

MONTHLY EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2021

# THE CONTRACTOR'S COMPASS



## Women in Construction



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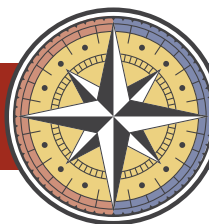
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## EDITORIAL PURPOSE

*The Contractor's Compass* is the monthly educational journal of the Foundation of the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (FASA) and part of FASA's Contractors' Knowledge Network. The journal is designed to equip construction subcontractors with the ideas, tools and tactics they need to thrive.

The views expressed by contributors to *The Contractor's Compass* do not necessarily represent the opinions of FASA or the American Subcontractors Association, Inc. (ASA).

## MISSION

FASA was established in 1987 as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity to support research, education and public awareness. Through its Contractors' Knowledge Network, FASA is committed to forging and exploring the critical issues shaping subcontractors and specialty trade contractors in the construction industry. FASA provides subcontractors and specialty trade contractors with the tools, techniques, practices, attitude and confidence they need to thrive and excel in the construction industry.

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*The Contractor's Compass* is a free monthly publication for ASA members and nonmembers. For questions about subscribing, please contact [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com).

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## EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

Contributing authors are encouraged to submit a brief abstract of their article idea before providing a full-length feature article. Feature articles should be no longer than 1,500 words and comply with The Associated Press style guidelines. Article submissions become the property of ASA and FASA. The editor reserves the right to edit all accepted editorial submissions for length, style, clarity, spelling and punctuation. Send abstracts and submissions for *The Contractor's Compass* to [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com).

## ABOUT ASA

ASA is a nonprofit trade association of union and non-union subcontractors and suppliers. Through a nationwide network of local and state ASA associations, members receive information and education on relevant business issues and work together to protect their rights as an integral part of the construction team. For more information about becoming an ASA member, contact ASA at 1004 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3588, (703) 684-3450, [membership@asa-hq.com](mailto:membership@asa-hq.com), or visit the ASA Web site, [www.asaonline.com](http://www.asaonline.com).

## LAYOUT

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## FEATURES

- Women-Owned Companies Gaining Competitive Edge on Large Projects.....12**  
*by Jeather Cirre, LEED AP, Small Business Contracting and Outreach, McCarthy Building Companies*
- Redefining "Home Maker:" Women in Construction.....14**  
*by Rebecca Lundberg, PulteGroup & Mike Brewer, Brewer Companies*
- Eight Effective Ways to Diversify Your Workplace.....17**  
*by Patrick Hogan, CEO, Handle.com*
- Finding Your Path in the Family Business.....18**  
*by Jenny Harris, ASA Communications Team*
- Women Leaders in Construction – Patty Peterson .....19**  
*by Jenny Harris and Patty Peterson*
- Foundations for Progress: The Future of Women in Construction.....22**  
*by Michelle Turner, Procore*
- Women in Construction: Safety, Innovation, Leadership, Discrimination.....23**  
*by Jack Rubinger, freelance writer*
- Celebrating Women Who Are Paving the Way for Construction.....24**  
*by Jessica Meno, writer for Raken*
- Women in Construction – Overcoming the Obstacles of Entry.....25**  
*by Stephane McShane, Maxim Consulting Group*

## DEPARTMENTS

- ASA PRESIDENT'S LETTER.....5**
- CONTRACTOR COMMUNITY .....6**
- ASA AWARDS WINNERS.....8**
- ALWAYS SOMETHING AWESOME.....10**

## QUICK REFERENCE

- Upcoming Webinars.....27**
- Coming Up .....27**

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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear ASA Members:

Are you as excited as I am to see the trees begin to bud? There is something about springtime that always feels incredibly hopeful. New flowers are pushing through the ground and new opportunities are on the horizon. I know I speak often of how excited I am for what the future holds for all of us at ASA, but I feel like each month gives us something new to celebrate.

To those of you who were recently honored at the ASA Awards Presentation, I want to give my loudest congratulations. Many of you have worked so hard over the last year, one that for many of us was the most difficult and challenging we've ever faced, and you have shown how much we can excel in the midst of struggle. Please know that all of ASA is proud to stand with you.

ASA celebrated this year's Women in Construction (WIC) Week, March 7-13, 2021, by hosting two podcasts. We interviewed Sheila Ohrenberg, an ASA member from our Kansas City Chapter and Chair of Women Construction Owners & Executives (WCOE); Dana Thompson, WCOE's Washington Representative; and Bethany Beck, Chair of ASA's Attorneys' Council. Together, these women candidly identified the "roses" and "thorns" about their experiences working in and/or representing the construction industry.

[\*\*Link to Sheila Ohrenberg and Dana Thompson interview\*\*](#)

[\*\*Link to Bethany Beck interview\*\*](#)

WIC Week, first announced in September, 1960 in Amarillo, Texas, highlights women as a viable component of the construction industry, and raises awareness of the opportunities available and expanding role of women in this industry.

Beyond identifying their experiences working in and/or representing the construction industry, these women addressed the following issues during their podcasts. The need for

- building a diverse and inclusive workforce;



- expanding the number of women in the industry;
- explaining the enormous gender gap in the industry;
- planning for the growth of women in the industry;
- increasing the number of women-owned construction firms;
- highlighting the challenges and opportunities women face in contract law;
- improving recruitment and retention of women in the industry;
- advocating for schools and educational programs recognizing the value of women in the industry; and
- educating members of Congress and their staff about women in the industry.

I highly encourage you to listen to these podcasts, and I am confident you will find them invaluable. More podcasts are planned for the remainder of the year.

Since the beginning of the new 117th Congress, ASA has been closely monitoring the sixth COVID-19 relief package, which was finalized before federal unemployment benefits expired on March 14th. ASA, along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and many other organizations representing small

businesses, continues to urge Congress to extend the deadline for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) through December 31, 2021. Congress created the PPP through passage of the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and in the past 12 months more than 5 million small businesses received PPP loans. That aid allowed between 1.4 and 3.2 million employees to stay on payroll even when their employers were forced to close their doors.

On regulatory issues, ASA in conjunction with the Construction Industry Safety Coalition (CISC), sent a second letter to OSHA outlining several issues the agency should consider while they deliberate the need for an emergency temporary standard (ETS) on COVID-19. Per the letter, "we call on OSHA to be more transparent about the process of developing the ETS and also raise concerns about the need for a COVID-19 ETS in construction and potential burdensome provisions in a COVID-19 standard."

Finally, I offer my sincerest gratitude to the 30 participants in ASA's Attorneys' Council's Subcontractor Legal Defense Fund (SLDF)'s "Suds for Subs" virtual beer tasting fundraiser that took place on March 3, 2021. To date, we have collected \$14,500 for the SLDF, which underwrites the legal costs of filing "friend-of-the-court" briefs to inform the Court regarding the broader impact of relevant construction industry cases throughout the country. ASA has won dozens of these cases since 1997, vindicating subcontractor rights today and into the future.

As always, I look forward to the day when we will be together in person. If we can't be together before then, please set your sights on one year from now, March 2-5, 2022, for SUBExcel. The community of ASA members is one of the strongest in the industry, and I know we'll be together again soon.

*God Bless,*

*Brian Cooper*

*ASA President 2020-2021*



# CONTRACTOR COMMUNITY

## Business View Magazine interviews Richard Bright and Mike Oscar

Business View Magazine recently spoke with ASA representatives Richard Bright, COO, and Mike Oscar, Director of Government Relations, about the Association's importance to its members and issues facing the industry at large. See what they have to say.

<https://businessviewmagazine.com/american-subcontractors-association-asa-better-construction-through-fair-construction/>

## Essential

Check out the excellent video that the Houston Chapter recorded detailing the essential construction worker. A great tribute to the dedicated men and women working through these tough times. In the video, **"Essential: A Tribute to Construction Working Through COVID"**, essential workers discuss everything from the rapid changes that needed to be addressed on the jobsite, to being a primary breadwinner for a family when there is economic uncertainty and parenting children who began remote learning and needed frequent help. Kudos to ConstructionDive for highlighting this video. **[Click here to view the full story from Construction Dive.](#)**

## ASA Strongly Supports the Promoting Infrastructure by Protecting Our Subcontractors and Taxpayers Act of 2021

On March 9, 2021 Sens. Van Hollen (D-MD) and Rounds (R-SD), and Reps. Lynch (D-MA) and Balderson (R-OH) reintroduced the Promoting Infrastructure by Protecting Our Subcontractors and Taxpayers Act of 2021. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation would direct the U.S.

