



Harris of Design AIDD Architects discusses "glass ceiling"

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Name: Andrea Harris

Title: Principal

Company/Firm: Design AIDD Architects, PLLC

Years with company/firm: 5 years

Years in field: 28 years

Years in real estate industry: 28 years

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Real Estate Associations/Affiliations:

How do you and/or your firm use social media?

We post information about specific projects through linked media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Unlike other architectural firms, we often post photos during construction because we want our followers to see the work that leads to the final space. We also post events and seminars that our firm attends.

What is your biggest leadership challenge, other than the "glass ceiling"?

My biggest challenge is delegating work. I need to remind myself that I am no longer an employee and I have other responsibilities. For example, after I learned the accounting software I did everything a bookkeeper would do including the architectural aspects of my business; and that was not an efficient use of my time. Therefore, I hired a bookkeeper and learned to pass the work over to her. Now I only look over the bills and authorize checks. I am very aware that delegating the work in other company aspects is how we will continue to grow.

What is the most daring thing you've done for your career? How did it turn out for you?

The most daring thing I did was open Design AIDD Architects in 2007 with colleagues from my old firm. (That is, if you don't count breaking wooden boards while standing on broken glass for my second degree Black Belt!) I never thought I would ever have my own firm, and here we are five years later with a newly constructed award-winning building under our belt. So far, this is turning out well and I cannot wait to see what the future holds.

Which project, deal or transaction was the "game changer" in the advancement of your career?

During our first year in business, we were awarded a new construction project in the Bronx. It solidified us as an architectural firm that developers can reach out to and emphasized our ability to utilize innovative and cost-effective construction techniques. Since then, we have been awarded many projects, including several from that first client, who has also referred us to other potential clients.

What do you consider to be the most successful way to increase referrals?

Be honest, consistent and keep your standards high. Cooperate with the design team and if challenges occur, look for the solutions instead of concentrating on the problem. It may sound a little cliché, but it is the truth.

What is the BEST advice you have ever received?

Always say what is in your heart, and you cannot go wrong.

What is your favorite tip for balanced living?

You must participate in an activity that you love at least once a week; it is called "Me Time". It will keep you grounded and sane so you can vent out the frustrations of the week.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

Being the proud owner of a successful Architectural Firm and Martial Arts Academy.

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