

2023 Women in Construction: Pamela Desmond, Schimenti Construction



Pamela Desmond
Human Resources Director
Schimenti Construction

In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? Building my current HR team has been the highlight of my year and what I am most proud of. We had a truly transformational year, and I am incredibly proud of my team's passion, knowledge, and ability to drive results through all the growth and change. Human Resources is such a critical business enablement function, and we have the privilege of interacting with every department within our organization. I feel fortunate to work with a team who puts people first and believes that people are the foundation of everything we do.

What was a pivotal point in your career? Years ago, I had a manager who was just... absolutely terrible, treating the team poorly, behaving erratically, and showing no empathy or support. This was a pivotal experience which led me to make a conscious decision not to become a victim and instead view it as a learning experience. It taught me how never to behave as a leader and the importance of treating every individual on the team with empathy and respect. Although it's not always easy, I try to always find the positives and remember that each of our unique experiences shapes us into the leaders we become.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? I think the key is to get involved in any way that you can when you are starting out. It's all a learning experience and an opportunity to create valuable connections within the industry. When a colleague invites you to attend an industry event with them, say yes! Exposure to different organizations and groups will help you determine where you feel most comfortable. In my experience, Professional Women in Construction (PWC) has been an excellent association to engage with peers at other companies and has offered opportunities to learn about the AEC industry and build a network.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? The easiest way to recruit more women is to engage with more female candidates. Research shows that men will apply for a job or promotion when they meet only 60% of the listed qualifications, but women will typically only apply if they meet 100% of them. It isn't about being qualified to do the job, but rather about having confidence to apply for the job. We have to proactively engage more women at all levels, but especially at more junior levels, helping them see the AEC industry as an exciting option in which to develop a rewarding professional career.

What is your favorite building in New York? I am passionate about the performing arts and have a deep love of historic theaters. I encourage everyone to go to Brooklyn and see the interior of the Kings Theater in Flatbush. It was modeled after the Paris Opera House and was originally a movie theater in the 1920's. It re-opened in 2015 after a complete renovation and is absolutely gorgeous. Speaking of historic theaters, I am unbelievably impressed at the work our Schimenti team is currently doing to restore the Brooklyn Paramount Theater. It will become one of the finest theaters in NYC once again!

2023 Women in Construction: Annie Vargas, Schimenti Construction



Annie Vargas
Assistant Project Manager
Schimenti Construction

In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? I am most proud of being part of the project team for the 28E28th St. repositioning commercial office building in NYC's Flatiron district. It is a 15-story, 703,000 s/f building, and we were tasked with significant demolition, white boxing, enlarging multiple floors, HVAC and electrical system upgrades, a new floor-through lobby connecting 28th and 27th Sts., and fit-out of multiple floors for multiple tenants. This project was my longest and largest scale project at Schimenti and took extensive coordination, teaching me a lot of the value and importance of teamwork. This project won an ABC Excellence in Construction Award.

What was a pivotal point in your career? Nearly two years ago, I experienced a major work setback resulting from a clash with my teammate while juggling multiple projects amid our busiest season. The experience was difficult and frustrating and led to feelings of disappointment, self-doubt, and uncertainty about my future. That setback became an opportunity to reflect on my career goals and make strategic decisions about my future direction. I took time to assess my skills, strengths, and weaknesses, and ultimately opted to pivot in a new direction with the mentorship of my direct manager. That collaboration led to the promotion I was working toward and more.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? I'd recommend joining Professional Women in Construction or CoreNet Global for women starting out in the AEC industry. These organizations offer a wide range of networking opportunities, including monthly chapter events, global summits, online forums and advocacy efforts. Membership benefits include a variety of educational & professional development opportunities like workshops and webinars, and access to industry insights helping women make informed decisions on market trends, best practices, and emerging technologies. By connecting with other AEC professionals and staying informed about industry trends and best practices, women in construction can enhance their careers and make meaningful contributions to the industry.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? To recruit more women in the AEC industry, there are several steps that can be taken. First, it is important to create a welcoming and inclusive culture that supports diversity and equality. This can be achieved by offering female-specific training and development programs, implementing flexible work arrangements, and promoting female role models within the company. Additionally, establishing outreach programs and partnerships with educational institutions will encourage young women to consider careers in construction. Finally, job postings and recruitment materials should be gender-neutral and focus on the qualifications and skills needed for the position, rather than perpetuating stereotypes and biases.

What is your favorite building in New York? One of my favorite buildings is The Edge, a 1,131-foot-tall outdoor observation deck located on the 100th floor of 30 Hudson Yards. It's the highest outdoor observation deck in the Western Hemisphere and offers 360-degree city views. The deck features a unique triangular shape jutting out from the building, giving visitors the sensation of floating in the sky. The platform is made of nearly transparent, 15-foot-tall glass panels, providing unobstructed views. There is also a glass floor section, allowing visitors to see down to the street below. The experience is completed with a champagne bar, restaurant, and event space.