Women In Skilled Trades

Katie Hughes, the founder of Girls Build, shares how her organization instills confidence and curiosity.

LEARN
how Tradesmen International helps vets leverage their military experience to find a fulfilling career.

EXPLORE
the ways one woman is helping rebuild the spirit of Houston in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

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Harnessing the Power of Women Workers

Learn about the important role women have to play in rebuilding America’s infrastructure.

Six months ago, a rapid succession of powerful hurricanes battered coastlines from Florida to Texas, the Virgin Islands to Puerto Rico. Collectively, we realized something we’ve always known but never thought too much about: power is everything.

I’m not talking about political prowess or financial strength. I’m talking about energy — the ability to cook our food, light our homes, charge our devices. Energy fuels our existence every single day, and yet we rarely give it a second thought — save to remember to plug in our phones before we go to bed at night.

An important lesson
Those hurricanes devastated families and cities and islands. I myself was a victim of massive flooding on Houston’s west side. My house and cars were submerged when city officials decided to release the dams near my home, sacrificing my neighborhood to save dozens of others.

It’s taken some time, but I’ve come to see those storms as one of the most powerful opportunities our industry and our country have ever seen. It wasn’t just energy that was disrupted; transportation ground to a halt. Roads collapsed. Our infrastructure — the support system we lean on for survival — was compromised, big time.

A better way to rebuild
Now we have to rebuild, and we have an opportunity to do that in a way that’s going to make all of our systems, structures and networks stronger than ever. We just need more of one very important thing. Diversity.

We live in an interconnected world. Construction builds our homes, bridges and, yes, dams. Manufacturing creates the resources we need to survive. Transportation brings them right to our door.

Energy powers all of that, and so does inclusion.

A proven need
A recent study from the Peterson Institute for International Economics found that, when profitable firms increased the number of female leaders in their organizations from 0 to 30 percent representation, net revenue increased 15 percent. Another study from the McKinsey Global Institute suggests that closing the gender gap could grow the economy by an extra $2.1 trillion in gross domestic product over the next decade. Plus, having more women in your ranks is tied to improved problem-solving and greater creativity, which are qualities we’ll need if we’re going to compete in the global economy.

These industries breathe life into everything we do. And there are strong, talented women already making waves in each and every one of them. But we need more.

We need companies to realize they are stronger when their teams are diverse and their culture is inclusive. And we need women — of all backgrounds, ethnicities and ages — to go after the jobs that power our world with everything they’ve got. These are good jobs, well-paying jobs, high-profile jobs that offer the opportunity to make an impact. They say you can’t be what you can’t see, so take a look. Women are everywhere, and we’ve only just begun.
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- Daily keynote speakers

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"Absolutely the place to be!"

"I always enjoy the AME conference. The program that AME puts together is second to none. I get so much out of this conference each year."

"The keynote speakers were life-changing to me! I loved the deep dive and the practitioner presentations. They were a great opportunity to see how people did things in the real world."

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Are there rising stars at your organization who should attend AME San Diego? Check out the AME Emerging Leaders Program:

The AME Emerging Leaders Program is a leadership development program that enables lean practitioners to participate in problem-solving work groups, network with peers, and serve the profession in a leadership capacity. The cost to participate is $1,000, and the deadline to apply is July 1, 2018.

Participation in the program includes:
- Registration to attend AME San Diego 2018
- Free leadership clinic at the AME Conference, sponsored by Living As A Leader
- Ongoing learning and networking through the online AME Network Emerging Leaders community and more!

To learn more or register for AME San Diego 2018, visit AME.ORG/USA
Will You Help Our Vets Find Success After Service?

Retired Army service woman Anne Sprute lays out the challenge facing veterans as they return to civilian life and encourages all of us to play a role in easing the transition.

Military service offers a unique opportunity to be a part of the most diverse organization at scale in the world. During service members’ time in the military, they experience countless challenges as they transition into new environments and cultures. As trained leaders, they know that these challenges are opportunities to stretch themselves and their team to accomplish extraordinary results in high-impact situations.

Facing the challenges that come with transitioning from military service, however, is not always a team sport. It is the service member that now must face head-on the challenge that will directly impact their personal and professional future beyond their time in service to the country.

Exceptional training
In the military, service members operate as a part of thousands of small teams that function in austere locations worldwide. Before leaving the perimeter for their mission, they develop and prepare detailed plans to best understand all aspects of what they will face, including challenges and barriers in new environments and cultures. Preparation and planning are part of a service member’s DNA. Yet many service members facing transition express that their level of stress is higher for the mission of transition than it was when they were facing the battlefield thousands of miles away from their home and their families.

