



# **Promising Employer Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Women in Construction**

**U.S Department of Labor, Women's Bureau**

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**Disclaimer:** Opinions and comments expressed by the panelist in their presentations do not purport to represent the official views or positions of the Women's Bureau or the U.S Department of Labor.



## **Kathleen (Kathi) Dobson**

***Safety Director***

**Alberici Constructors, Inc.**

Kathleen Dobson has been with Alberici Constructors since 1999, and is currently a safety director for the company. Her experiences include multiple U.S Army Corps of Engineers projects, work in the automotive industry and mining. Kathi was appointed by the Governor of the State of Michigan to serve on the MIOSHA Construction Standards Commission and served as its chairperson during her tenure.

# Promising Employer Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Women in Construction



**Alberici Constructors**

**Kathi Dobson**

*Safety Director*

Alberici Constructors, Inc.

# Successes?

- **We don't always meet our set points**
- **Rare opportunities to succeed even when contractually obligated**
- **At times, women and minority goals are recommended and not required**
- **FCA – 17% as composite; Ford & GM – 8% each**

# Recruiting Tradeswomen

- **As signatory union contractors, all subs, union halls and BA's are notified of hiring goals**
- **And we often get the same old, same old...**
- **Strong leader are needed to confront and challenge status quo**
- **Dedication and commitment to the goals we commit to**
- **Most goals are met through inclusion of subcontractors and suppliers**

# Once onboarded, women will stay...

- **Trades**
  - **We are told women perform well, come to work on time, do their jobs, can produce with quality and are efficient and safe**
- **White-Collar Project Staff (Project Engineers, PM's)**
  - **We are not always afforded the same opportunities as men, but long-term retention is better**

# Challenges

- **Workplace Culture**
  - **Harassment**
  - **Sexism**
  - **Discrimination**
- **PPE**
- **Sanitation**
- **Ergonomics**
- **Training**
- **Advancement**



# Lessons Learned

- **Start early**
- **Screening**
  - **“How will you feel when you are the only woman on the project?”**
  - **“What are your expectations as a tradeswoman?”**
- **Encourage the sisterhood**
- **Mentor**
- **Networking**
- **Work to gain responsibility and respect**
- **Challenge the status quo**



## **Danielle Skilling**

***Community Relations Specialist***  
**Gilbane Building Company**

Danielle Skilling, a Community Affairs Specialist for **Gilbane** in Boston has been instrumental in connecting with the local communities in Boston and building relationships with local subcontractors and residents in the community that are integral to diversity. Prior to her role as Community Affairs Specialist, Daniella held multiple positions in various fields including field engineering, project management and superintendent roles. This field experience has been an integral part of Danielle's success in increasing workforce diversity, particularly the inclusion of women, on all of her projects.

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Gilbane Building Company

**Danielle Skilling**

Community Relations Specialist

Gilbane Building Company

# Strategies for Success

- **Local Community involvement**
  - Get to know your local community and advocacy groups.
- **High Schools – and even earlier....**
  - Reach out to the up and coming workforce often and early.
- **Know the existing players**
  - Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues.
  - Various trade union women's groups.
  - Building Pathways & Youth Build Boston.

# Strategies for Success (cont.)

- **On the Ground Strategy**
  - Be present on the job site.
  - This doesn't happen with no boots on the ground.
- **Know your subcontractors**
  - The relationships with those who do the actual hiring are key.
  - Be prepared to show the benefits to your subs.
- **Communicate with the women on site**
  - Introduce women to one another.
  - Provide a means of communication to a women on site
  - Set the bar equally...

# Dearborn STEM

- **Before Day 1**
  - Clear expectations at bid time.
  - Repeat message at every meeting.
- **Be Present**
  - Keep lines of communications open for both subs and workers.
  - Evaluate both sides of situation to develop solutions to shortages.
- **Demolition and Site Work**
  - Multiple poor performing subcontractors significantly exceeded the requirements because of planning ahead and continuing to communicate.

# Challenges are Opportunities

- **Solution Based – stay positive**
  - Work with, not against your contractors.
  - Work for solutions.
  - Be willing to hear concerns of contractors.
- **Demand Compliance**
  - When “being nice” doesn’t work, don’t fail to become more authoritative.
  - Being helpful does not negate making sure it gets done.
- **Focus on Successes**
  - It is common to punish poor performance, however it is more helpful to praise success.

# Conclusion

- **Communication**
- **Be on the Ground**
- **Know Your Contractors**
- **Find the Opportunities in Challenges**
- **Reward Successes**





**Gena Mohan**  
***Compliance Manager***  
**Barletta Engineering/Heavy Division**

Gena Mohan began her career at **Barletta** in 1995. Currently in the role Project Office Manager Gena oversees projects valued between \$1 and \$228 million dollars. Gena has worked closely with for various government agencies including the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. During her career at Barletta Ms. Mohan completed her Construction Management Certificate of Professional Achievement at Northeastern University.

