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2019 Women Who Build: Kathyann Cowles, KC Architects

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Name: Kathyann Cowles

Position: Owner, Architect

Company: KC Architects

How many years have you been in your current field? Over 35

What motivated you to step out on your own? It was never a question to me of “if” but rather than “when” I would start my own firm. To get a better understanding of the whole building process, I was assigned to work with construction supers and tradespeople, to improve the quality on a huge city block reconstruction project. It’s no exaggeration to say I didn’t have a lot of friends as I was young, female, an architect and given the responsibility of determining whose work was deficient. It gave me the confidence I needed to open my own office.

What project, transaction, honor or accomplishment are you most proud of? I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to continue to work with my clients on a variety of different projects. It is gratifying to watch how their lives are affected by the process of altering and creating new space. Each time, that is my best accomplishment.

What is the best leadership advice you have ever received? Who was it from? One of my favorites from David Labau. We decided to involve a young intern to present to a client, and as the intern proudly explained how he had been developing the design, I noticed Mr. Labau shift in his chair each time the intern used the word “I”. On the ride home, Mr. Labau told him “You used the word “I” sixteen times during a twelve-minute presentation, and as far as I know, there is no “I” in the word “we”! If you are to build a team, loose that word from your vocabulary. Otherwise good job”

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