

4 Tips to Create a Culture That Supports Women in Construction

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Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the United States workforce is comprised of an astounding 151 million workers. Women comprise 47% of this figure, occupying various positions across the board. In the construction industry, however, the same data shows that only 11% were comprised of women occupying approximately 1.2 million positions, one-third of which are administrative support roles.

The good news? This signifies an increase of 133,000 construction jobs held by women since 2018. There are more women in construction now than ever before and this trend will likely continue to grow due to ongoing labor shortages, diverse job opportunities and a narrow gender pay gap. Construction needs women and women have the skills and know-how to significantly impact the industry.

Challenges Women Face Working in the Construction Industry

Still a male-dominated industry, women continue to face challenges working within the construction industry. Gender bias, negative stereotypes and obstacles to advancement continue to be reported by women working in the front lines. Not surprisingly, recent research continues to show women are vastly underrepresented within construction companies, which may lead to feelings of isolation in the workplace and lack of access to support and mentorship.

Despite these challenges, women continue to report that they love their jobs and working within this exciting and rewarding industry. The future looks bright, but companies in design and construction must continue the work to ensure women have the resources and infrastructure in place to feel supported and succeed in the workplace.

How Can Companies Better Support Women in Construction?

Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Studies have shown a diverse workplace contributes significantly to the success of a business. Harnessing diverse skillsets, knowledge and experience in your workforce can lead to innovation and creativity that can make your business thrive. In fact, the Delivering growth through diversity in the workplace report created by McKinsey & Company shows research that reinforces the link between diversity and a company's financial profitability.

There are many ways you can incorporate diversity and inclusion within your construction company, including building awareness, promoting values from within, conducting diversity training, implementing hiring diversity practices, soliciting employee engagement, and creating a welcoming and inclusive company culture.

Provide access to education and training opportunities. Allow women to advance within your company by providing opportunities for professional development including online classes, on-the-job training, certificate programs and/or workshops to expand skills and build new ones. Tap into organizations such as The National Association of Women in Construction and Women in Construction to provide opportunities for your staff to attend local and regional conferences and networking events.

Develop internal programs that support women. Since women are greatly underrepresented in the industry, providing internal programs geared towards them can help attract, support and retain skilled women workers. Programs such as internships, apprenticeships, or mentorship can provide opportunities for women to learn the business, gain experience, network and receive coaching from women role models and leaders.

Foster a culture of innovation and leadership. Creating a diverse workforce means having women at the top to serve as role models, mentor other women, and support the recruitment and advancement of women within the organization. It is also vital to company success to recognize potential and identify top performers early so you can provide them with ample opportunities to grow. Allow emerging leaders to fill critical functions when necessary and recognize achievement. Invest in leadership programs and tools to foster a culture of innovation within your company so that everyone benefits.

Would you like to learn more about how to support women in the construction industry? Join us for [Breaking Barriers: Women in Construction Webinar Series](#) , a new webinar series hosted by AIA Contract Documents. Designed to foster engagement and dialogue about what it means to be a woman in the construction industry, this series will examine the challenges women face and how organizations can better attract, support and retain them.

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