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2022 Women in Construction: Maureen Kelly, Project Engineer at TFMoran

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Maureen Kelly

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the past 12 months? The past year has been a challenge in a variety of ways. Hands down, my favorite professional achievement has been a mindset shift! I've stopped blindly chasing traditional milestones and accepting narrow measures of success. Instead, I'm choosing career goals and role models that align with my values. Mental health and work-life balance are the backbone of a sustainable, diverse workforce. Many workers are leaning into this fact, and that is a notable project!

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? Dive in, but respect yourself and set boundaries. Even when we love our studies and/or work, having variety in life is a healthy habit. Don't mistake excessive dominance for leadership; it's about who supports you, not who you can push around. Be the person people can trust to ask for advice or a reference, have a brainstorm session, and discuss sticky topics. Efforts in these areas will create opportunities for you, while improving the industry environment for everyone.

When you're not busy, what is your go-to book or podcast to unwind? I'm always partway through multiple books. One I am finding insightful is Unfollow by Megan Phelps-Roper. She touches many themes that are relevant to our society, like escaping echo chambers and recognizing humanity despite disagreement. For a quick, nostalgic read, I reach for Gary Paulsen. I've been reading his novels since I was a kid. The words are familiar but hit me in a different way with each reading. On road trips we listen to the podcast Sawbones - a great mix of medical history and modern humor.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? One early empowering experience for me was a capstone project at UMass Lowell, advised by Craig Miller of Waterfield Design Group. Craig worked with faculty to guide our design work for a local nonprofit and an industrial project in Haiti. As a UML alumnus and professional engineer, he was perfectly positioned to add to our education while supporting development goals in Haiti. He demonstrated how to maximize personal impact by giving back to society with your professional skill set. Many careers are suited to this, but it gave me confidence to see an example in my field.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? My two biggest influences at work have been Jeff Kevan and Jen Porter. Jeff supervises our civil department. His leadership has created an environment where I can ask questions and make mistakes while learning. He shares the reasoning behind his decisions, which helps me develop my own engineering judgment. Jen is a senior project engineer and her technical expertise is highly valued. She also knows when to take a step back, help a coworker, support her family, or make space for herself. She has been a role model for me both as a parent and an engineer.