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2020 Women in Real Estate: Holly St. Clair, Chief Technology Officer at Sasaki

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Holly St. Clair
Sasaki

Who inspired you to join the CRE Industry? A community organizer named Gladys Vega from the Chelsea Creek Action Group inspired me to shift from more of an environmental focus to looking at who owns the land and how is the built environment and its uses impacting our neighborhoods. The project we worked on together ignited my interest in opening data and using technology to understand the landscape around us.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from? I had the great privilege of working with Mark Nunnally, former secretary of the Office of Technology Services and Security for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. While I was chief digital officer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Mark introduced me to the Pareto principle or the 80/20 rule. It is an observation used in economics and management that roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. This advice has been helpful in my professional and personal life: use data to inform the problem you are trying to solve and then focus on the 20% that matters.

How have you been networking during the lockdown? Frankly, I have not been networking during lockdown. I have been so focused on ensuring our employees and firm has what it needs to connect and digitally collaborate, that my day to day interactions are focused on other firms and vendors who are solving those issues. Evening networking has not been a priority because I am either focused on getting myself out from behind the computer (who really wants to do another Zoom meeting?!) to get physical exercise or enjoying the summer weather with my children.

What books, blogs, podcasts, resources or influencers would you recommend to women? “Design Intelligence” - Interviews with different design professionals, disrupters, adjacent innovators about how the decisions we make in the industry can alter the future of the industry and society as a whole. “On-being with Krista Tippett” - I am always looking for ways to balance my life. This podcast always helps me think about the larger questions in life and it is a nice counterbalance to the daily firefighting.

What aspects of working from home have you enjoyed most? I enjoy not commuting by car. It gives me two hours back in my day and I am a nicer person when I don't sit in traffic.

What honor, achievement or recognition means the most to you and why? I was recently recognized as a 2020 Influencer to Watch by the American Business Journal in my first few months with Sasaki, which was both humbling and a motivator to not only supercharge tech and data capabilities at Sasaki, but also to continue to push the bounds of the AEC industry through digital transformation.

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