The challenge that we must face together, as a grateful nation, is twofold: first, how can the service member determine what’s next? And second, how can the service member’s “what’s next” be effectively realized? The solution is also twofold, and simple: first, we must encourage the service member to take charge of their transition and harness their skill to innovate, adapt, be resilient and utilize the leadership they possess to develop their personal action plan, and also engage them with opportunities related to that plan. Second, you are the key to the successful completion of each service member’s plan.

Your part to play
Supporting their plan to successfully return home is but a small recognition of the men and women who have committed to serve our country and have been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. It is also a commitment that supports both the service member and your community. When a service member returns to your community and becomes a civic asset — infusing their critical and technical skills, experience, leadership and resolve to seeing the mission through — the community thrives, the local economy thrives and, most importantly, the service member thrives as they become a successful veteran in their new home.

By Anne Sprute, Senior Vice President, Transition Strategy and Innovation, United Service Organizations

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One Company Proves What It Means to Be Veteran Strong

Discover how a small business blossomed, thanks in no small part to their commitment to hiring and empowering a veteran workforce.

Joseph O. Wesley retired from the Army in 1982 during a recession. Unable to find work as a heavy equipment operator, he used skills learned in the military to open a small electrical contracting business in Cleveland, Ohio. Joe took on any project to get by, completing each to perfection as if it were to be scrutinized by his former commanders. His reputation and business grew as a result. And so did the challenge to find qualified electricians to meet his ever-fluctuating workload on projects around town.

Paying it forward
This was the genesis behind Joe’s founding of one of the nation’s first construction-focused, veteran-owned staffing services, Tradesmen International. 25 years later, the company — now owned by The Blackstone Group — has 171 recruitment and operations facilities in 45 states. Tradesmen regularly employs 10,000 construction and office professionals who serve leading commercial and industrial contractors and shipbuilders. This is a true veteran success story.

“Our company has always welcomed former military onto our team,” said Matt McClene, Tradesmen International’s VP of Workforce Development. “Our founder was a vet, and we’re proud that nearly 10 percent of our employees nationally served.”

Recruiting the best
When asked how the company attained such a large percentage of veteran employees, McClene, the spouse of an Army veteran, replied, “As part of our on-going diversity initiative, we’ve always worked to add vets to our field and office teams. When our recruiters receive a resume with noted military experience, the natural reaction is always positive based on the good experience we’ve had hiring other vets. Those individuals were interviewed and asked to join our team upon completing the stringent, face-to-face vetting process all our candidates go through.”

Tradesmen International now has an even more aggressive strategic veteran’s hiring initiative under a program designated We Are Veteran Stronger. “With the skilled trade shortage so critical, we’re actively seeking out veterans to apply for craft professional positions,” said McClene. “We regularly post openings on 32 military-focused job boards, participate in veteran job fairs and promote career openings to vets on social media. Our referral program outright asks our thousands of employees to introduce us to friends and family members who served in the military and are looking for work.

Succeeding on the job
“Critical to our success,” stressed McClene, “is educating our recruiters on the reasons the phrase ‘We Are Veteran Stronger’ is a resoundingly true statement. Essentially, we find our veteran, reservist and guardmen colleagues make Tradesmen Inter-
national stronger because of their exceptional work ethic, emphasis on quality, respectful nature and leadership qualities. Also because they show concern for fellow construction workers. While I’m not comparing jobsite dangers with what our troops experience on battlefields, our vet employees not only emphasize personal safety, they make sure those around them are properly protected, wearing the correct PPE, being tied-off, etc. I firmly believe this is part of their military make-up; we love them even more for it.”

Easing the transition
It is not always easy for veterans to equate their military experience and skillsets to civilian job requirements. Tradesmen reduced this challenge by adding the “Military Occupation Code Crosswalk” to their Veteran’s Career Site. Veterans simply need to type in their MOC code and the system automatically suggests the best matches for their military skillsets to Tradesmen’s job openings.

Tradesmen vows to build upon their new veteran hiring initiative. “We are now setting more aggressive veteran outreach goals for 2018 and beyond,” said McClene. “We’re honored to work alongside these heroes who protected or continue to protect our freedoms.”

By Ed Rojek, Director, Marketing, Tradesmen International
Building a Women-Led Workforce

Learn how one organization is demonstrating to women around the country the exciting possibilities of a "new collar" career.

If I asked you what you thought when you heard the phrase "manufacturing jobs," more often than not you’d probably recall an image of what manufacturing used to look like: the kind of jobs your parents or grandparents might have held. Today, however, we live in a new age of manufacturing.

Modern manufacturing is increasingly high-skill, high-tech, high-pay, and it's creating jobs that go beyond the old definitions of blue collar or white collar. These are new collar jobs.

