

The Path to Leadership for Women in Construction

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Abstract

Statistics show that roughly 5% of the fortune 500 CEOs are women, which is equivalent to 25 women CEOs out of the 500 total CEOs. With construction being a male dominated field, women face many challenges, stereotypes, and misconceptions that can hinder their path towards reaching executive roles in their industry. Consequently, young women, witnessing their fellow women's challenges, need guidance on how to lead and how to crush stereotypes. In this presentation, two UMD women engineers will offer their insight on their experience in the male-dominated construction industry as well as provide key points on how to lead at a young age while being women. The speakers will also point out the unconscious biases they encounter or witness on the tough job sites. Additionally, they will discuss what their male counterparts in the construction industry can do to help empower women. The presenters will also discuss the soft skills required for young men and women to climb up the ladder and advance in their careers.

Introduction

In 2018, the Center for American Progress conducted a study that concluded that despite accounting for about 51% of the US total population and 47% of the US labor workforce, women still accounted for only 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs and 7% of Fortune 100 top executives (Warner et al. 2018)¹. Throughout history, women have reportedly struggled with equity issues such as equal opportunity, equal pay, and equal representation in the US workforce. While progress has been made throughout the years, the gap is still prominent as more women continue to struggle to make it to leadership roles.

Gender statistics in the construction industry, a traditionally male-dominated industry, are even more concerning. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, women accounted for less than 10% of the total construction workforce in 2022. Similarly, a report published by the Bureau found that only 1.4% of construction supervisors are women and only 1.3% are project managers (2023)².

Throughout the years, these statistics have continuously been updated, studied, and analyzed by thousands of researchers to understand the legitimate reasons behind the gender gap across different industries. Yet, the reality is that the percentages continued to be relatively similar each year both in the construction industry and in the broader US workforce. While the reasons can vary based on demography, cultures, race, etc., some of the most prominent reasons are unconscious bias, work-life balance challenges, lack of representation, lack of sufficient mentorship and networking opportunities, and specific culture norms that can specify gender roles.

All of these challenges have and continue to put the burden of overcoming them on the women themselves if they want to reach leadership positions in their industries. While most of the work relies on employers, managers, and public officials to accommodate women in the industry, there are some certain tools that women can use to succeed.

Achieving leadership roles in the industry requires technical strength, emotional intelligence, perseverance, and confrontation of bias. The metaphorical term “taking a seat at the table” is an important concept that teaches women to not be agreeable to the limited mold of opportunities that an employer would offer.

This paper will examine the challenges, stereotypes, bias, and misconceptions that women specifically face in the construction industry. The paper will also highlight the basic tools women

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/womens-leadership-gap-2/>

² <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>

can use to not only detect these barriers but also overcome them. The authors of this paper, two female engineers working in the construction industry, will provide insight, personal examples, and experiences that have shaped their careers. Finally, this paper aims to contribute to the pool of efforts working towards achieving an inclusive industry for everyone.

Challenges, Stereotypes, and Unconscious biases

The construction industry is one of the oldest industries in history, with its existence dating back to ancient times. As a result, it has constantly changed to cope up with an ever-evolving world. The nature of these transformations ranged from technological developments to social, innovative, economical, and cultural changes. Throughout these transformations, however, women representation still lagged and continues to do so in today's world despite various calls to include more women especially in management and leadership roles. Understanding the challenges, stereotypes, misconceptions, and unconscious bias that women in construction face every day is a key step towards eliminating the major barriers that hinder women's advancement to leadership roles.

One of the major challenges that women face every day is the harsh, hostile nature of construction. Working in a harsh, male-dominated, construction site, women have higher chances of facing discrimination, harassment, and in some cases assault at work. These incidents not only hinder hard-working, ambitious women from reaching higher positions, but also discourage younger generations of females from joining the industry. According to the US Department of Labor, 88% of women in construction experience sexual harassment at work, compared to a percentage of 25% in other industries (NWLC, 2015)³. Furthermore, according to an article published in 2022 by McKinsey and Company, in partnership with LeanIn.Org, the past few years have witnessed more women stepping away from leadership roles for various reasons. One of the main reasons is that women are more likely to experience microaggressions, belittling, or peer-doubt. Moreover, women are more commonly mistaken for administrative staff or junior level professionals (2022)⁴.