Department of Transportation (DOT) to ensure public-private partnership (P3) projects using Transportation Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (TIFIA) financing have appropriate payment and performance security and are sound federal investments by requiring a surety bond.

Unfortunately, P3 projects sometimes do not maintain the same level of protection that has been required on public infrastructure projects for over a hundred years through federal and state Miller Acts. Without these protections, in the event of a contractor default, the project is halted, and can be terminated, leaving subcontractors and workers without pay. Additionally, states and taxpayers then are forced to absorb additional costs of rebidding the project.

Payment and performance protections, through the use of surety bonds, provide monetary compensation in case a contractor fails to perform the acts as promised. These bonds play a vital role in ensuring contractors in financial distress avoid bankruptcy, allowing subcontractors and workers of public works projects to receive compensation and allowing the project to be delivered within budget and on time. This bipartisan, bicameral policy seeks to provide added protection for our nation's workers, subcontractors, and small businesses as they look to solve our country's infrastructure needs by ensuring essential payment and performance security protections are in place for all forms of project procurement where federal funds are used.

Finally, I am pleased to highlight ASA's Government Relations Committee Co-Chairs' comments on this important legislation:

"The American Subcontractors Association (ASA) proudly supports this important bipartisan legislation because our contractor members witness firsthand the importance of financial securities such as

performance and payment bonds on construction projects. These bonds assure that a contractor is qualified to perform the obligations in the award and serve as protection for the public agencies in case the contractor fails to meet their obligations under the contract," said Gloria Hale and Courtney Little, ASA Government Relations Committee Chairs.

## Learn the Ropes of Construction Credit in a New Free Online Class

Are you a Credit Manager or do you ever work with credit managers? A new, free class contains more than 50 short video lessons that break down the functions of credit management in the construction industry. Join Thea Dudley, a credit coach and 30+ year industry veteran to increase your credit skills and become the most valuable player on your construction company's team. **[Enroll today on Levelset Credit Management Academy.](#)**

## Explore this Series of Legal Webinars

**[March 31, 1:00 pm EDT - Management of Project Schedule Impact and Delay Claims](#)**

The third of the series sponsored by our sponsor FoundationSoftware and their partner Hahn Loeser, this program will discuss the management of project schedule impact and delay claims, as well as critical documentation and proactive practices to protect project profitability. The webinars are free, but registration is required.

**[April 13, 1:00 pm EDT - Joint Venture/Partnerships for Large Construction Projects.](#)** This session will focus on how local small, medium, and large contractors can create partnerships or joint ventures with each other, or with out-of-town contractors to bid on large projects.

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# ASA AWARD WINNERS

**There are many adjectives to describe the past year, and while we know we have changed forever, we still try to make events normal, if possible. Every person and company had new challenges in 2020. For surviving, achieving and grabbing 2020 by the horns... Congratulations to our winners.**

## Chapter of the Year

(100+ members)

*This award is presented to the chapters which exemplified outstanding achievement in chapter operations and member service.*

### ASA North Texas

*With record breaking event attendance leading up to the COVID-19 shut down, North Texas was in a position to survive the financial storm. They were able to improvise and adapt to the economic climate. Even during the worst of times, North Texas was able to carry on and grow their membership. North Texas hosted many virtual education seminars providing real time updates to their members. Most notably the North Texas Chapter mobilized efforts to collect PPE and made it available at cost to members in need. This was a tremendous undertaking that was organized at a time of extreme uncertainty. This is the kind of leadership, teamwork and support we should all seek through our membership in ASA.*

## Chapter President

Elizabeth Justis (ASA Baltimore)



*Elizabeth wanted Baltimore's membership engaged and growing, and she took it upon herself to make it so. She personally visited*

*17 unengaged chapter members, sometimes driving*

*up to 2 hours one way to do so. These visits resulted in 16 of those unengaged members renewing, increasing Baltimore's retention rate from 85% prior year to 93% during her term.*

*Elizabeth's energy level, positivity and commitment to ASA have made a significant impact to ASA of Baltimore and have earned her ASA's prestigious honor of President of the Year.*

## Excellence in Ethics

- Ace Glass Construction Corporation Little Rock, AR
- Banker Insulation, Chandler, AZ
- Bazan Painting Company St. Louis, MO
- Blauch Brothers, Inc. Harrisonburg, VA
- EyeSite Surveillance, Inc. Chandler, AZ
- Haley-Greer, Inc., Dallas, TX
- Holes Incorporated Houston, TX
- Kent Companies Grand Rapids, MI
- Markham Contracting Company, Inc., Phoenix, AZ
- Platinum Drywall Maumell, AR
- Shapiro & Duncan, Inc. Rockville, MD
- Sorella Group, Inc. Overland Park, KS
- South Valley Drywall, Inc. Littleton, CO
- Western Engineering Contractors, Inc., Loomis, CA

## Chapter Executive Director

We have a tie!



Beverly Reynal  
(ASA North Texas)



Brianna Wright  
(ASA Houston)

*Both Directors have tackled unforeseen economic obstacles with determination and commitment. From coordinating educational resources for members, evaluating and updating safety practices to help members continue working during a pandemic, to mobilizing efforts collecting PPE and making them available to members, Beverly and Brianna have used their individual talents and resourcefulness to help their members navigate unprecedented circumstances.*

## Innovation

ASA North Texas 401K Multiple Employer Plan (MEP)

*North Texas launched the 401K committee to explore the viability of a Multiple Employer 401K Plan. After many hours of negotiations, the plan was finalized and began a soft rollout one week before the COVID shutdown on March 16, 2020. It is currently going strong and is a plan that will be rolled out to all ASA Chapters.*



## Safety Recognition

(NEW in 2020)

In ASA's commitment to safety, the decision was made to recognize those members who make safety and safety education a priority in their company. Chapters were asked to recognize the member of their chapter at the forefront of safety and safety education. The companies recognized are those who have gone above and beyond to ensure their employees, and everyone on their jobsites, go home to their families after work every day.

- ASA of Arizona  
Brewer Companies, Inc.
- ASA Colorado  
Absolute Caulking
- ASA Houston  
Chamberlin Roofing and Waterproofing
- ASA Midwest Council  
Murphy Company
- ASA New Mexico  
Southwest Abatement, Inc.
- ASA North Texas  
Haley Greer, Inc.
- ASA Oklahoma  
Arrowhead Precast

## ASA Subcontractor Advocates

The ASA Task Force on Government Advocacy established the ASA Subcontractor Advocate Awards to spotlight organizations and individuals who dedicate themselves on both the federal and state level to go before the government on behalf of construction subcontractors, specialty trade contractors and suppliers.

