

Real Estate Journal

COVERING ALL OF LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK CITY AND UPSTATE NEW YORK

Sandra Wilkin of Bradford Construction discusses the importance of a mentoring relationship

sw Sandra Wilkin



Bradford
Construction
Corp.

One of the missions of the WBC is to be a mentor to women by seeking and implementing solutions to the challenges, obstacles, and concerns of emerging women business enterprises in the building industry.

Decades ago, the Beatles heralded a futuristic trend in construction when they wrote "I [can] get by with a little help from my friends." Today, we are seeing an increasing use of the mentoring process in construction. This process offers to both those who are mentors and those receiving their knowledge the chance to learn from each other and to grow.

This year, Bradford Construction Corp. is celebrating its 17th year in business. My introduction to the construction industry did not come from a hammer or blueprints. It came from a stethoscope and medical charts. My career as a nurse surprisingly prepared me to enter the construction field; both fields require one to handle and assess risk everyday and to work well with people.

The barriers and challenges faced by my company years ago are the same ones facing small, start-up construction companies today: financing, bonding and general growth.

What is different today? The stronger presence of mentorship opportunities.

Mentoring is an established and very useful concept that genuinely incorporates the combined involvement of the mentor and mentee. The continual process is hinged upon the mentor imparting wisdom, knowledge and experience to the mentee in the hopes of achieving the set goals and objectives outlined by the parties. In most cases, both parties learn from each other and benefit from the unique relationship that develops over time.

Mentoring is used extensively with great results in today's workplace. The concept has shown to be very effective whether it is used in the form of a group or utilized in the traditional sense of having a one-on-one relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Very often mentoring is directed towards new employees or executives that are trained to assume important positions within a firm.

As a construction management firm, Bradford has the opportunity of working with a premier mentoring program for the City of New York under the NYC School Construction Authority's Business Development Unit. The objective of the program is based on improving the contractor's construction and management skills resulting in increased competence and capacity to pursue and work on larger-scaled projects. The program also includes courses in marketing, financial readiness, project management, computer-related courses and other modules that are prerequisites to building one's firm and sustaining its growth.

I am proud to be a co-founder and an executive officer of the Women Builders Council here in New York City. One of the missions of the WBC is to be a mentor to women by seeking and implementing solutions to the challenges, obstacles, and concerns of emerging women business enter-

prises in the building industry. The WBC has opened new doors for women in economic development, procurement, training, technical assistance and advocacy.

One may seek a mentor for guidance on forging ahead to various levels or to achieve certain goals. The mentoring relationship doesn't end when the stated objectives are achieved. Radio and television critic John Crosby said "Successful people turn everyone who can help them into sometime mentors!" A mentor is not precluded from being a mentee or vice versa and one is not limited to having solely one mentor/mentee relationship. There are qualities that can be found in many individuals who are encountered on a day-to-day basis that are conducive to being a mentor or mentee.

I am a firm believer in the concept of mentoring. From the mentee's perspective, I have seen and received the benefits of such a relationship. As a mentor, my personal and Bradford's corporate levels of participation continues to grow. In the final analysis, the mentoring relationships result in better building for all.

Sandra Wilkin is president of Bradford Construction Corp., New York, N.Y.