And yet, today alone there are more than 364,000 open jobs manufacturers cannot fill. Why is that? Companies simply cannot find enough workers with the right skills. Most prominently, this is due to the decline of technical education and manufacturing’s perception problem. Both issues are linked. Both need to be addressed. And I believe women hold the key to doing so.

Creating opportunity
The organization I lead, the Manufacturing Institute, is working to close the skills gap every day. If we’re going to get the right workers in these high-paying jobs, we need to find ways to connect them with the opportunities. That’s why we launched programs like Heroes MAKE America to prepare veterans with the skills they need for manufacturing careers, and initiatives like Manufacturing Day to change the perception of the industry for the next generation of manufacturers. And that’s why we developed the STEP (science, technology, engineering and production) Ahead initiative to encourage women to pursue manufacturing as a career.

The reality is, women make up more than half of our country’s population and a similar percentage of the overall labor force, yet they represent only about a quarter of the manufacturing workforce. That’s a problem. We need to get women engaged in manufacturing careers, not only because it’s the right thing to do but also because we are underutilizing a huge portion of the workforce demographic if we fail to do so. It’s my mission and the mission of the Institute to bring that message to more women across the country.

Filling a critical role
The Manufacturing Institute is dedicated to showcasing the reality of modern-day manufacturing to our sisters, mothers and daughters through STEP Ahead by highlighting these innovative and rewarding careers on a national stage. And yet, while we are excited to recognize these amazing women who have demonstrated excellence in their careers, we also know that we still have more work to do. Manufacturers need the diverse talent, minds and skills to be competitive. From making life saving medicines, to the clothing that keeps us warm, to the planes we fly and the cars we drive every day, manufacturers are solving problems on a global scale. Having this influence on others is something that people strive for, and it’s just what you can find with a career in manufacturing. Manufacturers need more qualified women like you. So I hope you will consider a fulfilling career in manufacturing.

By Carolyn Lee, Executive Director, The Manufacturing Institute

Whether serving in executive leadership or on the frontline of daily operations, women play a vital role in the success of Georgia-Pacific.

Georgia-Pacific sincerely values people with diverse backgrounds, skill sets and experience. We have an wide array of manufacturing career opportunities for both men and hopefully more women.

For more information about careers at Georgia-Pacific, visit www.gp.com/careers.
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Preparing Women to Revitalize America’s Skilled Labor Force

Could targeted apprenticeship programs close the manufacturing industry’s gaps in both skill and gender equity?

The global competitiveness of American manufacturing faces a serious threat from within: the United States simply does not produce enough skilled workers to fill manufacturing positions. Some 3.5 million industry openings are expected over the next decade, according to a Manufacturing Institute report. Yet 2 million of these jobs are projected to go unfilled because of a severe skills gap in American manufacturing.

Creating an action plan
Urgent action is needed. That’s why the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI) created Apprenticeship Works, the National Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Partnership. With U.S. Department of Labor support, we and our partners are establishing registered apprenticeships across the nation in 17 in-demand manufacturing occupations, including emerging technologies of robotics and 3D printing.

Apprenticeship Works operates in 12 states, with more coming aboard this year. A major focus of this initiative is attracting women to manufacturing. While women make up almost half of the American workforce, their share of employment in manufacturing is significantly lower.

Working with women
Apprenticeship Works taps into this potential. RCBI partnered with West Virginia Women Work to create a one-of-a-kind program specifically to increase women in manufacturing. The Step Up for Women Advanced Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship Program is a free 10-week training course that prepares students for entry-level jobs or paid apprenticeships.

Women learn safety, metal machining skills, applied math, blueprint reading and precision measuring, and receive instruction in life skills such as personal finance and resume writing. To date, nearly 50 women have received training through Step Up for Women and more than 80 percent of graduates already have secured manufacturing jobs.

A brighter future
Graduate Fran Barker went from a low-wage food service job to making $16 per hour, receiving health and retirement benefits and paid vacation at a manufacturer of high-nickel alloys. She often recommends the program to friends and former co-workers. “One year ago, I never thought I could do any of this,” Barker said. “If you want a serious career change, try this. It is challenging and equally rewarding.”

RCBI has experienced an overwhelming response to the women in manufacturing initiative. What started as a workforce training program in southern West Virginia has expanded statewide, ensuring more women learn new skills, secure higher paying jobs and/or start businesses of their own.

By Michael Friel, Public Information Specialist, Robert C. Byrd Institute

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A New Life Starts With Finding Your Passion

Discover how hard work and continuing education helped one woman transition into a more fulfilling career.

Mardi Gauer was working in a dead-end job she didn’t enjoy. She knew she wanted more from her life, but she wasn’t sure what it was. So when her sons were old enough to be more self-sufficient, Mardi went through career assessment testing. The results helped her take the first step toward a new life.