### Federal Advocate

Robert Abney, F.L. Crane



*Robert Abney has been a tremendous resource and advocate with ASA GRC's Team, congressional staff, and members of Congress on understanding*

*the prohibition of reverse auctions in construction services, a top ASA legislative priority for many years. On December 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law the prohibition of reverse auctions in federal construction services, which was included in the FY21 Omnibus Appropriations, COVID-19 Relief Package. What a HUGE legislative victory for ASA and without Robert's advocacy and education, we could not have achieved this awesome victory.*

### State Advocate

Angela Cooner, Lewis Brisbois, Bisgaard & Smith LLP



*Angie's dedication and track record are second to none. However, it is her leadership in managing the recent merger between the Arizona State Contractor's Coalition (AZSCC)*

*and Arizonans for Fair Contracting (AFC) where she has distinguished herself most notably." Angie organized and fronted the initial fees for incorporating a new non-profit in the state, expertly created to maximize the influence of subcontractors on Arizona state legislation. The new vehicle has allowed ASA of Arizona to renegotiate a new contract with a government affairs firm that helped secure victory on a critical proportional liability bill and begin the upcoming legislative session on the right foot.*

## ASA Attorneys Council

Scott Holbrook, Crawford and Bangs, LLP



*Scott is a long-standing and dedicated ASA member and Attorneys' Council participant. For many years running, he has served as the Chair of our Subcontractor*

*Legal Defense Fund Task Force, devoting countless volunteer hours and effort to the evaluation and advancement of each case that comes before the group. He has worked for decades advancing subcontractor rights in the state of California, and his passion and commitment to the industry and its stakeholders stands out in a field of dedicated and committed legal professionals that lend their support to the Association every*

*year. Notably this year, Scott was the designated counsel for a significant SLDF appellate court victory in California. In Crosnos Construction v. Travelers Surety, the California Court of Appeals ruled in favor of subcontractors to limit enforcement of "pay-when-paid" clauses that delay payments to subcontractors. The Court specifically referenced Scott's argument in its opinion, using it to rebut a countervailing argument from the defendant.*

# ALWAYS SOMETHING **AWESOME**

## She Builds It ... and It Grows

The American Subcontractor Association has supported and nurtured various peer groups such as contract studies, associate members, and c-suite leaders. In 2018, the Houston Chapter of ASA saw the need and started a women's peer group, "She Builds It."

It began with six or seven women on a planning committee seeing the growth of women in construction, yet knowing these women needed support and a safe place to air their concerns and learn from others that had been in their shoes before them.

They organize both educational and networking events that are fun and motivating. While most of the events are for ASA members only, occasionally activities are opened up to all women - such as the online trivia during Women In Construction week and their winter holiday fundraisers, where participants gather to build relationships and raise money through gift cards for families of ASA members in need of a little help during the holidays.

From the small number of starters, the She Builds It peer group has spread to several other chapters with their events attracting anywhere from 20 to 160 participants.

We congratulate these daughters, sisters, moms, wives, employees, employers, and ASA members who continue to set the example for encouraging more women into the rewarding field of construction.



*Winter Holiday Gathering and Gift Card Drive*



*Buffalo Bayou Pontoon Boat Tour and Trivia Challenge*





*Saint Arnold Brewery Networking Event*



*The Struggles and Rewards of Being a Woman in the Construction Industry Lunch Panel*



*The Story of Jane Henry and SeeHerWork Education Program*

*Do you want to share something AWESOME?! We love to highlight the achievements of ASA members.  
Send us an email at [communications@asa-hq.com](mailto:communications@asa-hq.com)*





## Women-Owned Companies Gaining Competitive Edge on Large Projects

by Heather Cirre, LEED AP, Small Business Contracting and Outreach, McCarthy Building Companies

There may never be a better time than now for women-owned trade contractors to take advantage of the opportunities created by favorable marketplace circumstances. Amidst real challenges due to the ongoing pandemic and a national focus on improving racial and social equity, large companies increasingly seek female-led firms. In addition to helping to meet specific goals for hiring small business trade contractors, these firms also help to grow the industry's base of qualified craft workers by contributing a diverse workforce during an industry-wide shortage of qualified construction workers.

A very real example is Next NGA West construction program, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's (NGA) new \$1.7 billion campus being built on a 97-acre site in St. Louis, Missouri. Active construction began in January 2020 and is expected to complete in 2023. As Federal Government investment, the project is required to comply with Department of Labor affirmative action goals for 6.9 percent female participation by trade and 14.7 percent minority participation by trade, alongside subcontracting enterprise participation goals of 28% small business and 5% women-owned small business.

The joint venture design builder team of McCarthy HITT aims to extend those requirements with a Project Specific Inclusion Plan (PSIP) that establishes specific maximum achievable opportunities for qualified minority and female participation on all aspects of construction. PSIP goals build on Federal goals by setting benchmarks for diverse business enterprise participation of 25% minority-owned and 5% woman-owned companies of any size.

"When it comes to competing on large construction projects where the bidding process is complicated, demanding and extraordinarily time-consuming, there are no short-cuts or back-doors to winning a contract award, but the effort is worth it," says Julia Yank, president of roofing company Jim Taylor, Inc., located just

outside of St. Louis in Belleville, Illinois.

Taylor Roofing worked diligently to win contracts for the roof of the 212,000-square-foot main office building, as well as a contract for two large parking garages on the Next NGA West campus. Part of their winning strategy to achieve the large volume of contracts included engaging a minority-owned company to perform a portion of the work and further expanding the diverse labor workforce to the project.

"Preparing for and submitting a bid is far from a 'cut and paste' process," says Yank. "For example, Taylor Roofing has had a long-standing relationship and is very familiar with McCarthy Building Companies' processes, however we had not worked before with all of the team members from the joint venture for the Next NGA West project."

"Due to this, we not only attended every 'opportunity fair' event (three so far) and every pre-bid qualification meeting, including virtual programs, we went out of our way to introduce ourselves, ask smart questions that showed we understood the scope, and express our sincere interest in working on the project," Yank added.

On any project, the construction bidding process offers all subcontractors a chance to show off strengths they can bring to a project in a preview of their expertise and organization style. Research shows that some common characteristics of women-owned companies make them especially suited to capitalize on this pre-construction phase.

According to an article in *Psychology Today* published in 2015, women approach work (and life) with a collaborative mindset and empathetic viewpoint. This ability to empathize allows for accurate listening, attention to subtle details, and the capability to pick up on nonverbal cues.

In construction, successful projects are built through intricate teamwork that depends on clear communication and trust. When female-led enterprises take part in



a job, levels of collaboration on the jobsite often increase.

Prime contractors look at companies that have good communication skills and the confidence to ask questions to gain a deep understanding of project documents during the bid phase to gauge how these companies will operate in the field. In addition, the bid process also creates pathways for companies to establish solid relationships that can translate to working together on future projects.

For the Next NGA West project, the McCarthy HITT JV team reached out through various databases and sources to nearly 5,000 small, minority, women-owned and veteran-owned businesses, providing a level field of the same opportunities to access requirements, attend opportunity fairs and pre-bid events, and detailed



contact information and contacts for additional information.

In addition to seeking diversity of ownership in solicited contractors, McCarthy HITT's bid criteria call for firms to commit to "boots on the ground" workforce participation goals that women-owned businesses are often best-positioned to attain. Women who have overcome barriers themselves can appreciate the importance of removing obstacles to success for other women and underrepresented groups and their firms often represent a wide diversity of personnel.

Contracts on the project are still being awarded. As of February 18, 2021, 11 of the first 68 project contracts have been awarded to women-owned business

enterprises for work including electrical, HVAC, roofing, rebar, fencing, and other goods and services, ranging from a contract size of \$5,000 to over \$5,000,000.

Those trade partners selected not only were the best qualified from a technical proposal standpoint, but they also paid attention to every detail, submitted all information on time, and did everything possible to establish their commitment and reliability for the McCarthy HITT JV team to award the work with confidence. Further, these women-owned companies stand out in the industry, bringing cooperative leadership and an employee base increasingly reflective of the diverse demographics that the St. Louis region encompasses.

