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2021 Women in Commercial Real Estate: Krista Manna, Owner, KR Architecture & Interiors

September 24, 2021 - Spotlights



Krista Manna
Owner

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months? Offices are becoming more than “just a place to go to every day.” That has especially proven true since the pandemic landed here, and the resulting hybrid work models where people work remotely some or much of the time. So, time spent in an actual office environment takes on a new meaning. Amenities become more important, including collaborating spaces, food amenities, uniquely-equipped conference rooms, and digital tech rooms where you can blend the in-person and remote team seamlessly in a way that people working remotely don’t feel left out. This also means that the new offices will be more and more plugged into technologically with digital room booking software and hotel desk booking software. There will be a lot more consideration put into designing offices than simply figuring out what are the best vending machines. The new office of the future will be how best to serve employees by providing items in the office that they can’t provide at home.

What led you to your current profession? From a very young age, I was intrigued by drawing floor plans. At five or six my favorite fall pastime was to rake floor plans in leaves, and pretend to play house in them. As a tween and teen, I would draw scaled floor plans of my room and re-arrange furniture to optimize the layout. In high school I worked for my grandfather, a housing developer. I poured sidewalks, picked up shingles, swept, and did every chore imaginable. I gained a strong understanding of what is involved in construction. My interest in construction/architecture can be traced back to those early years.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of? A contractor client wanted to move his office from Easton to Abington, and use the remainder of the space as an apartment. This required going through the special permitting process in the town. Part of the design was to include a residential unit on the same floor behind the office, even though it was commercially-zoned. Through our efforts, the zoning meeting could not have gone any easier and was quickly approved by the town. The project is currently under construction. It has allowed my client not only to move his office closer to his clients but also allow an additional residence in my hometown.

What is one characteristic that you believe every woman in commercial real estate should possess? Know how to present your case with confidence and authority. Unfortunately, there are still situations where female architects are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Leveling the playing field where it is necessary requires patience, conviction and excellent communications skills.