



2022 Women in Construction: Anna Karp, Bolster

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Name: Anna Karp

Title: CEO and co-founder

Company Name: Bolster

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you?

I was working on forest conservation in foreign countries when I met my co-founder, Fraser Patterson. He invited me to partner on a construction company, and I thought I could have a strong ecological and immediate impact, as working in forest conservation takes 20 years to see any real change. I quickly learned a lot about the construction world, particularly from a sustainability perspective, and fell in love with the industry immediately. My empowerment came from a space of change and knowing that I could pivot into a new industry and keep working towards fulfilling my own personal values.

What advice would you offer to other women getting into the construction industry?

Be a builder! Don't stop, don't look back, chin-up when times are hard, and persevere. When you feel low, rely on your strengths, focus on building a strong team, and let your work speak for itself. Do not feel like an outsider if you are surrounded by men - at the end of the day, we are all humans. I am sure that if women connect with their peers on a human level, regardless of how male dominated the industry is, they can find a common ground by achieving great results together.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months?

The pandemic has been the biggest stress test for Bolster's risk reduction processes and ethos. This is why I made the decision to fully honor the fixed-price cost and Bolster Promise for the homeowners whose projects completely came to a halt during the lockdown, despite the pandemic being an Act of God. We kept their original contract values, with no change orders—meaning that we fully delivered the projects with our pre-pandemic labor and material costs. While this radical financial move is not sustainable long term, it was the right thing to do at the time, based on our company's ethos and values and in partnership with our homeowners and architects.

Why should women consider a career in construction?

Women GCs, especially in NYC, are so rare that even I don't know of any others. In an industry that is as complex as it is outdated, there is a need for more diversity in the industry, and that includes women. I hire based on talent, and Bolster is now 40% women. The industry is thirsty for diversification and could leap forward by having unique perspectives and approaches. When we combine our skills and talents with team members with different backgrounds, experiences and nationalities, we raise the level of quality of the entire industry. Women have increased their acquisitive and decision-making power over the last ten years and I have seen a shift in the renovation sector first hand—more women lead and make high stakes decisions in their renovation projects.

Who within your own firm has helped you succeed within the construction industry?

I have been fortunate enough to have a series of high-caliber mentors, partners and champions throughout the years; however, Bolster's success is based-off the quality of our team. Each and every member of our team has worked collaboratively and with great focus to deliver a complex, custom product backed by the best possible renovation experience. Our investment in people fuels everything we do. We hire and nurture the best people in the industry and support them in achieving

their potential via mentoring, training, and up-skilling programs. Our entire team is trained in our industry-leading approach, proprietary technology, and our established in-house leading quality standards to deliver custom results, consistently.

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