#### About the Author



*Heather Cirre, LEED AP, is responsible for small business contracting and outreach for St. Louis-based **McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.** and is part of McCarthy HITT joint venture for Next NGA West, which includes **HITT Contracting**, Falls Church, Va.; **Black & Veatch Special Projects Corp.**, Overland Park, Kan.; **Gensler**, San Francisco; and **Akima, LLC**, Herndon, Va. The Black & Veatch + Gensler Joint Venture serves as the Architect-Engineer of Record for the project. She can be reached at [hcirre@mccarthy.com](mailto:hcirre@mccarthy.com)*



### Tips for trade contractors to keep in mind include:

- Register in the general contractors' bid solicitation database to receive notices of bid opportunities, outreach events, and pre-bid meetings.
- Submit a prequalification application, which typically provides detailed information about your company's areas of expertise (NAICS codes), safety record, project references, bonding and credit capacity and other business classification information.
- Register your company at SAM.gov and enter as much data as possible, including any special status or certifications held by your company.
- Prioritize your company's internet presence. If your business model allows, use website monitoring to understand how your company appears in search results and supports your business development and marketing efforts. The website does not need to be elaborate, but it needs to reflect the high quality of your company's work and be user-friendly to navigate.
- Contact the person(s) responsible for running the bid process to express your interest in working on the project. In addition to sending a well-written email that includes an organized capability statement, follow-up with a quick phone call to introduce yourself and make sure your email was seen and did not land in a spam folder.
- Attend ALL outreach events, industry days and seminars hosted or attended by the general contractors who will be choosing trade contractors and introduce yourself and your company.
- Understand that low bids are not the only factor in winning a job. While a competitive price matters, it is equally (and perhaps more) important to demonstrate that you have taken the time to carefully review contract documents and proposed a complete scope of work; have accounted for adequate supervision, safety and quality assurance practices, training or commissioning, and any other special requirements; and are responsive to any pre-bid requirements for information.
- Submit everything on time and pay attention to every small detail.
- Answer questions directly and accurately. Whether responding to a prequalification application or a bid invitation, provide information that addresses the question or scope of work presented and then stop. Admit when you don't have an answer – but offer to follow-up.



# FEATURE

## Redefining "Home Maker:" Women in Construction

by Rebecca Lundberg, PulteGroup & Mike Brewer, Brewer Companies



Walk onto any construction job site, either residential or commercial, and statistically you'll find one female worker for every 99 males. In fact, only 3.4 percent of construction tradespeople are women.

Another statistic to digest: according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics, less than 11 percent of those employed in the construction industry in 2020 were women. Those numbers include non-tradesperson positions, such as sales and marketing, human resources, design center team members, and other "administrative" roles.

And as low as those numbers are, it's hard to imagine those are actually an **IMPROVEMENT** over the past years.

It's not a surprise to anyone when we say the construction industry is male dominated. So, the question is how do we, as leaders in the Arizona construction industry, find opportunities for more women to enter our growing field? After all, the construction industry is expected to see a five percent job growth nationally

over the next five years, while here in Arizona, the Phoenix/Mesa/Scottsdale area has the ninth highest employment level in the nation for construction laborers.

In our opinion, it's simple: it's time to examine the obstacles, both perceived and real, women face when contemplating a career in construction, particularly trade roles; identify opportunities that encourage women to consider construction-related jobs; and rebrand the industry from the perception that construction workers are single men to the reality that workers are single men and women, and family-oriented hockey dads and moms.

### Why the lack of women?

With more than 10 million employees, the U.S. construction industry is vibrant and, as noted above, continues to grow. The reasons for this are plentiful, but the ones which come to our minds first include career stability, rising salaries due to

higher demand, and overall higher job satisfaction as we don't have to be in an office or cubicle all day (or even ever!).

Both of us love what we do. We see endless possibilities for careers in construction or as a tradesperson.

So, why is the male to female ratio in our industry so off kilter?

An obvious answer is the lack of women in trade schools and apprenticeship programs across the state. Fortunately, Arizona's trade and technical schools are working hard on overcoming the lack of females in what are traditionally considered male dominated industries by actively recruiting and providing increased support for non-traditional students.

Arizona defines non-traditional as occupational training or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in the workforce. For example, females enrolled in welding, construction technologies, building electrical, plumbing and similar programs would be considered non-traditional students.

By actively marketing these programs to this emerging group of students, whole new worlds of opportunities are opening up for the next generation of tradespeople, and we couldn't be more excited.

In another initiative, both PulteGroup and Brewer Companies partnered with the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, Arizona's largest Chamber, to develop an industry-funded/led, multi-year marketing campaign (Build Your Future Arizona: [www.BYFAZ.org](http://www.BYFAZ.org)) to educate and attract young people – both male and female – to the construction trades.



Of course, we would be remiss if we didn't also mention the Brewer Craftsman Academy, which has prepared more than 160 men and women for a successful – and profitable – plumbing career. But again, the mix of these young people has been completely lopsided toward young men seeking careers in the trades. Only 2% of applicants have been women.

But while it's easy to point to the lack of females in formal education and apprenticeship programs as the reason for the lack of women in construction, that would also be short-sighted.

Simply stated, sexual harassment in the construction industry is an issue that needs to be addressed. An ABC News piece from August 2020 reported the construction industry has the second highest rate of sexual harassment in the workforce, per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Fortunately, many companies, like ours, are actively working to create inclusive work cultures where both men and women are equally valued. This includes the creation of diversity councils with representation from different races, genders, and ethnicities, adoption of family-friendly work policies and benefits programs, and enhanced training materials to educate team members on the importance of diversity and inclusion.

These efforts are certainly paying dividends. PulteGroup, one of America's largest homebuilding companies with operations in 40 markets throughout the country, is ranked on Fortune's "Best Large Workplaces for Women" list. And it is no coincidence that 94% of the employees at PulteGroup say it is a great place to work (national average of US-based companies is 59%).

It is important to note diversity in the workplace, to include more women, is simply good for business and life. McKinsey & Company, an American

world-wide management consulting firm, reported that the most gender-diverse companies are 25 percent more likely to achieve above-average profitability than companies with less diversity.

Here in Arizona, the American Subcontractors Association has its own program called – "She Builds It." The goal of this peer group is to create a forum for dialogue among women who own, manage, and work for trade contracting firms, build relationships with other female contractors, collaborate on strategies to overcome workplace challenges, and serve as a resource for connecting and mentoring women within ASA's construction community.

Finally, there are a multitude of industry and trade organizations working hard to introduce women to the construction industry while also providing networking and mentorship opportunities. These include the National Association of Women in Construction, Professional Women in Construction, and the Women Construction Owners & Executives USA. Each organization offers a variety of conferences, workshops, online forums and other tools to help excite women to enter the field and help them enjoy a successful, lifelong career.

## Single Men to Hockey Moms and Dads

While obstacles exist for women to enter our rewarding fields, we believe a lot of work has been done to chip away at improving diversity in our ranks. Much of this has to do with the rising number of women in leadership positions across the industry. In 2019, women comprised 7.5 percent of all construction managers, and 44 percent of the top contracting companies had women in executive roles.

As more women enter the construction industry and climb the

ladder of a male dominated industry, they serve as role models and mentors to the next generation. Both of us are where we are today because of the wonderful men and women who mentored us over our careers. As leaders recognize the value diverse people add, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, etc. the ranks in leadership will change to benefit the whole organization.

Also, with the continued rise of female leaders, perceptions and attitudes in the workforce are changing. Gone are the days where construction workers and tradespeople are seen as big, burly men who talk sports all day and into the night at the local watering hole.

Now, we see a generation of workers that likes talking sports, but who may also have families and, like us, juggle work with obligations such as kids' doctor appointments, dance classes, and, of course, hockey practice!

We believe the construction industry is making significant improvements in diversity and inclusion. However, like every other industry, that work is ongoing and it is up to us to continue that journey.

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## About the Authors

**Rebecca Lundberg** is Division President of the PulteGroup's Arizona operations. Bringing over thirteen years of experience with the company, Lundberg oversees all aspects of the division's day-to-day home building operations in the Greater Phoenix and Tucson areas. For more information, visit <https://www.pulte.com/>

**Mike Brewer** is the founder and CEO of the Brewer Companies. He currently serves as President of the American Subcontractors Association of Arizona, chairs the steering committee for Build Your Future Arizona. For more information, please visit <https://brewercompanies.com/>

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# FEATURE

## Eight Effective Ways to Diversify Your Workplace

by Patrick Hogan, CEO, Handle.com

The construction industry is currently going through a major shortage in skilled labor. Despite the millions of construction workers who got laid off due to the pandemic, there are still numerous construction jobs that remain unfilled to this day.

As construction companies intensify their efforts in recruiting new employees, they should also consider hiring new recruits from a specific demographic: women.

