



Women IN CONSTRUCTION

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I should have been a High School English Teacher or a Marriage and Family Therapist. I was certainly on my way to any one of those when I graduated from the University of San Diego with a Teaching Credential, a Major in English and a Minor in Psychology. I had made the assertion that I was going to change the world and like many of my peers I found myself looking for work in a recession.

It was there, the space between my plans and where I found myself, that I discovered life and living. It has been far better and more exciting than any of my prior plans.

I was 22 and a recent graduate working at various schools in San Diego; substituting and doing a job that I had grown up in and quite frankly wanted to get out of-construction. I took it for granted. It had given me the best education, some of which I did not realize until I owned and operated my own firm.

My family owned Standard Drywall, Inc. and grew it from the time I was four years old. I had many card rides; job walks and more where I absorbed the trade. It was as simple to me as life. But it was there that I learned the art of negotiation from my dad, diligence

and detail from my uncle, brass tax and fortitude from my grandfather and a sense of drive and ownership from my mother as well as colorful language from my grandmother.

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Obama had contracts set aside for Women Owned Businesses and I realized there was an opportunity- something that I knew. I needed to jump in and if I did, I needed to give it my everything.

I started Onyx Building Group, Inc. with the basics- money in the bank, a rented office space from a friend and a few employees. I learned everything from project management to taxes, contract negotiations, submittals, safety- you name it- it had my name on it and I was determined to get the certifications and experience to be the best at it.

My first job was a Bachelors Enlisted Quarters at Naval Base Coronado with Barnhart Construction. I remember going every other day to check on things. At the time, I was taking my contractors license exam and Onyx and my growing business was my priority.

The momentum from one project lead to others and I found myself in South Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. Each new state bringing new challenges and opportunities. While Onyx's focus in the beginning was primarily Federal Work, my own growing family lead to my need to stay local. Public Works projects allowed that opportunity and I began building many of the same schools that I had previously taught in.

Over time the "me" of Onyx became "we" and the evolution of the Company challenged me to push myself and not hold too tightly to anything before me. I found my best and biggest growth happened when I could let go, go for it and also begin to trust, rely and learn from others. That said, Onyx and our daily operations still comprises my every day. I am raising my two boys in my office. Quite literally I signed a contract and negated a change in labor with my second son. I was at work the day after I gave birth and while I don't recommend it to others, Onyx is a part of what drives me.

Anyone in this industry can appreciate and understand the draw and the gamble. We prepare ourselves and we go out to execute our best. We build to make our mark, to be inventive, to push the limits and to foster our communities. To know that we have a hand in building the schools, entertainment and structures of tomorrow is enough.

There have certainly been projects that I am extremely proud to be a part of. Warriors Gatehouse Arena is a unique and an altogether beautiful testament to our trade and the craftsman that are a part of our Team. Legoland's Movie World was one that finally put me on the map with my children and building Saint Augustine High Schools new gym was one that I will always refer to when they go to school there. Moscone Center and

Sycuan casino are definitely ones that make me extremely proud as well. I realize it isn't so much the project, but the team and the experience- where you were at that particular time in life- that defines the job.

The best advise I can give to younger generations is to go after your dreams and find a way. Burnout happens when we strive to prove something to others- prove things to and for yourself. Not everyone will see you for who you are and in business as well as in life you need to feel comfortable with the end result. You need to know that this is the best you can give and your legacy should be your own- go get it and don't settle. YOU are the only one who can hold you back. Role models should be various and all walks of life and the company that you keep, associations that you join and align yourself with should push you to be your best self.

I couldn't be more proud to be in this industry and working among some of the best in our field.