



EDiS Company Celebrates Women In Construction: An Interview with Eileen Brown

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In celebration of Women in Construction Week, we sat down with our own Eileen Brown, Estimator at EDiS Company, to learn about her insights and experiences as a woman working in a traditionally male-dominated industry.



“Everything is a teachable moment and every teachable moment is a learnable moment, so keep asking questions.”

Eileen Brown
Estimator



Q.: What is your role at EDiS Company? What was your most challenging project that you've completed and/or what is the most challenging aspect of your role?

A.: I'm Eileen Brown and I started here as an Estimator in January of 2017. My most challenging aspect to my role has nothing to do with the work itself, but it was transitioning to my role and adjusting to working in Delaware that turned out to be the biggest hurdle I faced. Luckily, EDiS Company has a comprehensive on-boarding process and my coworkers were there to help me ease into my daily routine. An ongoing challenge for me and all Estimators alike is keeping a healthy social network. This is necessary to my work because my job includes a ton of correspondence within and without my company. I need to know who to reach out to for



pricing, who the major players in the area are, so starting fresh was a challenge I overcame in time and continue to master.

Q.: How did you know construction was what you wanted to pursue as a career? What was your ‘Ah-ha’ moment? Who or what influenced you to pursue a career in construction?

A.: In my sophomore year of undergrad, I ended up interning for an engineering design firm during my semester. This was an important wake-up call for me because I realized that engineering design, an industry I’d been working toward, was not where I wanted to end up in my future career. I knew I wanted to be more involved in executing the project, not just the design, and construction management combined that aspect with the wonderful feelings associated with building actual, physical structures. It’s great being able to look out my window and see a project I helped complete, so that’s what keeps me going as an Estimator; hard-work backed by tangible results.

Q.: How has the workplace culture changed since you began your career in construction and what changes would you like to see happen?

A.: When I started my internship in my sophomore year of undergrad, I faced a similarly male-dominated industry, engineering design, not only as a woman but as a young woman. My biggest source of frustration was just getting men to listen to me as an authority in my designated role. I’ve grown into my current role and command the respect I deserve now, but often faced adversity in the form of a very ‘why is this young girl telling me what to do?’ type of attitude. Keep in mind that this never came from the folks at EDiS Company, who have been accepting and welcoming of their female employees, a trait you don’t see too often in this industry.

Since I entered the construction management industry, I’ve noticed that things are getting not only younger, but more female, and I’m happy to see the gender gap closing. With time, things will continue to improve for women looking to advance their career in construction.

Q.: What is a key resource for someone who is interested in a career in STEM, or more specifically, construction? What organizations, websites, or opportunities empower women entering this career and how can young women use these to their advantage?



A.: *I mentioned that I completed an internship before entering the construction industry, but I was also in a STEM-oriented sorority in undergrad; Alpha Omega Epsilon. I highly recommend that you get yourself involved in internships and sororities that bring you closer to what it's like to work in the real world because it will help you realize what you are good at and what you want to do when you graduate. Even if it's just joining a study group or intramural sports program, networking and making connections is invaluable when you're finally on your own. The more hands you can shake and friends you can make, the better off you will be in the long run. You never know where people will end up and you don't know where you will end up, so seeing familiar faces in your industry and professional field is both encouraging and useful when you need to figure things out.*

Two organizations I belong to that have helped me in my role and in my industry are ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors) and ASPE (American Society of Professional Estimators). If you're wondering about how you can get involved with organizations like these before you know what you want to do with your career; identify what you are good at first, then look up some job titles that fit those parameters, and then circle back and figure out what organizations support those roles. Even if it's just calling for information, it always helps to have done than to have not done.

Q.: **What advice do you wish you had going into a career in construction? What would you tell a young woman just entering undergrad as a STEM major?**

A.: *Soak it all in. Take notes and do whatever it takes to retain as much knowledge as you can. In most cases, your duty is to learn instead of create, so keep that in mind as you approach your career in this industry. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, but you can do your best by learning everything about it. The information is all there, this industry has been around for a long time, so the onus is on your prerogative and drive to succeed. If you feel lost, just ask for help. You will find that you will always get a good reaction for asking questions over acting like you know everything (even if you do know everything). I still ask questions every day and I don't feel embarrassed or ashamed that I don't know everything because that's not how a team works. Everything is a teachable moment and every teachable moment is a learnable moment, so keep asking questions.*