The construction sector is a male-dominated field, but this is slowly starting to change. More women are starting to join the industry, and construction companies have everything to gain for diversifying their team. Here are some tips for attracting more women to join and stay in the construction sector:

### Pay them well

Male-dominated fields such as construction and engineering are notorious for paying women lower than their male counterparts. To retain more women in the construction sector, construction companies must ensure that their women employees are paid according to skill and experience. Women must therefore get paid just as much as the men who perform the same jobs.

The pay gap is a serious issue, and this can cause qualified women to leave the construction industry and further contribute to staff shortage. If companies want to retain their skilled women workers, they should be willing to pay them right.

### Create a gender-inclusive job posting

If you are trying to diversify your team, you should start with writing a gender-inclusive job listing. The job posting is the first thing that a potential candidate sees, and they may get turned off if the job description and requirements use a language that is heavily catered to attracting men.

Gendered pronouns, for example, must be avoided. There are also masculine-oriented words reported on LinkedIn that make a job posting unappealing to women. These words include "ninja" and "rock star."

### Ensure that the hiring team is also gender-inclusive

The hiring team must also be diversified and must therefore include women, especially if you want to hire more women into your team. An all-male hiring team is more likely to dismiss women candidates regardless of skill and qualification. Having more women decision-makers in the hiring team will ensure that the hiring process is balanced.

### Acknowledge diversity as one of your company's values

If you want to recruit and retain more women workers, your company should openly acknowledge diversity as one of its values. This should be reflected in your job postings, as well as in your overall company branding.

If you consider diversity to be one of your key values, then you are more inclined to promote a workplace culture that welcomes women in the team. You will also develop policies that ensure all employees are valued, regardless of gender.

### Require all employees to undergo gender sensitivity training

Gender sensitivity training in the workplace is important, especially if you want to promote a diverse and positive culture at work. These training sessions typically show examples of abusive and hurtful behavior that arise in the workplace due to long-held biases and beliefs of some employees.

Everyone, including women employees, must also understand that they must refrain from committing abusive and non-inclusive actions.

### Offer benefits that are valuable to working women

There are valuable benefits that you can offer to attract more women in the construction sector. These benefits include a fair salary package, paid parental leaves, and a diverse workplace culture.

If you want to retain more women workers, you should let them know that you are invested in their growth as employees. Other benefits that appeal not only to women but to all employees include professional development and career improvement opportunities.

### Ensure that women employees have access to the appropriate equipment

Women in construction are more prone to injuries because of poor-fitting personal protective equipment (PPE). Construction companies must put the effort in making sure that women have access to the right PPE.

Giving women the proper equipment does not only encourage them to stay with the company, but it also promotes a safe working environment for everyone.

### Place women in leadership positions

The lack of women role models may deter women from staying in a company. They have no one to look up to, and the prospects of moving up and getting promoted may seem bleak.

Companies must therefore not just recruit women in entry level positions; you should also be more open in having more women in your mid- and upper-management teams. Promoting diversity should also apply even to the higher-ups, and more women are likely to stay in the industry if they regularly see strong female leaders.

### About the Author



Patrick Hogan is the CEO of [Handle.com](https://handle.com), where they build software that helps contractors, subcontractors, and material suppliers with filing documents like **preliminary notices** to avoid late payments. Handle.com also provides funding for construction businesses in the form of invoice factoring, material supply trade credit, and mechanics lien purchasing.



## Finding Your Path in the Family Business

by Jenny Harris, ASA Communications Team



Tish Barker, President of Haley Greer, Inc. since 2003, knows what it is like to follow in her family's footsteps, and yet create her own path at the same time. She didn't simply come directly into her father's company, but learned a completely different field than her father, and then returned to implement those skills and improve a company close to her heart.

Barker's father, now in his 90s, still comes into the office twice a week. His incredible knowledge of glass comes from his almost 70-year long career within the industry. He began to work in the glass industry in his 20s, and keeps current on all the projects currently in production. His dedication to the company and ability to be an incredible resource makes him a crucial asset to the success of Haley Greer. It also has modeled a work ethic that is important to his daughter.

After studying Criminal Justice and Math in college, she began working for a local architectural firm. While her degrees may have set her up for a different career path, she was always open to opportunities. "Your life finds you," she said. "You just have to be open to it." To that end, she never expected that she would later end up with a career in HR. While her life took her to many different places, Barker firmly believes that all those experiences put her in a place to be

successful in business. By being open to opportunities, if it feels right, you may suddenly discover that not only are you capable of excelling, but you may also discover you really like what you are doing.

While working for the architect after college, her father decided to start his own company. He asked her to come and help get the company set up, and she agreed. However, she didn't stay. About a year later she and her husband moved to Florida, and that is where she began her career in Human Resources.

Those many years in Florida gave Barker the opportunity to learn and grow within the HR field. When she made the decision to move back home, she was able to put that knowledge to good use. In the beginning the plan was for Barker to return working for her father, writing some policies and procedures while she was job hunting. Her father agreed, but when she found another job, her father didn't want to lose the incredible resource he had found. He knew that while he was a glass expert and a salesman, she was the knowledge source for all things non-glass. He offered for her to become the Vice President of Business Administration, a position she accepted.

Barker genuinely believes that her time away from the family business gave her the skills to make a bigger impact when she returned. Many people start in their family business at an early age and never leave, losing the opportunity to learn a lot from different environments and perspectives. Her time in Florida not only gave her more experience, but it allowed her to discover her own strengths, and create added value to the company.

When she returned to work for her father as a Vice President, Barker wasn't just "the boss' daughter". She didn't need to try to become a clone of her father. She isn't a glass expert, but brought insights and efficiencies to the company, which helped her gain the respect of the rest of the employees. She feels that when you work for a family business, the culture is

different. The employees really feel like family. It isn't a big corporation with shareholders and a board of directors, and that family culture made the respect of the fellow employees even more important. That respect set her up well to become President.

Over the years, the business has had its ups and downs, and one of the things Barker is most proud of is her ability to keep the company's finances afloat during changing times. Glass products are manufactured differently than years ago, and fewer employees are needed on site. Fewer employees on a single jobsite, means that they're able to cover more job sites.

Barker's father stresses the importance of teamwork and collaboration within the company. Haley Greer has been able to keep their doors open throughout the pandemic, and while some employees chose to work from home for several months, most everyone came back to the office over the summer. Her father likes to say that people become "lone rangers" when they work from home for too long. Ideas aren't shared and bounced around the same way as when people are together, and mistakes are more likely to happen when you're apart.

Barker is always happy to discuss some of the projects Haley-Greer has completed over the last several years. The Cowboys Stadium boasts the largest movable glass doors in the world, something she is incredibly proud of. They have worked on the George W. Bush Presidential Library, as well as the new Rangers Stadium. She looks forward to fans being able to come back to the baseball stadium to admire the amazing work they have done.

Tish Barker has found her own path within her family business. Leading a company doesn't mean knowing everything. "Take the knowledge and experience you do have and find your niche where you can have the most impact." By letting her life find her, she has built a career she can be proud of, and encourages others to not be afraid to let their own lives lead them to new opportunities.

### Finding a Community in ASA

Being the President of a company often means that you don't really have peers, which can be a lonely place. Tish Barker believes that one of the biggest benefits of her ASA membership is the ability to be with other business leaders at events like SUBExcel. The annual get-togethers and local chapter events are a great sounding board, creating a cherished community that she would not have without ASA.



## Women Leaders in Construction – Patty Peterson

by Jenny Harris, ASA Communications Team; and Patty Peterson, Tindall Corporation



These days it is rare for an employee to remain loyal to one company, but Patty Peterson has been with Tindall Corporation, a precast/prestressed concrete manufacturer in Virginia for more than 25 years. Tindall's CEO Greg Force, who was responsible for hiring her, said, "Patty has a unique ability to diffuse conflict and effectively create team-oriented win-win resolutions. She has been a key figure in Tindall's success through the years in establishing its position within the market, not to mention the impact she has made on the precast and construction industries overall through leadership positions in Precast Concrete Institute (PCI) and American Subcontractors Association's (ASA) National Board of Directors."

Peterson attributes the success of her career to maintaining a mindset of continued learning. She believes that "Education can never be taken away from you." She recognizes the importance of dumping any preconceived notions about potential training and being determined to learn, to do the best possible job.

