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2022 Women in Construction: Lori Smith, Studio Manager at Jewett Construction

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Lori Smith

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? Establishing the Architecture Department at Jewett. Most architects dream of having their own firm. To be able to create that within Jewett, with the unwavering support and encouragement of the leadership here has been a dream come true.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? It was actually my first female client who helped me to find my voice as a professional. She was an impressive woman, running the materials department of a local hospital. I was terrified of her, to the point where I once had to take deep breaths to get through a big meeting. For our first one-on-one design meeting, I made sure I was well prepared. About halfway through grilling some nurse about the particulars of her equipment, she looked at me and said “don’t ever let anyone tell you that you’re too detailed, this is your strength.” After that, I had a bunch more confidence and I embraced my geekier nature.

When you’re not busy, what is your go-to book or podcast to help you unwind? I’m never not busy. I do take time out to hang with my teenager with an old-fashioned jigsaw puzzle in front of the fire in the winter. In the summer I’m in my garden.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? I didn’t get much help along the way. I now try to do for others what I wish had been done for me.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? If this is what you want to do, don’t back down. You do have to be proactive about finding mentors and advisors. Don’t be afraid to ask other women for support, advice, etc., and if you aren’t finding the support you need where you’re at, go somewhere else quickly. The female friends I’ve made in this business are among my very best friends, and we continue to support each other in business and outside of it.

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