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2021 Women in Construction: Kelly Ford, Project Manager, TSP Smart Spaces

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Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? I'm a "see an opportunity and take it" kind of personality, and jumped at the chance to assist as the Smart Spaces project list

grew. As my role expanded beyond technology and into construction, Aaron Stallings, our Smart Spaces Director, and our founder, Michael Oh, were instrumental in allowing me the opportunity to not only learn—and make mistakes, a critical component to growth—but to utilize my existing skill set to help them build a more powerful team. Without that support and willingness to let a novice jump right in, I would not have found my favorite career.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? As the demand for smart home technology has increased over the years, so has our docket of projects, from colonial mansions in Boston to lakeside vacation homes in New Hampshire. When I transitioned into the Smart Spaces team, we were still getting our sea legs. My greatest accomplishment has been turning that chaos into a highly coordinated and optimized schedule and process so our team has space to breathe and be at their best creatively, while also ensuring the client is never uncertain and always feels comfortable coming to us with questions or concerns.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months? Like our peers, the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to adapt and ensure our activities mesh with current guidelines. Before every onsite visit, we assure clients—whether prospective or existing—of TSP's adherence to Covid-19 protocols, including daily attestations. We also ask that our clients wear a mask and socially distance. It's critical that we not only protect the client, but ensure our team is healthy and can perform their jobs without the burden of unnecessary discomfort or uncertainty as well. If anything, the change has increased our level of communication and trust—both as a team and with our clients.

What steps have you taken to ensure the continued success of your firm? Coming from an IT project management background, I know how critical it is to ensure team members have all the information they need to not only meet, but exceed client expectations. My goal is to ensure our team has the information, time, and resources they need to be successful in the field. I apply an agile approach to our process: highly detailed but flexible scheduling, tweaking our systems and processes as we go, and high levels of communication. We are firm believers in measure twice and cut once. Our efforts in planning have paid dividends in client satisfaction and referrals.

Why should women consider a career in construction? As with any field that is dominated by a particular viewpoint, you risk your business becoming stale and myopic. More than a woman considering the field, there should be greater outreach to women like me who may not have considered construction as a career to take advantage of the richness diversity brings. I was drawn to the Smart Spaces side because the work often blends the lines between construction and technology. From what I've seen, that's where the industry as a whole is headed as well. It's a refreshing and creative career choice for both employers and potential employees.