Few little girls dream of entering the construction industry, and Peterson was no different. In childhood she loved to be creative, build puzzles, and was often found playing in the dirt; but a future in construction was certainly not the career she envisioned for herself.

After high school, she assumed college to be the next logical step, however she had no clear direction for her field of study. She chose Computer Science, since it was the potential wave of the future, but soon realized it was not the right fit, and withdrew before completing the first semester. Peterson tested multiple minimum wage jobs for the next few years, which left her dissatisfied, ultimately recognizing that "There had to be more to life than this." It was a good motivating factor for her to seek out what she really wanted to do with her life.

She was drawn to the Porter and Chester Institute, a technical school in Connecticut, through their radio commercial: "There is a Test, no right or wrong answer." The 'test' was an aptitude test, which gauged one's interest level in various tasks, to clarify a potential career path through their course offerings. Her results directed her towards Computer Repair; Automotive; and Drafting/Design curricula. Finally, her years of creativity, puzzles and playing in the dirt had prepared her for something worthwhile. She registered for the Architectural and Civil Drafting and Design Program.

The program changed its focus of study every three months exposing Peterson to many disciplines of construction. She soon discovered the importance of recognizing that which you want to do; and also, that which you do not want to do. Upon graduating as a Certified Architectural and Civil Drafter and Designer, Peterson started working as a Drafter for Ceco Concrete Construction.

Peterson compares her start at Ceco and the Construction Industry to learning how to drive a vehicle. While we may first take a test and get a license, we don't fully learn to drive until we are out on the road. She started her career in drafting with drawing high rise buildings, visiting project sites and coordinating with other trades. It was at that time, she says, "When it all clicked, and I had a grasp on things." While working for Ceco, she traveled and stayed with some projects all the way through to completion, which furthered her understanding in how a project comes together; and she learned a great deal from the challenges encountered along the way.

Having developed a hunger to know more, Peterson returned to night school to study Civil Engineering. The company assisted with their tuition reimbursement program. In the eight years with Ceco, while going to school, she met Kevin Peterson, and their relationship blossomed. Their sights were set on relocating to Virginia.

Responding to an ad for the position of Project Draftsman in the help wanted section of the paper was how Tindall Corporation, located in Petersburg, Virginia, and Patty Peterson met. She started working in the Engineering department, and spent months working on large projects, while still attending school. Later she moved into coordinating the Division's prison projects, along with several other large projects. During this time Peterson pushed for a title change from Project Draftsman to Project Drafter - a subtle, but meaningful, change to a woman in a male-dominated industry.

Much of Tindall's work is 'Design/Build,' which placed Peterson within design teams to bring together all the elements of a project. In recognition for her efforts she was advanced to Project Manager and eventually Senior Project



Manager. Her education continued, now in the realm of contracts and legal issues. Often she would comment, "I didn't know I was going to gain a law degree along the way," explaining, "Not that I have one, but between conversations with attorneys, seminars, webinars, and guest speakers, and the need to understand contract clauses and how to address them, I gained a whole new education." She asserted, "My participation with ASA was incredibly valuable in helping me gain this knowledge."

Today, Peterson's focus is on processes, quality training and the Quality Management System for Tindall. She is one of Tindall's Certified Heart of Leadership coaches and enjoys helping others. She hopes between the QMS, coaching to help and grow others, and sharing her knowledge of the industry, this three-prong stool can help others find their path and provide many opportunities as well.

When it comes to being a woman in a male-dominated industry, Peterson recalls early in her career, "When I'd enter a meeting, it wasn't until I proved

I knew what I was talking about that I was accepted, while males were automatically accepted." This motivated her towards accuracy and taught her to be strong and assertive. She is quick to point out that there is a big difference between being assertive and being aggressive, and it is important to know the difference. "There were times I wasn't accepted at all, but I still had a job to do and did it. That's what I could control, not what they thought or how they felt."

"I'm told I can be direct, but I also bring a different perspective and point of view to situations. A peer told me that's a trait he thought added a great deal to our meetings and projects."

Charles Wynings, VP and GM of Tindall summed it up. "I've had the privilege to witness Patty's skillful leadership on some of Tindall's largest and most complex projects. Her knowledge of the construction industry has allowed her to make lasting impacts, not only to the Tindall Corporation, but also to the role of subcontractors at large, across state and national levels.

I'm certain her ongoing contributions to organizations such as ASA and PCI will bring continued positive change to the construction industry." Thank you, Patty!

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### About the Authors

*Jenny Harris is a writer from Ellicott City, MD, where she lives with her husband and two sons.*

*Patty Peterson is Director - Quality Standards, Certifications & Training at **Tindall Corporation** in Petersburg, VA.*



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## Foundations for Progress: The Future of Women in Construction

by Michelle Turner, Procore



While the construction industry has made strides in attracting more women to the industry over the last two decades, there remains a lot of work to be done. Women make up about 9% of workers in construction, that figure also includes office, executive and administrative positions.

**Procore** recently sat down with a panel of female leaders in construction to discuss barriers that remain for women considering a career in the field and what the industry can do to bring more women on board.

Sasha Reed, Director of Industry Advancement at Procore, hosted the webinar entitled ***"Foundations for Progress: The Future of Women in Construction."*** The panelists included Sandra Benson, Worldwide Head of Engineering at **Amazon Web Services**, Tiesha Moore, President and Co-owner at **G3 Electric**, and a project manager at **Kinetic Construction** Jessica Sidhu. The group discussed everything from their personal beginnings with construction to hiring biases, and some important themes quickly became apparent.

### Old Perceptions Remain

**Research shows** that many adults who wind up in construction were first inspired by TV characters they saw during childhood. It's a problem, though, when girls are underrepresented in those roles. Only one of the three panelists sought out construction from the beginning of her career—the other two happened into the industry as happy accidents.

Why girls don't consider a career in construction is a subject of much research, but the panelists agreed that there is still

a bias against construction that affects students. "It starts with the parents," Benson said, suggesting that people still see construction as a vocation for the academically challenged or as a lower-class job.

"There was a lack of support from my parents," Sidhu said. "They didn't understand what it was really like to be working in this industry. They were concerned for my safety and my mental health." Luckily, Sidhu did get support from teachers.

The public discourse is also lacking in its portrayal of what it's like to work in modern construction and what opportunities exist in the field. "So many women think they're going to be on top of a roof hammering—and there's nothing wrong with that, and there are people who do that—but there are so many other jobs out there," Benson said.

"You can go through trade school and become an electrician with zero debt and be making a great living," Moore said but acknowledged that women just starting their careers are not told that.

### Seeing Is Believing

Even when women do come into roles in construction, many leave the industry in search of a new path. Construction work is infamous for long, grueling hours, which may not fit women who have children and are **statistically more likely to bear the brunt of unpaid work** in their households. Another setback is that they might not be able to envision a future at their current jobs.

"We all start at the entry level," Moore said. "But what does advancement look like?"

Seeing the way to the top can take two forms: having a supportive leadership team that values women as equals, or finding a more experienced mentor who can guide and bolster career-related activities. Sidhu said women shouldn't be afraid to look for such relationships. "There are a lot of groups out there; you just have to look for them," she said. Sometimes, employers can help.

Moore said real, effective mentorship is

necessary, not just programs that talk the talk. Leaders need to assess the results of their programs to make sure a real connection is made.

Benson takes mentorship one step further to what she calls sponsorship. While she defines mentorship as a less-experienced person picking the brain of someone who knows the ropes, she considers sponsorship as actually helping to further a youngster's career by putting her name forward for an opportunity.

### Future Next Steps

Going forward, panelists agreed that the most basic, and yet the most necessary, step they need to take is to get boots on the ground to see what barriers still exist for women in their workplaces.

"Talk to the people of your company," Moore suggested. "What's the culture? What are they going to think about a woman who's their peer moving ahead of them? If that's not something that can happen, it would be difficult to keep a woman there."

Getting down to the nitty-gritty of daily life on a job site can be revealing. Sometimes, the things that seem small, like not having a nearby bathroom for women, can make women feel like they don't belong, Benson said. "We have to get sensitive about those kinds of things."

