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## **2021 Ones to Watch: Melissa Roy, Associate, Director of Business Development, Tecton Architects**

May 28, 2021 - Spotlights

Which project/deal was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career? When I started as executive assistant at Shawmut, I took that job thinking it would only be for a year before I went on to graduate school. But after I started there, I fell in love with the culture and wanted to stay. So when I was offered the opportunity to relocate from Boston to CT as an assistant project manager on the ISET Complex at the University of Hartford, it was a game changer because it gave me a way forward in construction.

What led you to your current profession? After majoring in political science in college, I joined AmeriCorps and simultaneously applied to both law school and PhD programs in political science. After AmeriCorps, I moved to Boston to decide on a direction. I started working at Shawmut with the intention that it would only be for a year before graduate school, but I fell in love with the construction industry. I discovered that having a liberal arts background offered a unique perspective. But what really kept me in construction was the culture at Shawmut, being on the job site, and learning from mentors.

Who or what inspires you? I’m inspired by our industry. I think that the AEC and real estate industry is unique in that we’re all passionate in the same way, and we all understand each other. We have so many visionaries – people who work hard and they do it because they love it. I tell everyone all the time that the people I am surrounded by are the hardest-working people I’ve ever met. We’re unique in the level of passion, commitment and dedication we bring to every project. The more we take on, the better we do at everything. I love the AEC community.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession? I enjoy being involved in several industry organizations, (currently the CREW CT Blue Ribbon Awards Chair), but what I’m truly passionate about is connecting people with information or with others to build and share common goals. I enjoy helping others and building diverse partnerships. I’m also interested in bringing health and wellness to our industry and am becoming a certified yoga teacher with The Yoga Shop. (<https://theyogashop.us/>) I love merging my worlds. I have never believed in the concept of work life balance. To me, it’s all connected. My family is involved in my work, and my colleagues are family.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles? Our entire industry is formed around overcoming conflicts and obstacles. I almost feel like we thrive on that. My advice to teams is

to have an intentional mindset. There's something that happens in-between setting an intention and taking action that has the potential to create conflicts and obstacles. I'd rather avoid them through intentional thinking, but when they come up, I always ask myself, "What is the intention or experience that we are trying to create here?" If we are intentional with our brand, how we present ourselves, then we're authentic – not in a contrived way, but who we truly are.

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry? Take time to get to know people – everyone you can – because you never know what person or connection can help you. You never know where people will end up. But get to know who they really are as people, and not in a transactional way. I can look at my network and tell you who people's kids and grandkids are, what their college majors are, and what they're interested in. Liberal arts taught me to communicate, solve problems, create relationships and connections. The technical piece of construction can be learned, but making connections is something that I bring intrinsically.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career? My mentors at Shawmut were Randy Catlin, Mike Kearns, and the UHART team. At the time, this was the biggest project Shawmut had on the boards. When they needed an APM for the job, they looked for someone who really understood their company culture and gave me the opportunity. I remember Randy encouraging conversations with the subcontractors – learning construction by watching it in real time. I relocated to Connecticut before Shawmut had an office there. We had to build it, so networking became huge. I wanted to grow their Connecticut presence, and this started my passion for business development.

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