



Demolishing the Construction Industry's Glass Ceiling

Panelists

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Key Takeaways from the Panel Discussion & Breakout Sessions

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Why Does a Diverse Workforce Matter?

- A diverse workforce increases an organization's productivity and efficiency. In result of this, many businesses will experience growth and an increased revenue.
- Men and women may look at work, challenges and problems differently – and provide different types of solutions.
- Having a diverse workforce can bring in a diverse level of clientele. Being able to better connect with clients and understand their needs at a greater level, can open up a huge outlet of opportunities.
- Men often do not want to be outperformed by a woman, so they will work harder. It can become a productive, healthy competition.
- Women are often more experienced at verbal communications – not just raising their voices for attention.

Commonly Referenced Hurdles

Being Underestimated

- Often, younger women find themselves working with older men, who might assume they are less capable or have them excessively doublecheck their work.
- Some women look younger or less experienced than actuality, so others might think they are new to the trades and don't know what they are doing/talking about.

Feeling Left Out

- In a primarily male culture, women can find themselves excluded from conversations or after work activities.

Equipment and Facilities

- Generally, PPE is designed for men. Women have a hard time finding supplies to fit their needs and at times have to resort to other equipment options.
- Construction sites don't always have bathroom facilities and other necessary accommodations specifically for women.

Gender Bias in Schools

- Counselors and teachers often overlook the trades when presenting career options to girls in school. In some situations counselors may even try to steer women in a different direction if they happen to be interested in the trades.
- Young women aren't encouraged to take construction-related educational and training courses.

Overcoming Hurdles:

Suggestions Provided by Panelists

Building Confidence

- Take any opportunity that comes your way and be open to learn and grow, even if you have to ask questions along the way.
- Whenever possible, don't surround yourself with those who doubt you.
- Work a little bit harder, so you are more prepared than everyone else (over prepare!).

- Do your best to remain confident in yourself, and don't let others doubt your own abilities.
- Find a mentor, someone that you trust to share ideas and look for guidance.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Directly seek support from your leadership and management.
- Be willing to learn, listen, work really hard and put in the time to prove yourself.
- The way you approach challenges and the attitude you have will bring you success.

Fitting In – If You Want!

- Stay in tune with what the guys are talking about, so you can fit into your crew's culture.
- Find ways to fit, look at your environment and don't expect the environment to fit you
- OR don't try to fit in by being like the men. Instead, use your natural talents and traits to your advantage. For example, if you're more petite, can you fit into small spaces that others can't?
- If you are interviewing with a company that makes you feel rejected or uncomfortable because of your gender, rethink if that company is really a place you would like to work – even though you have the qualifications. Would that organization be a place where you could grow?
- Be authentic.
- What you permit is what you promote.

Developing Young Talent

- If you are in the industry, visit schools, attend career fairs and raise awareness with counselors and teachers.
- Don't perpetuate labels – teach children that the industry is not gender driven.
- Share resources – materials, your time, job opportunities, etc.

Messages for the Leadership and Males in the Industry

- Be a mentor! Just one trusted colleague can make a significant difference in the career of a female construction professional.
- Actively recruit a diverse workforce.
- When growing your team, consider culture adds not culture fits. This brings different thought processes to find the best answer/result and reduces group think.
- Continue to look at progress, not perfection. Perfection will come over time and looking at growing your diversity can help get you there.
- Construction is a friends and family industry. A majority of those working in construction learned about it from a friend or family member. This means that growing diversity in our industry can start with you. Talk with your female friends and family members and encourage them to look into what our industry has to offer.

Additional Resources

- Associated Builders and Contractors
- Inforum Michigan (inforummichigan.org)
- National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) (nawic.org)
- National Association of Black Women in Construction (nabwic.org)
- Women in Transportation – WIT (wtsinternational.org)
- Girl Build (girlbuild.com)
- C-TEC in Newark, Ohio (c-tec.edu)
- Women in Technology networking group – WING (Maggie.britt@esub.com)
- ABC Greater Michigan is starting a women's peer group. Contact Cathy Geiger if interested (cgeiger@abcgmc.org).
- Research: Men Get More Actionable Feedback Than Women (hbr.org/2021/02/research-men-get-more-actionable-feedback-than-women)