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**Gena Mohan**

*Compliance Manager*

**Barletta Engineering/Heavy Division**

Canton, MA

# Successful Mega Project in Fall River, Ma

- **MassDOT Route 79 Interchange and Braga Bridge Repairs**
- **Joint Venture between Barletta Heavy Division and O&G Construction**
- **Project entailed the removal of a multi-level bridge and ramp infrastructure and replace with on grade roadway, along Route 79/RT 138**
- **Duration of project was expected to be 4 years, but was completed in 3 and at Contract completion was valued at 223 million.**
- **Trades included Iron Workers, Laborers, Painters, Piledrivers, Masons, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Electricians, Operators**

# Project Goals

- **U.S Department of Labor Goals:**

- 1.6% Minority and 6.9% Female

- **The Mass DOT Goals:**

- 15.3% Minority and 6.9% Female

- **Project Wide Results:**

- 28.69% Minority and 7.39% Female

- **Barletta Heavy/O&G Results:**

- 24.35% Minority and 9.03% Female

# Recruiting and Retaining Women

- **Initial Collaboration between awarding authority, unions, Subcontractors, and other key entities on the project.**
- **Outline our plan to make the goals & other contract requirements**
- **Subcontractors sign acknowledgement letters of their requirements to meet the goals, and provide good faith effort documents.**
- **Consistent communication via an “EEO committee” results in larger network for recruitment, and faster results.**

# Challenges

- **Keeping Subcontractors in Compliance – Internal workforce audits of paperwork, and in the field**
- **Trending Logs to monitor when Subs had increased their workforce and if they had hired any females or minorities to meet their goals**
- **Communicating with the Field Superintendent as a hands on resource**
- **Collective bargaining Agreements require that we can only hire through the union halls**

# Conclusion

- **Be Proactive and Persistent – Keep an open dialogue with awarding authorities, subcontractors, unions.**
- **Workforce Goals should always be kept in the forefront of the project- constant discussion**
- **Retaining Women in Construction- communication, feedback, equal.**



## Alex Tittle

**VP, Business Connect/Corporate Affairs,  
Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee &  
Equity Program Consultant for the  
U. S. Bank Stadium**

Alex Tittle serves as the chief consultant for the Equity Program of the **US Bank Stadium**. This program's purpose is to ensure that the equity plan is facilitated appropriately. The program outlines compliance measures regarding workforce and small & disadvantaged businesses on the US Bank Stadium. Additionally, Alex serves as the Vice President of the Business Connect Program and Corporate Affairs for the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee. The Business Connect Program is the "supplier diversity" program centered on the 2018 Super Bowl. Alex ensures local minority, women, veterans and the LGBT businesses network successfully conduct businesses with the NFL and its contractors.



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**Alex Tittle**

VP, Business Connect/Corporate Affairs, Minnesota Super Bowl Host  
Committee & Equity Program Consultant for the  
U. S. Bank Stadium



# Background

- 2012: Equity Program – Public/Private Partnership
  - Minnesota Statute § 473J.12
  - Employ women and minorities
  - Host Job Fairs
  - **Create Employment Program (Equity Plan)**
  - Goals for construction contracts and labor to be awarded to WMBE's at least equal to Minneapolis minimum projects
  - Include zip code emphasis
- 2013: Hired as the Equity Director for the U. S. Bank Stadium Project by the MSFA & MN Vikings
- 2013: Awarded Construction Manager to Mortenson & Thor Construction

# Success in Recruiting and Retention

- Projections
- The Question to Contractors (1:1)
  - Contractor Interview (How Many Women on staff?)
  - Union Interview (How Many Women on bench?)
- Data Management System – Design & Integration
- Statewide Recruiting Effort (Construction Manager)
- Aggressive & Continuous Site Visits
- Employment Assistance Firm “EAF”
- Partnerships
  - MN Dept. of Human Rights
  - City of Minneapolis – Civil Rights Office
  - Business Development Organizations (AWC)

# Results usbankstadium

## WOMEN LABOR

358,967.06 hours

ACTUAL

9%

GOAL

6%

**EXCEEDED GOALS**

# Challenges

- **Excuses:**

- Not Enough Women for specialty trades
- The Women cannot keep up with the pace
- Some Women asked to execute labor tasks as specialty tradespeople

# Conclusion

*“If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu!”*

- Diligent
- Identify mentors (man or woman)
- Program Reporting makes ALL the difference!
  - Bi-Monthly public meeting
  - Contractor reported labor performance
  - Success was celebrated by the NFL and the Governor’s Office

**Q&A**

**Thank You!**



# Contact Information

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