



2020 Women in RE: Valerie Monastra, Nelson Pope Voorhis

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Name: Valerie Monastra, AICP

Title: Principal Planner

Company Name: Nelson Pope Voorhis Hudson Valley Office

List up to three associations or organizations that you are currently a member of:

Westchester Municipal Planning Federation

IFCA Housing Network

American Institute of Certified Planners

What conferences, books, blogs, podcasts, or influencers would you recommend to women?

I really enjoy non-fiction books where the powerless become powerful. "Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women" by Kate Moore is a book that demonstrates the strength of women and their perseverance and willingness to fight for justice even when the stakes are against them. It portrays ordinary women who, through battling debilitating and terminal illnesses, take on an industry that refused to act and protect its workers. To me, this book not only brought to light our country's struggles with employee rights but also how often it is that ordinary people are propelled into situations where they become the voice for many.

What is one characteristic that you believe every woman in business should possess?

Women need to have confidence in who they are and what they can achieve. Whenever I am provided an opportunity to advance, manage new projects, or take on a leadership role, I need to remind myself that I am capable of succeeding and to take the risks and render the decisions that need to be made. Without confidence in yourself, one will never grow or advance because it is too easy to remain in your comfort zone.

What would you tell your daughter if she was interested in following in your footsteps?

I know my daughter understands my passion to improve communities and make the world as a sustainable and just place as possible. As a principal planner for NPV, a board member for the IFCA Housing Network, and the president of the Westchester Municipal Planning Federation, I can apply my passion not only to my career but also to the broader community. I would tell my daughter that

this is a fulfilling career but it is extremely important to find a company that has the same philosophy as you and supports all of your endeavors both professionally and personally; this makes going to work each day rewarding.

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