



2024 Women in CRE: Laureen Harris, Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP

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Laureen Harris
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What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of?

In June 2024, I was appointed by governor Hochul to be a board member of the Empire State Development (ESD). The ESD is the chief economic development agency in New York State with a mission of promoting New York's economy through loans, grants, tax credits, real estate

development and various other forms of support.

What are the most important factors young women should consider when choosing a firm to build their career with?

The culture of a firm is revealed through their hires and promotions. Young women, particularly if they are in a male-dominated field, should research the hiring and promoting practices of female employees within the prospective organization. In addition, women on the rise often need a culture of understanding and flexibility when it comes to 'primary care responsibilities' (i.e., for many women, that is an elderly parent or raising children). A work culture should acknowledge a dedicated and talented young female employee by providing a flexible work environment.

Who inspires you most? What qualities do they possess that inspire you?

I am always very impressed by those who are provided less opportunity and overcome seemingly insurmountable deficits and succeed. Historically, examples are Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin, who both had limited formal education, but led this country in profound ways; and Helen Keller, who transcended her deafness and blindness to become a ground-breaking advocate for those with disabilities and a world-renowned author. These extraordinary examples inspire me to have compassion for those who have a more difficult road to success. I have learned to listen more closely and appreciate the other person's story that got them to where they are today.

What would your title be if the words currently use to describe your job no longer existed?

Assistant to commercial developer

Which professional organization(s) would you recommend to women just starting out in your industry:

Depending on the field, I would recommend the Long Island Association (LIA). The LIA has a large tent with a lot of talented people.

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