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2019 Women Who Build: Taylor Simmons, Burns & McDonnell

February 15, 2019 - Connecticut

Name: Taylor Simmons

Position: Assistant Construction Manager

Company: Burns & McDonnell

How many years have you been in your current field? 4

Which project, deal or transaction was the “game changer” in the advancement of your career during the last 10 years? The “game changer” project in my career was a \$218 million transmission line program for a major utility in the Northeast. My company, Burns & McDonnell, was responsible for program management and successfully completing the 37-mile new-build in Connecticut. During the final stages of the project, I was offered the opportunity to work for an assistant project manager. At that time, I was working in our environmental services group, so it was a complete role change. By stepping out of my comfort zone and accepting the assistant project manager position, I found my passion in the construction industry.

What was your first job and what did you learn from it? My first professional job was as an assistant environmental engineer at Burns & McDonnell within its environmental services group. When I started out, I never said no to any opportunity or task. My “can-do” attitude created opportunities for me and helped me learn a wide range of project support services, including environmental compliance, public outreach, project controls, environmental permitting and compliance. Being a part of teams executing these critical project components provided an amazing foundation of knowledge. Now, as a project manager, I have a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the entire construction process and team.

What were your biggest fears when you started out in your profession? Being the youngest, and often one of the only females in a room when launching a new construction project, was intimidating for me. I was responsible for leading a team of experienced professionals who hadn’t worked with me before. The fear of not being respected or seen as a leader always weighed on me. Once I was able to show the team that I was willing to work hard and learn as much as possible to make our project a success, I earned respect and my fear faded away. I was always willing to accept when I didn’t understand or know something and was never afraid to ask questions. It’s important to be aware of what you don’t know, and to know who to ask for the answer. To this day, I find by being open and listening to those around me, I learn a new skill or technique almost daily.