### About the Author

*Michelle Turner is the product marketing manager for Specialty Contractors at Procore. Over the past two years, Michelle has worked with the Preconstruction product team at Procore but recently pivoted her focus to launch solutions aimed to drive success for Specialty Contractors. Procore is a leading provider of construction management software with a platform that connects every project stakeholder to solutions built specifically for the construction industry. To learn more about Procore and how you can help create a safer, more ethical jobsite, visit [procore.com/asa](https://procore.com/asa). This article was originally published on [Jobsite](https://jobsite.com).*





## Women in Construction: Safety, Innovation, Leadership, Discrimination

by Jack Rubinger, freelance writer

Women like Denise Duncan, Yorlanda Fisher, Shonnessy Gilmore, Jodine Hatfield and Debra Hilmerson are taking leadership roles in the construction industry as safety advisors, business owners and product innovators. But there have been struggles, challenges and triumphs along their journeys.

Duncan started a company that addresses the dangers of toxic dust accumulation that build up on job sites, **AT Industrial Products**.

Fisher is a construction site safety supervisor and consultant who travels across the country to work on projects and help keep professionals safe.

Hilmerson owns a construction product manufacturing company, **Hilmerson Safety**, and has created a number of innovative guardrail products. She saw the process of building wooden guardrail systems that were trashed at the end of each project as a huge waste of time and money. Wooden guardrails are wasteful, take time to install and are often installed incorrectly, thus providing a false sense of security to workers. Never one to back away from a challenge, Hilmerson and her team have been on a mission since 2016 to make leading-edge fall protection safe, lean, efficient, and profitable. "We continue to field requests for safe, lean construction solutions that put smiles on faces, add to project profit margins, and most importantly save lives," she insisted.

Shonnessy Gilmore, MPH, CIH, CSP, is a safety consultant, responsible for construction site audits, reviewing COVID-19 safety plans, health and safety plans, as well as more technical worker exposure assessments as a certified industrial hygienist. As a woman in construction, she has experienced some lack of respect for her knowledge and experience, but when she's able to demonstrate her expertise, she gains respect from co-workers.

### Harassment

She had numerous incidents where other company safety managers would make inappropriate advances or sexually harass her, and the best she could ever do was make certain she walked those sites with a trusted superintendent. As she grew in her

career she met other women in management and leadership roles in construction. They pushed to make sure she had a seat at the table on various committees and programs.

"Women are less likely to report injuries, sexual harassment, or even things like PPE that is too big, because they don't want to be labeled as a troublemaker by their employer," said Gilmore.

"I left a job I loved because I was stalked and photographed by a client construction safety professional thirty years my senior, and my company management hid this from me for six months because they didn't want to damage their relationship with the client company. When one of my superintendents told me about this six months after the incident, I was understandably sickened, as I had been on that site once a week for six months after the incident. My former company was very upset that I informed the client company of this incident, and the client company HR said it was a "joke," and too long after the incident for them to discipline their employee," she said. Gilmore has had other incidents of sexual harassment from management in client companies (very rarely from actual construction workers), and she was always told to think of it as flattering and to not make waves.

### No Pay Gap

Despite these experiences, Gilmore said things are improving for women in construction. "Construction is one of the few careers left in America where you can start at the bottom and work your way up the ladder all the way to business owner. Union wages, where available, help ensure there is no gender pay gap, unlike most industries, and even non-union employers tend to pay based on experience, and so it is one of the most equitable careers for wages. Nearly 10% of the overall construction workforce is female now, and there are more opportunities for mentorship and training," she said.

Jodine Hatfield is a superintendent responsible for managing the biohazard removal subcontractors. Hatfield created and implemented a biohazard site removal program that meets the LNI standards.

Hatfield also managed the installing and planning of all site egress and access scaffolding structures. She supervised COVID-19 site access and egress logistics compliant with CDC requirements. Hatfield is involved in waterproofing installation, site-wide temporary power, site-wide temporary water plumbed toilets, framing, and drywall installation. She's supervised crews of more than union laborers and carpenters. As an apprentice, her foreman used to throw her tools into the water every time she did something he was displeased with. Each time he would take her to the company tool room and get her another hammer, speed square or tap measure. This job was at Terminal 90 at the Port of Seattle. On the weekends she would dive down and bring up all different kinds of craftsman tools - even a chainsaw. She exchanged all those tools for new ones. At the end of the job she laid out the tools in her truck and showed him she had enough tools to last the rest of her career. "He was quite angry, but I won in the end," said Hatfield.

### Team Player

On the other hand, Andrea Cansler, a Health and Safety Coordinator at **Quality Tank & Construction Co, Inc.**, doesn't believe sexism exists anymore.

"It is appalling to me to listen to women whining today," she said. "Being a woman in a man's world is a skill. You can't change them. To be successful you have to learn to be a team player."

Fortunately, there are now many groups in addition to ASA's "She Builds It" peer group, like the Associated General Contractors, Oregon Tradeswomen and SafeBuild Alliance which help women feel supported in the construction industry and provide opportunities for training.

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### About the Author

*Jack Rubinger is a freelance writer, with more than 10+ years of workplace safety and construction industry research and writing experience. Looking for an article on a specific construction topic? Contact: jackrubinger814@gmail.com or call 503-964-4877.*



# FEATURE

## Celebrating Women Who Are Paving the Way for Construction

by Jessica Meno, writer for Raken

This month, we celebrated Women in Construction Week—and we at Raken have been reflecting on how proud we are to work with, and support, women in the industry. According to this [report published by our friends at Levelset](#) (which included 1,001 women), 78% of respondents say they love their jobs. But, 65% say fewer than 1 in 10 of their company's employees are women. While ideally this number would be much higher, we've been excited to see more women enter the construction space in recent years—and continue to break ground on new (inclusive) ways to work together.

### Words of wisdom from two women in construction

In honor of this dedicated week, we reached out to some of the awesome women we know in the industry. They told us all about their experiences—from what first inspired them to work in construction to debunking some common misconceptions.

Linda Johnson is a Project Administrator and Safety Advisor at [She Digs It](#). She Digs It is a woman business enterprise (WBE) that specializes in utilities, excavating, and plumbing for the commercial industries. Linda just recently celebrated her five-year work anniversary there.

Mariah Whitlock is a Construction and Safety Administrator at [JRC Mechanical](#)—a Class A mechanical contractor offering 24/7 commercial repair and maintenance services. Mariah has been working there for two years.

Here's what they said...

#### *What got you into the construction industry?*

Linda—My husband and his passion in the industry.

Mariah—My husband works for JRC, and most of my family is in construction.

#### *What's your favorite part about your job?*

Linda—Connecting with my crews! Hoping to always make them feel appreciated, and keeping them safe.

Mariah—I love being field support. These people work an intense labor job and create these beautiful buildings. (It's really an art form.) I love being able to help them out, in any way I can, to make their lives easier.

#### *What's your dream role in construction?*

Linda—I'm in it.

Mariah—Exactly what I do now. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

#### *Are there any memorable projects you've worked on? What made them memorable?*

Linda—We did a job for the City of Gladstone—a park named Hobby Hill. It had very personal ties to the community, and was a great success.

Mariah—I've been a supporting role in many jobs, and they're all my favorite in their own way. From the Sentara Cancer Center and the Chemistry Lab at ODU, to the high-rise apartments at 27th St in Virginia Beach.

#### *What do you want people to know about the construction industry?*

Linda—It's not just for men. Plenty of women are making their mark!

Mariah—Learning a trade is never a bad thing, and it's always something to be proud of. Construction workers are the backbone of the community!

#### *What's one goal you have for this year? (Personal or professional)*

Linda—The number one goal every year is to keep our crews SAFE! And for 2021...let's conquer COVID-19!

Mariah—My goal is always to be the best support, and do the best I can to make life as easy as possible for our field people—our backbone of the company.