Similarly, another challenge that faces women in the industry is the physically demanding nature of construction. This includes harsh weather conditions, long working hours, heavy lifting, risk of injuries, and fatigue. These elements impose challenges on women's personal lives including work-life balance and caregiving. Moreover, according to an article published by the Labor's Health and Safety of North America, women have a risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) that is between 2 to 5 times higher than men due to women's typically smaller body size and

³ https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/final_nwlc_womeninconstruction_report.pdf

⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

lower physical strength (Fox, 2020)⁵. Thus, women are more likely to experience muscle fatigue leading them to step away from their jobs, in some cases.

Surprisingly, women's higher risk of injuries can be due to poor fit of the required personal protective equipment (PPE). A study conducted by the US Department of Labor found that most tools, equipment, and clothing are not designed to accommodate women or fit their physique (1999)⁶. These studies show a deeper issue of lack of inclusion in the construction industry. The same study showed that 80% of women on the jobsite either encountered poorly maintained toilet facilities or no toilet facilities for women at all. Consequently, many women resort to using the toilet facilities at nearby gas stations or restaurants or avoid using the facilities altogether during the workday.

The challenge of inclusion and underrepresentation not only faces women on the jobsite but also in their search for opportunities and mentorship. Given the male-dominated nature of construction, women tend to struggle to find role models or female mentors that can appeal to them. Additionally, the lack of sufficient representation for women in leadership roles makes it hard for the issues that women face every day to reach the table of decision-makers. Such a culture can easily create an environment where women feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or excluded.

Aside from all the challenges discussed earlier, the gender pay gap is another prominent challenge that not only faces the construction industry but also most industries in the US. According to the National Women's Law Center, women earned 80 cents to every dollar man earned. Moreover, black women earned only 63 cents to every dollar, white, non-Hispanic men earned (2017)⁷. One of the key reasons for the existing gender pay gap is occupational segregation where women are often selected to occupy more of the lower-paying positions like administrative roles rather than management roles. Another reason is the lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to disclosing pay grades. This makes it harder for women to identify pay inequality and address it.

Oddly enough, some industries have often used the challenges discussed earlier as an excuse to exclude women from certain positions and opportunities, creating yet another stereotype against women. Unfortunately, stereotypes and unconscious bias continue to be deeply ingrained in society, and the construction industry is not immune to such matters. Throughout the years, women have reported being excluded from certain positions based on women's "week" physique. Thus, creating another gender gap in certain tasks in construction. Furthermore, some individuals in the industry assume that a woman is only committed to her career temporarily and

⁵ <https://www.lhsfna.org/improving-safety-health-for-women-in-construction/>

⁶ <https://www.osha.gov/advisorycommittee/accsh/products/1999-06-01>

⁷ <https://nwlc.org/resource/equal-pay-for-black-women/#:~:text=Black%20women%20working%20as%20construction%20laborers%E2%80%94a%20traditionally%20male%2C,%20white%2C%20non-Hispanic%20men%20working%20as%20construction%20laborers.>

will soon move on to caregiving and making a family. These stereotypes can often be driven by unconscious bias, where men can unconsciously favor other men for certain roles or make assumptions about women's skills and capabilities.

One of the main challenges in addressing unconscious bias is that it is often difficult to recognize and acknowledge it. Moreover, even after getting acknowledged, unconscious biases are hard to overcome and require tremendous effort. Yet, it remains essential to recognize and challenge the underlying biases that individuals of certain societies might exhibit. Achieving this goal requires a cultural shift both within individuals and in societies at-large. It requires a tremendous effort and commitment to inclusion and diversity, as well as acknowledgement of the existing unconscious biases.

Tools Women Need to Succeed

Being successful in any field, not just the construction field, is not a talent someone is born with but is rather a result of a combination or accumulation of tools and qualities that were learned and developed over the years. What will be referred to as "success tools" is categorized into the following categories: Technical Skills, Soft Skills, and other success qualities.

Technical Skills

Technical skills are defined as "*the specialized knowledge and expertise required to perform specific tasks and use specific tools and programs in real world situations*" (2023)⁸. Different technical skills are required for each industry and sectors such as the business sector, construction industry, healthcare sector, IT sector...etc. In his article in Forbes, Bernard Marr (2022)⁹ refers to technical skills as "hard" skills and indicates that they are the competencies and skills "*needed to perform job-specific tasks, whether digital or physical. They're the practical skills required to do a job successfully, in other words*". With the construction industry being a diverse and broad field by itself, different technical skills are required for each job. For instance, design companies require a minimum expertise in CAD software whereas consulting firms (specializing in claims and project management) do not. If one intends to become a bridge engineer, then he/she will need to be knowledgeable in codes and guides such as the AASHTO guide. However, in job interviews, employers do not simply take the interviewee's word for a proficiency or knowledge in a field. Otherwise, a nurse could get a job as a bridge engineer. Employees look for tangible proof, and that proof is usually in the form of a college degree and/or certification. This paper will not discuss the specific technical skills needed as they would differ depending on the field pursued. Rather, this paper will briefly dive into the role of

⁸ <https://www.coursera.org/articles/what-are-technical-skills>

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2022/08/03/the-most-in-demand-technical-skills--and-how-to-develop-them/?sh=71a66a3c62e4>

technical skills in women's success as well as how to identify and acquire the technical skills a job might need.

