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Don't forget to network...The Boston chapter of the National Assn. of Women in Construction

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Now, more than ever, it is so important to remember the benefits of networking because you never know when that next job offer is right around the corner. Building a solid foundation of networking skills will position you to stand a better chance of finding prosperity in today's troubled job market.

Anyone who has been in the industry for a number of years can easily tell you about the valuable contacts they have made, often paired with an interesting anecdote about how they met someone, or what has occurred with one or the others' career/business ever since. I have a wealth of those stories already! It seems like at least weekly I find myself aware of and amazed by some great connection that came to me, to a friend, or even better, someone I was able to help via my network. (Case and point, being invited to contribute an article to the New England Real Estate Journal!) As an architect and contract coordinator at Payette, and also co-chair of our in-house mentoring program, I recently gave a lunchtime presentation in the office about the benefits of membership in a professional organization. Extra-curricular groups can enhance a career by way of idea sharing amongst industry colleagues, mentoring, offering some excellent networking opportunities, and simply providing an enjoyable past time outside of the home and office routine.

I would be remiss not to mention that much of my networking interaction occurs via my relationships within the Boston chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction. NAWIC has provided me wonderful opportunity and I am thrilled to have the honor of serving a second term as chapter president. Our dinner meetings, joint events with other local groups, social gatherings, fundraising events, and regional meetings all lend themselves to forming bonds with women and men of similar professional and personal interests.

With any professional organization, all that someone has to do to strengthen his or her network is to get involved! Volunteer for a committee, join the board of directors, or just simply attend monthly events and make a sincere effort to reach out; it seems that there is room in every group for any level of involvement. One of the ladies on our board of directors recently noted that she makes it a point at every NAWIC meeting to meet ten new people. Being a recent college graduate, this effort is rapidly developing her circle of professional contacts. Another board member recently landed her "dream job" because the interviewer said she was so impressed with the candidate's organizational skills practiced while serving on the board and its various committees.

Belonging to a professional group may provide a certain sense of security in the fact that members can rely on acquaintances and contacts to find support whether it is looking for a new job, understanding a situation from a different perspective, or learning a new skill to enhance job performance. The larger the network created, the better the experiences and resources available, and perhaps an even more reliable safety net.

Continuing on the hot topic of employment and as a true testament to the virtues of professional

networking in our current economy (not to mention the friendships we form within our associations...), two additional stories come to mind. Earlier this fall, one of our members was faced with the unpleasant situation of office layoffs. It was a shock to our group to hear her news, given this member's skill and work ethic. However, she put the word out, we all offered suggestions, and within days, she was once again gainfully employed. Equally as impressive, a Detroit NAWIC member sent us an email inquiring about Boston construction industry employment as she was moving to our area for personal reasons. Upon forwarding this to NAWIC members, she received several job offers and has since started her new job in Boston, even sooner than expected. The point here obviously is that aside from doing the textbook things like keeping your resume updated, your best outfit clean, and a subscription to the classifieds on hand, do not forget what you can accomplish through sincere networking and active participation in professional extra-curricular organizations.

Finally, I will leave you with this... regardless of your chosen career or your level, remember to practice good manners and always send a thank you note!

For more information visit our website www.nawicboston.org.

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