#### *Anything else you'd like to share on the topic?*

Linda—The common misconceptions in this industry are that construction workers are low on the career totem pole, unskilled, uneducated, and underpaid—and that construction is only for men. I'm here to tell you that that couldn't be farther from the truth. These men and women are hard-working Americans that made this country what it is today. Without them, we'd have nothing. As someone once said, "The road to success is always under construction."

Mariah—Construction and learning a trade are great alternatives to college. College isn't for everyone. Whether it's about finances or home life, all situations are different. Also, a trade is always a good thing to have to fall back on. My husband started as a helper, and in less than ten years, he's our youngest Senior Superintendent. Be proud of being in construction!

### Inspiring women in construction, every week

We believe celebrating women in construction shouldn't be confined to just one week. The [National Association of Women in Construction](#) works year round to support women's career growth and development in the industry. (They're the ones who made this week possible.) Looking ahead, we can't wait to see more women continue to choose construction and take the industry to new heights with their experiences and perspectives.

Special thanks to our customers, Linda and Mariah, for their time and incredible answers!

#### About the Author

Jessica Meno is a writer for Raken, the cloud-based software that was built to connect the field to the office. Raken helps boost productivity and safety by streamlining workflow processes such as daily reporting, time cards, production tracking, and safety management. Interested in learning more about Raken? [Schedule a demo today.](#)





## FEATURE

# Women in Construction – Overcoming the Obstacles of Entry

by Stephane McShane, Maxim Consulting Group



When women are exploring possible career paths, it is still uncommon for them to consider a career in the construction industry. As a point of discussion, my own career path took me from modest beginnings in the field as an electrician, through estimating, project management, branch management, executive management, and a current role as a business consultant and professional speaker in the industry. There were many obstacles along the path, the largest of which was the decision to enter it at all.

According to **NAWIC**, as of the end of 2018, approximately 1,106,919 women were employed in various occupation sectors of the construction industry, making up 9.9 percent of the construction workforce in the US. As of the end of 2019, **women held the majority of American jobs at 50.04%**, excluding farm workers and the self-employed. That is an increase from 49.7% in 2018. Those statistics are certainly disparate from those of the construction sector.

The benefits of women in the industry are, however, both tangible and measurable. **A study** by McKinsey & Company suggests that executive teams in the top quartile for gender diversity were 21% more likely to outperform on profitability and 27% more likely to have superior value creation. It is well understood and documented that diversity at all levels of the organization bring positive benefits. However, how is it achieved? Unless a woman happens to have a family member or trusted advisor in the industry who can fill the educational gap about available careers, our industry goes largely overlooked. With the significant workforce shortage, the need for strategy that creates engagement and interest for women to enter the construction business is at an all time high. Until recently, this was a demographic largely untapped, bringing with it a tremendous opportunity to increase our workforce. With all of that said, and significant upside to gain, there are still significant barriers to entry that exist that must be addressed.

## Marketing

The marketing materials that are produced on social media are still largely composed of photos, videos, and statements of men in our industry. The tide is beginning to turn on this, as we begin to see more women being featured. The perception must continue to shift to be even more inclusive of women. Targeted marketing campaigns aimed at the female demographic should be strongly considered.

Outreach to the junior high and high school students must be done in a way to ensure that **all** can see the opportunities that exist, not just the male population. As contractors, it is a wise investment of time to participate and sponsor construction technology programs and career days. Even more immersive is the chance to participate in the ACE Mentoring program, which works with high school students to learn to design, estimate, and pitch construction projects.

Part of that marketing collateral should surround our industry's willingness to pay our employees to be trained, in contrast to other markets where the potential employee may spend tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars for the chance of gaining employment. This has been a key talking point that is unique to construction, and a welcome relief and path forward for many whose economic status may prohibit such an investment.

## Points of Entry

With the industry continuing to shift from a construction focus to a manufacturing focus, this has forced the need for contractors of many trades, including general contractors, to have varied staffing needs. The opportunities span across accounting, engineering, procurement, manufacturing, project



operations, safety, field installation, and others. Producing specific marketing capital that would explore female candidates who have interest in any of these schools of thought would be beneficial. No longer is the candidate pool limited to the engineering and construction management majors, as there are career opportunities across so many other functional areas described above. Offering summer internships and scholarships is another way to increase the visibility needed to open awareness to this much needed group.

## Cultural Acceptance

Within the construction associations and companies in the industry, an acceleration of the cultural acceptance of women in the industry is paramount. While the words are many times spoken that the opportunities are available, there is occasional hesitation when hiring women. Not long ago, it was expressed to me by a construction executive that he, "Would never have" hired me because I am a woman. His reasoning was that I am married, and that I have children that I would have needed to attend to. He did admit, however, that in hindsight his reasoning was short-sighted and biased, and it would have been a mistake not to hire. Such cultural obstacles still exist, however unjust they may be. Since COVID, the remote work

environment has been battle tested. With this, flexibility in schedules and work locations for all employees has opened, allowing for those with a multitude of responsibilities, both personal and professional, to balance their respective workloads effectively and productively.

## Truly Equal Opportunity

Advancement opportunities must be based on merit, utilizing a predetermined and published skillset and financial metrics that are appropriate for the position being sought. To do this effectively, roles and responsibilities, along with clear expectations by position must be developed to bring clarity to those wishing to move within an organization. Effective employee development programs bring a tremendous amount of transparency to performance metrics, allowing the next generation of workers to determine where they wish to go, and how quickly they get there.

Compensation should also align with both skillset capture and financial goal achievement. The same as with advancement, the compensation models given to employees must be clear and easy to understand. The employees must feel empowered with the ability to influence their direction in the organization, advancement opportunities, and incentive

compensation amounts. Having roles and responsibilities defined, career path mapping, advancement based on skills gained, and compensation aligned with performance allows for a truly equal opportunity environment that eliminates gender parity and inequality.

It is true that opportunities abound for women in the industry. It is also true that the obstacles for entry are still prohibiting the inclusion of women at rates comparable to most other industries in our country. The path forward must contain the right messages, commitments, and actions required to ensure that the opportunity of employing women can fill, or even exceed, the workforce shortfall that we are experiencing today, and in the future. Attracting, engaging, developing, and retaining high performance individuals is certainly a viable path out of the shortage of talent that we are in. Our speed of action toward this goal will dictate how long we will continue to struggle to fill the available positions in our firms.

## About the Author



*Stephane McShane, Director at Maxim Consulting Group, is responsible for the evaluation and implementation processes with*

*our clients. Stephane works with construction related firms of all sizes to evaluate business practices and assist with management challenges. Her areas of expertise include: Leadership development, organizational assessments, strategic planning, project execution, business development, productivity improvement, and training programs. **Mrs. McShane** is an internationally recognized speaker, mentor, author, and teacher. Her ability to motivate, inspire, and create confidence among your work groups is extremely rare and highly effective. [www.maximconsulting.com](http://www.maximconsulting.com)*



# Upcoming Virtual Events

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM (EDT)

## Labor Burden Shouldn't Be a Burden

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### Objectives:

- Learn the basic labor burden formula.
- Learn best practices for what should and should not be in the calculations.
- Learn how to use the labor calculations to do better bidding and costing.
- Learn about great tools to help with the calculation and how to use the labor burdens that have been calculated.

Presented by Tonya Schulte, Construction Profitability Advisor.

*Tonya Schulte is the cofounder of The Profit Constructors. Along with guiding her own firm, she delights in teaching construction company owners the best practices she has learned down through the years so that they can take their businesses to the next level or, as she likes to say, "We help you run with the big dogs." [Register here.](#)*

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in the April 2021

Issue of ASA's



Theme:

## Thinking About Cash Management

- In the Midst of Chaos, There Is Also opportunity—Examining the Upside of the Upside Down
- Why Effective Cash Flow Management Is Crucial for Subcontractors

Look for your  
issue in April.

To access past issues  
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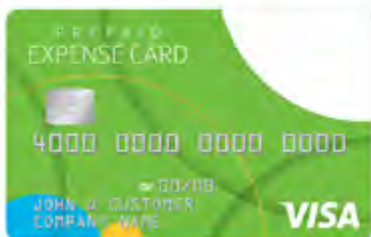
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