First step is to identify the skills needed. This can be done through research on the field one is either in or plans to pursue. It could be as simple as observing what other work colleagues have or what the job requires. For instance, to put together or review a construction schedule, one needs to be knowledgeable in scheduling software.

Second step boils down to one thing: Education. Education for both young boys and girls is important, but educating girls and women is "one of the most powerful things we can do, not just for girls and their families, but for their communities and their countries" as former first lady Michelle Obama indicated (2016)¹⁰. In the authors' experiences, as two girls raised in the Middle East, the authors were taught that education is a weapon that when acquired, can't be lost. A tool that works hand-in-hand with success. Looking back at high school classmates, the authors realize that many girls believed that they could do it without education, however, life has proved that the chances can be very slim without the required education/technical skills.

In today's recruiting practices, education is one of the first elements that are often looked at when one applies for a job. Even if one can get the job without having the required degree (e.g., getting the project engineer position without a Civil Engineering degree), the employers tend to preserve higher promotions to those with the required education, either to satisfy certain clients, or to satisfy the company's policies.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, people with a graduate degree (master's or doctoral) have the highest earnings and the lowest unemployment rates (2021)¹¹. Thus, earning a graduate degree, especially as a woman, will pave the way for the following long-term:

- Advancement in your career
- Higher pay
- Higher recognition and credibility of your expertise

¹⁰<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2014/12/13/first-lady-michelle-obama-give-all-our-girls-the-education-they-deserve/>

¹¹ [Education pays, 2021 : Career Outlook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/educatio1.toc.htm)

Soft Skills

Unfortunately, technical skills might not be enough for a woman to reach leadership positions whether in construction or any other industry. There are several non-technical skills, often referred to as soft skills, that are essential tools for women to achieve leadership positions. These skills include (but are not limited to):

1. **Effective communication:** While effective communication is an essential tool for any leader, it is especially crucial for women in male-dominated fields like the construction industry. A woman needs to focus on communicating confidently, clearly, and assertively.
2. **Emotional Intelligence:** emotional intelligence is one of the most important skills and is arguably more important than technical skills when it comes to reaching leadership roles. It refers to the ability of managing one's own emotions, as well as recognizing the emotions of others. Mastering emotional intelligence is key to successful management of teams, problem solving, and stakeholder engagements.
3. **Collaboration:** a construction project typically involves hundreds if not thousands of people all working together. The ability to work effectively with others is a skill that leaders need to exhibit.
4. **Resilience and Commitment:** The challenges and stereotypes that women will face throughout their careers can be discouraging, however, women should be resilient against all obstacles and setbacks they might face.
5. **Self-awareness:** As much as it is important to understand others, it is crucial for a woman to understand herself. Both men and women are not born self-aware; it takes time to clearly know the person that one is and have the ability to perceive the actions, principles, beliefs, and values that make that person who he/she is.

Other Qualities

Aside from the technical and soft skills that one should acquire, there are other factors that lead to success. In fact, these factors or qualities are what allows an individual to stand out from a group of people with the same technical skills and soft skills. Oftentimes, the industry witnesses people with high technical skills who are out achieved by people with less technical skills or work experience. And the question arises: how is that possible? What recipe were these people following? Frankly, the answers to these questions are what make leaders unique.

Have a roadmap for where you want to be (have a vision):

You may have heard of the words “mission” and “vision”. Successful companies have a defined mission which is why the company exists and what its purpose is. A vision, on the other hand, is “*the What, Where, or Who you want the company to become*” (2021)¹². A man or a woman should treat themselves as a company and define their vision. It basically means “what is it that you want to become?” If engineering is taken as an example, a woman may want to become a senior steel designer, an executive director, or president for a contracting company. She may even want to open her own contracting company. She may want to become a well-recognized motivational speaker or entrepreneur. The point is that it is important to roughly know what one’s goal is. Why? Because this will help her define and develop the capabilities she needs to become that person. By knowing her vision which is ultimately the “end point”, she can develop a strategy and a roadmap to achieve her goals. Additionally, defining one’s vision helps them recognize the opportunities and the risks that can come along and that one should take to move a step ahead and make progress towards their goal.

