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2021 Women in Construction: Julia Meier, Manager - Development and Construction, Surus Development and Construction

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What steps have you taken to ensure the continued success of your firm? I believe the key to continued success of Surus is to identify and continually revisit the strategic goals of the company.

Being a relatively new company, it is important that our current business operations align with and set us up to achieve our long-term strategic goals. With the construction environment changing so quickly with the integration of technology and workforce development, it is crucial to ensure the company is agile enough to take in new information and pivot as an organization.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? My greatest professional achievement in the last 12 months was completing my Masters in Business Administration in the part-time program at Babson College. The three-year process of completing my MBA, while working on major projects at the same time, allowed me to push the boundaries of what I thought was possible for me both academically and professionally. The strong Babson network has been a great resource throughout the development of my career in the construction industry. I am looking forward to giving back to the network that has provided me invaluable support.

What are you most looking forward to post-pandemic? Similar to many people, I am looking forward to traveling post-pandemic. My family is located across the United States and abroad and being able in the past to travel to see them face to face was a luxury I took for granted. While Zoom and other means of virtual communication have allowed us to stay connected, I am excited to get back on the road and visit all of the amazing places I miss. I am also looking forward to walking down the streets of Boston and seeing everyone's faces without a mask and being able to grab coffee with a friend or coworker after a long week. We all have truly come to learn the value and enrichment of actual in person connections in our lives.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months? The last 12 months has required me to change a lot of the processes I established in the pre-pandemic environment. In other words, I have been forced to look at the way I have "always done business" and adapt to new ways. The hardest adaptation for me has been the shift to a more virtual working environment because it is more difficult to create new professional relationships with coworkers, the professional trades and consultants. Those touch points, whether they be virtual or in person, are even more important now than ever to the way we manage a construction project on a day-to-day basis. I have taken special care to ask questions and learn more about the individuals I work with. Everyone is starved for personal connection and you would be surprised what you can learn by taking a few extra minutes to make that connection!

Why should women consider a career in construction? Women should consider a career in construction because of the strong sense of accomplishment that comes with the physical impact of building. While the projects can be stressful and overwhelming at times, nothing beats the feeling of looking at the end result knowing exactly how that project came together, the challenges you and the team overcame, and the ability to do it all over again with all the lessons learned. There is unlimited career potential for women in this field if you are not afraid to ask questions, actively listen, and challenge the way things have always been done.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? I was empowered by senior industry leaders that showed me that there is no problem that cannot be solved. In construction, we are faced with problems every day, some that can be identified ahead of time and not. The key is to

understand what you do not know, voice it, and identify technical experts or subcontractors to assist in solving the problem. This business allows us to effectively problem solve in real-time, while gaining the knowledge to anticipate future issues before they arise. Starting out in construction, the real-time problem solving me a rush that has kept me in this industry.

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