



2021 Women in Building Services: Leia Sims, KOW Building Consultants

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Name: Leia Sims

Title: Director of Sustainability

Company Name: KOW Building Consultants

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months?

NYC is taking action to reduce climate impacts of the building industry. The Climate Mobilization Act includes LL97 which is imposing limits on the carbon emissions from buildings. Now, building owners are going to have to make energy saving (and cost saving) improvements to their buildings to limit their exposure to fines. By 2030, 80% of buildings in NYC will have to make some improvements to comply. KOW is working closely with our clients to reduce carbon emissions, make buildings more energy efficient, and be compliant to avoid fines. As these laws begin to take effect, (2024 is the first round) the industry is transitioning to be ready to build and maintain energy efficient buildings.

What led you to your current profession?

I was raised in family businesses and participated with installing geothermal HVAC, Solar PV, and other renewables. I thought there had to be more to buildings than installing pricey systems to offset consumption, so I began studying building science, building construction, and sustainable building principles. Since I began going down that path in college I never looked back. I owned a small business performing home energy retrofits and then decided to join with a larger firm to make a bigger impact on the industry. Since joining KOW Building Consultants six years ago, our sustainability division has grown from a team of two to a team of eight! We are now a full-fledged sustainability consulting firm.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Well, this is a kind of funny story about how a young adult finds their way...I was very good at math and raised with family businesses (one of them was construction-renewable energy design and installation). I thought I wanted to be an accountant because I liked business, numbers, and a high school counselor recommended accounting. I went off to college as an accounting major but all the

while taking physics and calculus courses. One day, my dad says to me, “Why are you taking those courses? You might want to check out engineering.” So, I transferred to engineering. Engineering had lots of numbers, which I liked, but no business, which I missed. I finally landed in building construction which married my interests perfectly!

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