To define her vision or know the person she wants to become, a woman in construction must take the first step by jumping into action and experiencing different things. More specifically, the authors of this paper recommend the following steps for a woman especially in construction to take:

1. Try different roles and tasks in the company you’re working in.
2. Read more and ask career-related questions.
3. Associate yourself with the senior level employees.
4. Be brave to discuss your ambitions and vision with friends and family you trust as well as senior-level people at work, especially those who share the same vision as you or who are in places that you would like to reach.
5. And finally, understand that your vision will get defined better and carved out with time. It takes time and work to know the exact person you want to become.

Self-doubt: Believe in yourself: act like the person you want to be:

An article on the Confidence Gap published by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman on the Atlantic discussed how women in workplaces are usually less self-assured than their male counterparts (2015)¹³. Both Katty Kay and Claire Shipman interviewed highly achieved and educated women, and most of them brought up confidence and self-doubt as issues that women face. In fact, many of these successful women attributed their success to luck or indicated that for so long they felt like imposters. The research on the topic found the following:

“There is a particular crisis for women—a vast confidence gap that separates the sexes. Compared with men, women don’t consider themselves as ready for promotions, they predict

¹²<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbooksauthors/2021/02/24/is-a-vision-statement-important/?sh=35d1c43b3be7>

¹³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>

they'll do worse on tests, and they generally underestimate their abilities. This disparity stems from factors ranging from upbringing to biology”.

In the construction sector, the pressure on women is even more intense due to the male-dominated nature of the field. When the authors of this paper entered the job market and worked with men, they found that women, including themselves in many instances, were trying so hard to prove to men that they were as confident and as competent. The minute these women doubted themselves, they instantly apologized. In fact, during one of the panels in the annual Women in Construction Conference that was held in Washington DC in 2021, one of the panelists, who was a high-ranking manager in a large construction firm, indicated that for years, she had constantly apologized in emails even when it was unnecessary. She said she realized that she and other women tend to start their email with “I’m sorry”. “I’m sorry I don’t have the time to take on this extra task”. “I’m sorry I’m not feeling well today” ...etc.

Constantly apologizing and feeling guilty at work is something that most men do not have. Of course, as the Confidence Gap research suggests, there are many reasons women feel less self-assured than men. But from the perspective of the authors of this paper, one reason is due to the fact that for so many years a “woman’s good behavior” was measured by how much she follows rules and orders set for her and not by how she leads. Women were deprived of the right to lead and be in decision-making positions including their households. Of course, this has changed over the years, and the world is witnessing women take leadership roles including highly leading political offices.

One way a woman can bridge the confidence gap and break the barrier of self-doubt is by redefining confidence as “one’s willingness to try” as motivational speaker Mel Robbins defines it, rather than an innate superpower.¹⁴ In other words, if a woman comes across an opportunity to lead a challenging task at her company, she should take it! A woman should be willing to try and not give in to the voice within that says, “you’re not good enough; you don’t have what it takes; you’re not confident enough to lead it; you’re not ready so maybe later; someone else will do the job better”. In fact, the only way one can be ready is when they experience things and gain more understanding of how to do things right after doing them wrong. Experience does not come from confidence, but confidence comes from experience. The number one hindrance in women’s advancement in careers is self-doubt and hesitance to take on new roles. In Katty Kay and Claire Shipman’s research, they indicated that they came across a very successful banker who just landed a promotion and who mentioned to the authors that she was not sure if she had deserved that promotion. Can one imagine the emotional and mental burden that the woman was carrying on her first day at the new role? Or can one imagine the energy her brain invested as she doubted herself and felt hesitant every time she had to make a big decision?

Therefore, one way to work on self-doubt is to redefine the confidence concept. Another way is to “start acting like the person you want to be”. In science, this is referred to as “behavioral activation therapy”. The difference between acting like the person you want to be and the proverb “fake it until you make it” is that when you act like the person you want to become, you

¹⁴ Mel Robbins Podcast

truly believe that you are that person. How true is that? How many times do people see both men and women in junior positions act like leaders. They may not have the title, but they exhibit a day-to-day behavior even in the smallest tasks that transmits a sense of leadership to their surroundings. They suggest ideas, they take on new roles, they “give it a try”, they initiate creative conversations on how to resolve an issue, and they are willing to work with their teams. This is the behavior of true leaders.

