of that knowledge to my current role as Project Manager.

**Explain a bit about your career transition from starting at NEXA as a Quality Engineer to Project Manager?**

I started at NEXA in 2019 as a Project Engineer, and then moved to a Quality Engineer II role, and later a Quality Engineer III position before transitioning to my current role as a Project Manager in June 2022. Honestly, this was difficult for me because I'm someone who likes to have their hands on everything. As a project manager, you need to learn to delegate and have faith in your team members that they will do what needs to be done without my having to be involved in every step of the process. My fellow project managers at NEXA gave me tips to help me embrace these new challenges and shared their experiences, which really helped me and still does today.

**What have been some of your biggest challenges you have encountered when managing projects and how you overcame them?**

My biggest challenge was gaining the confidence that I was qualified and capable of running a project. In the beginning, I would often question my decisions, concerned that one wrong decision could throw a project off track. Fortunately, I had and continue to have the support of my colleagues and manager; and seeing that the results were positive, I eventually gained more confidence in my ability.

I also had to learn how to balance multiple projects and people and switch gears during the day being at different client sites, and realigning priorities to keep projects on track. It can be challenging but its manageable—as long as you make sure that your team is completing tasks and achieving client goals.

I often have to delegate more responsibilities to my team, but they do such a stellar job and handle anything I send their way. I really think it's important when it comes to managing people that you ensure everyone gets what they need to perform at their highest level—encouraging them to ask questions, staying informed, and to keep communicating with their colleagues. More importantly to resolve issues even when you're not with them so projects stay on track.

## Q & A with Team Member Laura Himmelreich Project Manager (US)



**What do you enjoy most about your role as a Project Manager?**

My favorite part about being a project manager is interacting with my team and helping them learn and grow professionally. I love seeing that "light bulb moment" when they figure something out on their own and learn something new. Knowing that they are happy and excited about the work they do is infectious and motivates me to continue supporting them as they grow in their careers.

**Tell us about your inspiration to start the Women at NEXA (WIN) initiative?**

Last summer, I joined a group outside of NEXA that focused on young professionals and improving mental health. Admittedly, as someone who struggles with anxiety, I was stunned at how rewarding it was to speak with others who were feeling the same emotions and sharing their day-to-day struggles. And then I had my "light bulb moment" of wanting to bring this level of understanding to NEXA. And since a lot of the women are spread out between the U.S. and Ireland, I thought it would be a great opportunity for us not only to get to know each other, but also to share our ideas, experiences, and concerns. It helps to have a support system in place, particularly as the company continues to grow and more women join our team.

**What advice would you give young professional women starting their career?**

I'd tell them to take a risk! Even if you think you're not qualified for it because what I've found is that no one ticks *every* box on a new opportunity. In other words, it takes time to build confidence and experience, and you're always learning, so you need to trust yourself, and believe in yourself that you have it in you to do the job. And also to remember that you're never going to need to know everything all the time or in the moment—you'll never know everything. You learn by asking questions, making mistakes, and trying again. This can be scary, but also exciting. You'll grow into it eventually, and will make it your own.

**What is one thing people would be surprised to learn about you?**

Despite being a science and math person, I really enjoy art and being creative, such as painting. I have hung my own art in my home. It gives me a lot of satisfaction to see the final project!