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2025 Ones To Watch - Rising Stars: Stephanie Salsman, Bruner/Cott Architects

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Stephanie Salsman
Associate, Manager of Marketing and Communications

“Since joining Bruner/Cott Architects in 2017, Stephanie has grown and developed into an instrumental leader and presence in our firm. In addition to shaping and elevating our marketing and communications strategies, promoting our brand, people, and designs, and leading our internal proposal and awards processes, Stephanie is involved in our internal DEI, Sustainability, and AI working groups, is a current Co- Chair of the BSA Marketing/PR Network, and is an active member of SMPS. She is also a marathon runner and kick- boxing instructor!” - Dana Kelly, Partner + Principal at Bruner/Cott Architects.

What recent professional milestone or project are you most proud of, and why? I’m most proud of my recent promotion to Associate at Bruner/Cott Architects. This recognition reflects the contributions I’ve made to the firm over the last eight years and marks a meaningful step into a leadership role I am excited to take on. It’s incredibly rewarding to have that effort acknowledged in a way that allows me to help shape the future of the practice and continue to grow professionally.

What’s one challenge you’ve overcome in your career so far, and what did it teach you? One challenge I’ve overcome in my career has been learning to manage a team and shift from being primarily a producer to taking on more of a facilitator and leadership role across different types of projects. This experience taught me the importance of clear communication, adapting to different personalities and working styles, and navigating difficult conversations with empathy and clarity. It’s been a rewarding shift that has made me a more effective and thoughtful leader.

If you could give advice to someone just starting out in your field, what would it be? If you don’t ask, the answer is always no! Don’t be afraid to advocate for yourself and speak up about what you want in your career. Some of the most pivotal shifts in my own journey, like transitioning from operations to marketing, happened because I took the initiative to ask questions and start important conversations. Being proactive can open doors you might not even know exist.

Who has played a pivotal role in your development, and how have they influenced you? Dana Kelly, one of Bruner/Cott’s three partners and the firm’s Director of Business Development + Marketing, has played a pivotal role in my development. Not only has she been my boss/direct supervisor for the majority of my career, but she has also been one of my strongest advocates when it comes to my growth and advancement in the industry. Dana leads by example, demonstrating integrity, strategic thinking, and an unwavering commitment to both client relationships and team development. Her mentorship has shaped the way I approach challenges, collaborate, and lead, and I’m incredibly grateful