Behavioral activation is a mental health approach used to instigate emotional states through activating some behaviors. It is mainly used by therapists and mental health specialists to treat depression since by “deliberately practicing certain behaviors, people can “activate” a positive emotional state. For example, engaging in fulfilling or healthy activities can make someone feel good, which then makes them more likely to keep participating in those activities” (Villines, 2021)¹⁵. The same is applicable to self-doubt and confidence, when one constantly engages in self-doubt ideas and behaviors, they will doubt themselves in the face of opportunities and tasks that they CAN DO. On the other hand, when they tell themselves that they can do it, that they are fit for this position and that they deserve it, they will exhibit more confidence and focus their thought and energy on how to do the job because they know they can do it right. Therefore, even if a woman is not feeling confident, she should activate the behavior that she would take by the time she has 25+ years of experience. It is simple: “Act like the person you want to become”.

Embrace who you are:

One other topic that relates to self-confidence is embracing who one is. From the author’s experience, when one is not comfortable in their own skin, with their own mistakes, people will notice and will get a sense of lack of competence from that person. In the case of the two authors, as two young female engineers, immigrants with an accent, they saw that people respected them more when they owned up to our mistakes, when they said, “I don’t know the answer but I’ll find out”, when they proudly spoke of where they came from and how far along they have come. Another thing that the authors point out is that, especially in the US, people, including their male colleagues and bosses, appreciated the fact that the authors exhibited the “emotional” and “warmth” aspects that they embraced and celebrated as part of being women. A successful male director at a consulting firm mentioned that “empathy” is so important at workplaces, and it is what most women have, and many men can lack. More important than men, it is women who should be at peace with the fact that as a woman in a construction field can be both strong and kind (or warm), and that men will still take her seriously. The authors mention that, in fact, the times they exhibited strength had nothing to do with being cold and emotionless. It was more on how they led their tasks and established boundaries where no one could disrespect them even when they made mistakes. Therefore, as a woman in construction, one needs to embrace who she is, including her mistakes, her origins, her looks, her nature as a woman, her differences from men, her experience and even her lack of experience.

¹⁵ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/behavioral-activation>

Work on your Charisma Skill

Another quality one should work on is charisma. According to Venessa Van Edwards, the author of the book *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication* (2022)¹⁶ charisma can help one get ahead in their career, make more money, and even make more friends.

According to Van Edwards, charismatic people exhibit a combination of competence and warmth. Competence is defined as “*the quality or state of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, or strength (as for a particular duty or in a particular respect)*”.¹⁷ In her podcast with Mel Robbins, Van Edwards gives Oprah Winfrey as an example of a highly charismatic person¹⁸.

She indicated that Oprah portrays a sense of warmth to the people she interviews, making them feel comfortable and able to trust her and share with her. At the same time, Oprah comes across as someone who is smart and who asks tough questions. Van Edwards indicated that engineers tend to show high competence without warmth. They can get trapped where they are. By being highly competent, people give the impression that they are fixers and know how to solve a problem. Whereas highly warm people, on the other hand, show high empathy, share emotions, are cheerleaders, and are not afraid of being vulnerable. In fact, Van Edwards indicates that women tend to be warmer as they tend to try harder to be liked. However, Van Edwards indicates that there needs to be a balance in the extent to which one tries to be liked. In other words, warmth should not compromise the respect one expects to receive from others. Charisma is not a superpower or a talent, it is a skill that can be worked on. Van Edwards and other science-backed sources provide hacks including both verbal and body cues that can help one improve their charisma skill. This includes the tone one presents themselves or even salutes people as well as the way one uses their hands and the way they react as they listen to others speaking. For more information on how to work on your charisma, refer to Venessa Van Edwards book *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication* (2022).

Trust the process

Knowing that success takes time is key. It is easy to notice that many people tried to take the shortcut. Some of them made it, but most did not. In his book, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell indicates that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to master a skill (2008)¹⁹. Gladwell discusses the role of getting the right opportunities in one’s success, as does Morgan Housel in his book, *The Psychology of Money: Timeless lessons on wealth, greed, and happiness* (2022)²⁰. However, both authors do not dismiss the importance of hard work in the equation of success. Trusting the process does not mean blindly pouring hard work into a random job or assignment. On the

¹⁶ *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication*

¹⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/competence>

¹⁸ Podcast with Mel Robbins

¹⁹ *Outliers* book by Malcolm Gladwell.

