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When I started my career 7 years ago, I never thought I would end up working in the construction industry. So, when I landed the job at Aerotek and they told me I would be recruiting for construction clients, my immediate reaction was that it wasn't the right fit for me. My anxiety came from the fact that I knew nothing about the industry and that I did not know how I was going to connect with carpenters, laborers, and electricians etc.

At first, I tried to be "buttoned up and professional," but I quickly learned a very valuable lesson; just be myself. The construction industry is filled with many incredible people that are very genuine and straight forward. Once I decided to bring my true self to the table, I was able to build real trust and genuine relationships with candidates I was placing and the clients I began to work with. Simply put, I could always find common ground in that everyone I worked with was working hard to build a life for themselves or their family. Being vulnerable and sharing who I am and what my own path had been always laid the foundation for a more collaborative working relationship.

Within two years, I was promoted to a Business Development role and my immediate reaction was again intimidation. To land business and learn more about the companies, I would need to walk on site donning my PPE and having to talk to busy construction professionals. After several months of dreading site visits, sitting in my car longer to delay the inevitable, I made the point of finding mentors within construction. While he might not know it, Bob Clark, a superintendent with Belair Sitework Services became an unspoken mentor, as someone who I would call frequently to place candidates with, but to also to get advice on advancing in my career. Also, important, I found a female mentor within my own company who was making big moves. Watching how she approached situations and the tenacity she displayed inspired me to push past the little losses.

If I were to offer any advice to women thinking of entering the construction industry, it's that women have far more to gain than they do to lose. While I have had to deal with the occasional harassment and have found myself in meeting that feel like a "old boys club," I have found my gender to be a strength as my perspective is often different. My patience, softer approach, and care has helped open the door to many partnerships that other male Aerotek counterparts did not break. Once I found confidence in my expertise in recruiting and understanding of the Colorado labor market, I found that the doors continued to open helping to grow our team from two, to a team of eight recruiters and with a consistent net revenue of \$6 million.

Thinking back on the fear I felt starting both roles, I realize that most of the hesitation I felt was due to not seeing many women forging the path before me. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics only 10.9% of the construction industry is made up of women. While this number is growing, it is growing too slowly. To increase the number, We, as companies and individual's need to have more candid conversations about the barriers and benefits of being a female in the industry.

Now I lead a team of eight and am proud to say that my team is made up equal numbers of women and men. My career in construction has helped me build wealth, provided me great mentors, and taught me skills that are applicable in all aspects of my life. There is great pride that comes from being a part of an industry with such tangible outcomes. I am proud to be able to support clients that build impressive and important projects throughout Colorado. I get to walk through the halls at the Denver airport knowing that my team has placed candidates who have helped build it and know that my future children will go to school in buildings my clients have built.

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