

RICS MATRICS YOUNG SURVEYOR OF THE YEAR 2022 FINALISTS

Sava is pleased to be sponsoring the Residential Property category in the RICS Matrics Young Surveyor of the Year Awards 2022. We asked finalist and Sava graduate Zoe Baker about her journey into surveying, and her advice to anyone considering a career in surveying. Hear what Zoe had to say below.

Zoe Baker AssocRICS

Sava graduate and founder of
Your Surveyors Ltd



What was your role and background before joining the Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation?

I started my working life at the age of 16 and did a Vidal Sassoon salon hairdressing apprenticeship.

I wanted a change of career in my early 20s and got a job working for a chartered surveyors in Surrey where I worked my way up to be a manager quickly. I was then headhunted by the founding Director of a surveying company in Kent whereby I rationalised and modernised most processes in that business as well as taking a copyright product which the company had to a national audience of potential users.

Now, I own and run my own very successful residential surveying business covering most of the Southeast for private and corporate clients enjoying the unique way in which we provide our service with industry leading standards of delivery and quality.

What made you consider a career in residential surveying?

I'm not afraid to say I fell in love with the residential surveying sector and I knew this because I just wanted to learn all the time every day.

I purchased a property in my early 20s and was intrigued by the process. I looked into all options within the property industry and the role of a surveyor stuck out to me the most. It has given me the opportunity to be that direct professional link between the purchasers of a property and the sometimes confusing technical elements not only of the property itself but of the whole home buying process.

What was it in particular that drew you to Sava and the Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation?

The fact that I could pretty much, within reason, complete it in my own timeframe. Additionally, the course is specifically designed for residential surveying which was the sphere I was most interested in. Another key factor for me was having a direct route to an AssocRICS qualification which is now widely regarded as a mark of quality within the profession and was what I personally needed to progress in my career.

Would you recommend the Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation to others looking to pursue a new career?

Yes, I would. The course is well structured and gives you a very good base of knowledge to build upon, with applying yourself over and above course material to ensure when qualified you have the broadest knowledge base possible.

“ I always say to people, if the thought of an opportunity gives you fire in your belly and a desire to learn then that's usually all you need to confirm it's the right choice and path for you. ”

Another piece of advice to take into consideration is who you get your support from within this industry is key.

What would you say has been the highlight of your journey so far?

I have faced many challenges. Firstly, people look down on hairdressers and assume you do not have the intelligence or capability to shift to another career.

Secondly and sadly, misogyny I have found remains rife in many sectors of society, unfortunately including some areas of the property profession.

However, seeking out and surrounding yourself with experienced and supportive fellow professionals is paramount. Particularly, if you find yourself in a situation where you need to push past the negativity of some influences that you may encounter on your journey.

Going from a hairdresser to having a successful well established residential surveying business where all our reviews have been 5* and having an office in a prime location has got to be the highlight of my continuing journey so far.

Did you work while completing the diploma? If yes, please tell us how you found managing both work and completing the diploma.

For the first year I continued to work whilst completing the classroom days. When I got to assessment stage I stopped working meaning I could focus on my assessments which I completed within 6 months. The company I was working for had changed and staying there would have definitely restricted my progress.

It was always my plan to eventually set up my own company and be self-employed. Therefore, I needed to focus on developing the brand and putting my efforts into getting the business working efficiently and effectively for when I was qualified. I wanted to offer customers levels of quality and customer care that I thought they deserved.

I have brought my exceptional customer service skills from my hairdressing days into my new surveying business. As a Sava student, bringing across skills you have acquired in a previously completely different line of work can help to set you apart from the crowd.

If you could give one piece of advice to learners who go through the process, what would it be?

Be prepared to keep learning and take constructive criticism. Make sure people who you surround yourself with in your personal and professional life are aware of what you are doing and are supportive. Manage your time effectively. Leisure time is an important part of the learning process as well as dedicating sufficient amounts of study time to achieve your end goal. Be inquisitive and keep your eyes open in everyday life because construction is literally all around us every day. You can learn from not only surveyors but friends/family who might work in the construction trades and anyone with a good knowledge of the legal elements involving your future career can also form part of a very useful pool of information.

A great work ethic must be an important factor in your career, what or who inspires and motivates you to be the best you can be?

A strong work ethic has always been ingrained in me from a very early age by my loving family who were supportive of me throughout all of my surveying qualification journey. I have had one of the best mentors in the whole industry who has supported me throughout this whole process providing me with invaluable advice, knowledge and insights which go way beyond anything anyone can learn in the classroom.

Garrett O'Hanlon FRICS is also Technical Director of my company and our joint experience and qualities we believe are a big part of the reason as to the exceptional successes we have achieved in this business so far.

Striving to be the best is always at the top of my agenda and has been from when I started my working life. I put my all into everything that I do and how I develop and grow this business will be fashioned by this overriding ethos.

How does it feel to be a finalist in the RICS Young Surveyor of the Year Awards 2022?

“ I know it sounds cliché, but this really is the cherry on top of the cake for me. I have spent just under 10 years in this industry demonstrating my exceptional drive and enthusiasm for the surveying profession which on some occasions has been the subject of attempted interruption through the negativity of others. However, I stayed focused on my goal and didn't let anyone or anything get in the way. ”

I want to demonstrate that you can be a young woman and can achieve whatever you desire. I always seek to rise above the quotidian. I want to be a role model that those who perhaps doubt their own capabilities can look at and reimagine their own future prospects keeping a positive mental attitude to lead them through to success.

Find out more about the Diploma in Residential Surveying and Valuation

Scan the QR code on your phone to read more on our website, or visit www.sava.co.uk