²⁰ *The Psychology of Money*.

contrary, it shows that the person has planned their goals, drawn a roadmap, worked on the skills required (both technical and soft), and is deliberately working towards becoming the person that represents their vision. Trusting the process is understanding that things take time and that one should not give up simply because they did not achieve what they wanted in a timely manner. One proverb used to represent trusting the process state is seeing oneself “on the bridge”. In the world of engineering and construction, one does not simply become what they want to be by simply graduating from college with a degree. The job market and especially in corporate companies is very competitive and has a conventional ladder of promotions. There are ways of course, as this paper discusses, to stand out and beat the conventional framework for success in the world of construction management, but that hugely involves trusting the process.

Go above and beyond to achieve your goal; Do not take no for an answer

One thing that the authors of this paper stress the importance of is “not taking no for an answer”. Think about the number of applications that a job opening on LinkedIn receives. Think about the number of people who ask for a high raise on their annual reviews. Think about the number of students who do not do well on an exam. How many of these people take it to the next level when the answer is “no”? How many of these people tell themselves that “there must be something I can do”? Very few. There are multiple examples that can be given in that context. But one real-life example that one of the authors, Hala, has experienced is when she thought it was time to change her job. She applied to a job opening for a contracting firm through LinkedIn. Weeks passed and she did not get an answer. She looked up the HR employees in that company and tried to get in touch with them through LinkedIn. Still, she did not get an answer on her application. She then decided to print her resume, go to the company’s office, and talk to them. As awkward as it seemed, she walked in and asked to talk to someone about a job opening. She was sure that meeting her face-to-face and having her talk about her experience was far better than a random electronic application on LinkedIn that was probably one of hundred people who applied. Well, she got an interview! In fact, she was sure that there were many applications for men who had more experience than she had but still did not get the interview. The interviewing team told her later that they had not seen anyone just walk-in to follow-up on an application. And that’s one thing that employers like: the fact that their employee is willing to go above and beyond to get what they want. It gives the impression that the employee is creative and willing to take unconventional steps at their job to achieve the company’s goals. Therefore, it is not only good but integral to go above and beyond to achieve one’s goals. By not taking no for an answer, the woman has won half the battle. In fact, women should stand up for what they believe they deserve whether it is the raise or the position. Both persistence and insistence are not only traits, but ways of life needed to succeed in the very harsh field of construction.

Try to stand out

One factor for women's success that is often left out and could be because it is a sensitive issue is the fact that she is a woman! Both authors view being women in male dominated fields as a plus. While they are fully aware of the challenges that come along with being a woman in

construction, they are also aware of the pros. It is as simple as the following example: if you have 20 balls, 3 of which are yellow and the remaining are red, would you not notice the yellow ones? Or in other words, would not the yellow balls stand out? That's exactly what it is. And it does not have to be the gender. It could be one's personality, body language, skill, persistence, background...etc. The point is: find what you exhibit that is different from other people, something that makes you special in your group of people, embrace it, and use it to stand out. Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo and an immigrant from India, openly talks about how she stood out because of her accent and the fact that she looked different from others in the room. While it is important to stand out, what one is willing to do with that is even more important. After standing out, try to follow-up in a way that shows your skills. For example, if a woman stands out in a meeting, she should then try to participate in the conversation by giving ideas or simply her perspective on the issue in discussion.

Therefore, the authors find it crucial to discuss how being a woman can be beneficial if the woman knows how to cultivate her work tools and skills after standing out.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the path to leadership for women in construction is not a simple one, on the contrary, it has its own set of challenges, setbacks, and hurdles. However, it is not an impossible one and can be successfully navigated through the right tools and skills. This paper discussed the challenges that women face across all industries but especially in the construction industry. These challenges include misconceptions, underrepresentation, harassment, microaggression, unfair pay, and unconscious bias. Similarly, the paper discussed the necessary tools and skills needed to overcome many of these hurdles that can hinder a woman's success in the industry. These tools include technical skills like education and soft skills like effective communication, emotional intelligence, resilience, etc. However, the burden should not lie solely on women to bridge these gaps and overcome the barriers. It is essential that the whole industry recognizes the importance and value that women bring to the industry and take proactive steps towards inclusion and equity not only for women but for all other minorities. Ultimately, the success of women in the construction industry is not only an issue of social justice but also a crucial element to the success of the industry as a whole. Through creating an equal environment, we are opening the doors for more talent and potential to greater success, innovation, and advancement.

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