



2023 Women in Construction: Sheri Best, OnCentive

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In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? Leading the Nontraditional Employment for Women's (NEW) ambassador council revision of the New to NEW event structure and goals. This was done by creating more clarity around the purpose of the event, focusing and enhancing the presentation format to deliver critical facts, key composition of presenters, presenting understandable and viable options for interested supporters to move forward with meaningful engagement of NEW, increasing numbers of attendance, and identifying optimum profiles of invitees.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? I would recommend CREWNY, AMFP (Association of Medical Facilities Professionals), PWC (Professional Women in Construction), WBC (Women Builders Council).

What is your favorite building in New York? Empire State Building, not for its architecture, but for its history, the story of its construction, its interior renovations and transformations, its sustainability achievements, and because for most of my childhood my father's office was on the 72nd floor – a place I loved to visit.

What was a pivotal point in your career? A pivotal point for me was in 2008, determining to expand my construction company's marketplace from the non-union environment of single family residential renovations to include the predominantly union commercial interiors market. Simultaneously I began to see the value of expanding my leadership role in two industry organizations. This positioned me to meet leaders in real estate and construction, to engage with them deeply in conceptualizing program/event themes and structure the formats for these events. Deciding to implement these steps increased my comfort level with expressing ideas, speaking publicly, and gave me the opportunity to design and feature important, timely industry topics with prominent experts.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? The answer(s) are not simple, and implementation not fast. Among them: 1. Establish benchmarks with metrics of where your company stands at the start, 2. Identify the goals of increased numbers and a timeline for achievement of goals, 3. Be thoughtful about relationships with diverse and women's organizations and institutions, 4. Play a role in developing a pipeline beginning at the earliest stages of education so to impact career choice development possibilities – including high school (if not sooner), college, graduate school, technical and trade schools, 5. Implement programs guided by experts that include meaningful participation and buy-in of senior leadership, 6. Be prepared to create culture and organizational change.