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2022 Women in Construction: Sarah McGillicuddy, Director of Business Development at BR+A Consulting Engineers

March 25, 2022 - Spotlights



Sarah McGillicuddy

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? Starting a new role at BR+A, a relationship-driven one no less, three weeks before a global pandemic turned everyone's world upside down definitely ranks high among personal career challenges I've faced and overcome/innovated solutions to. Truly a silver lining of this terrible pandemic has certainly been some of the new tools I was forced to employ in some ways refreshing my whole career as I knew it. Additionally, serving as a founding member and president of PWC Boston has been a wonderful experience both personally and professionally. That was a "project" that yielded terrific professional relationships, friendships, and learning opportunities.

When you're not busy, what is your go to book or podcast to help you unwind? Ha, I like murder...a lot. Unsure what that means about me but it's one of my faves! I like Crime Junkie and The Teachers Pet podcast was insane, so much so that listening to it was banned in Australia – check it out! On the more cerebral side, Malcom Gladwell's revisionist history is a really good crazy way to think about ingrained institutions in completely new ways from golf courses to higher education.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? Lori Chicoyne was one of my first bosses and she taught me so much; she remains a treasured mentor and friend. There have been several other women and men that have supported me throughout my career and their mentorship and sponsorship has been invaluable. I would name them all but fear I'd forget someone! Additionally, I credit my involvement in industry organizations as a huge contributing factor of my professional growth and development. I would suggest anyone starting out in the business advocate for their firm to support their participation in a professional organization; one that aligns with your firm's business goals. Through getting involved with SMPS early in my career I managed responsibilities that fell outside of my job that were challenging at the time, then was able to use those experiences to take on more daunting experiences at work with a greater level of confidence. The other added benefit was creating a basis of my professional network.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? I always admired the firm BR+A, they were considered best in class for a reason, they deliver quality expertise and service and maintain it at a very high level. I've always viewed my work as an extension of myself, I feel brand ambassadorship is critical especially in a role where you are building relationships on behalf of your firm in effort to grow the company. So to take on this role for a firm that lives what it is espouses is critical for my success, I couldn't fake it or represent a firm I didn't believe in. Allan Ames, CEO and Pat Duffy, President are two people who lead with integrity and by example which are values that are important to me. All of these elements, most importantly the hard working people that make up the firm are tantamount to any success I have.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? I have friends who work in a range of different worlds from stay at home mom's, to authors, banking leaders, and I do feel that one differentiator within the AEC industry is the community you can build. I don't mean solely an internal company community but an industry that truly at times feels like families. Some of my closest friends and confidants I have met through this industry which makes going to work each day a more enjoyable experience because I know I can share the highs and lows with people that both understand my day-to-day and who care about me

personally and professionally. It's an industry that is constantly seeking to evolve and that ensures you are always learning and growing yourself. If that sounds like a fit then you should consider it; but know that if you seek success it truly does take a village and the AEC village is where it's at!

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540