Returning to school
In her mid-forties, Mardi went back to school to get a degree in construction management. During this time, she worked two jobs, raised two teenagers, took eight hours of classes each semester and studied as much as time would allow. While her schedule was hectic, Mardi says the end result was quite rewarding.

“During my last year of school, I worked at my co-op (internship), plus the two jobs, the classes, and I took care of my sons,” she said. “It was all so worth it because the company where I did my co-op hired me, and I’ve happily worked there for 16 years.”

In 2002, her employer asked her to join the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC). She says participating in the organization has been an invaluable part of her career.

Using community to grow
“NAWIC has helped me grow my leadership skills. I served as regional director, chapter president and have held many chair positions on the regional and chapter level,” she said. “Each position has its own set of learning opportunities.

“Stay focused on the goal so you don’t get sidetracked.”

“My membership also enlarged my network of contacts nationwide, which benefits both me and my employer,” she added.

Mardi says the best part of her job as a project engineer is watching the creation of a building from start to finish. She advises others who are going back to school to “stay focused on the goal so you don’t get sidetracked.”

“All of my hard work has paid off many times over in happiness, job fulfillment and increased income,” Mardi said.

By Michelle I. Zavala, Strategic Communications Consultant, National Association of Women in Construction

Building a level playing field
Follow the conversation with @SkanskaUSA on Twitter March 5 - 9

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The Sky Is the Limit for Women in Welding

Explore the many reasons why welding can and should become a woman's world.

When a woman graduates from welding school, the only uncertainty she may have is which job offer to accept. Despite common misconceptions to the contrary, welding can be a great career for women, for a number of reasons.

Supply and demand
There is currently a huge demand for welding personnel, and women fit into the picture well because they are typically fast learners, manually dexterous and reliable employees on the job. The demand comes from the fact that many welding personnel who have built their skills over a lifetime are presently retiring, and there is a need to replace them. Combine this with the present and strong need to build and refurbish U.S. national infrastructure, and the opportunities become obvious.

Welding provides relatively high average pay, and there is typically little or no gap between male and female salaries in this field. According to federal statistics, the average wage for welders, cutters, solderers and brazers tops $40,000 a year, and pay can go much higher in certain applications for highly skilled workers.

Concerned about working conditions? The notion that welding is "dark, dirty and dangerous" is a proven myth, and many welding jobs are now undertaken in clean and pleasant workplace environments. In fact, there are tremendous opportunities in manufacturing and construction, and current jobs in this sector have greater demand than ever for complex skillsets. The result is a very favorable environment for welders and many other types of manufacturing workers entering the trade. Of course, greater skill needed for modern jobs typically means higher wages and improved working conditions. In addition to increasing wages, the demand for higher skills also improves job security.

Teaching the trade
So how does one get the training to qualify for premium welding jobs? There are many dedicated welding schools throughout the United States, and welding and technology programs are growing in traditional colleges and other post-secondary education institutions.

In Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Fox Valley Technical College invites high school girls into its science, fabrication and welding labs for summer camp. Called "Girls in the Shop," the program focuses on welding, as well as other applications in STEM fields. In Mobile County, Alabama, a construction camp program for girls is offered to eighth and ninth-graders for a week each summer to teach them the basics of carpentry, welding, pipefitting and more. In Canada, the Canadian Welding Association Foundation offers "Mind Over Metal" welding camps across the country to expose young people to welding.

Any way you look at it, the future looks bright for young people who are considering entering the welding field. And, as mentioned, this is especially true for non-traditional welding job candidates, such as women.

By Monica Pfarr, Executive Director, the American Welding Society Foundation

American Welding Society
aws.org

"Welding and the welding industry have made an incredible impact on my life. I have found that there are always new skills you can learn, and new knowledge you can gain. AWS was incredibly helpful in advancing my career and a great way to network with the welding and manufacturing communities."

— Karen Gilgenbach
District Manager – Midwest Region, Airgas, an Air Liquide company

Demand is High for Female Welders!

- America will need an estimated **277,000** welders by 2020
- Women are projected to be a big part of the solution and the percentage of women in welding is growing
- Welding opportunities exist in many industries and include multiple career paths – welders, inspectors, educators, engineers, managers etc.

Each year, AWS awards over $1 million in scholarships and opportunities exist for all education levels – from welders to PhDs. Several of our scholarships are specifically awarded to females pursuing welding related education.

For more information please visit us at aws.org/womenweldtoo
Empowering Young Women Through Power Tools

Recent studies suggest that women represent just 8.9 percent of the construction workforce in the United States. One organization is working to improve this figure.

Girls Build, a summer camp in Portland, Oregon, gives young girls the opportunity to use power tools, pour concrete, wire electrical switches and shingle roofs. "Our mission is to inspire curiosity and confidence in girls through the world of building," shares Katie Hughes, the camp's creator and executive director. Attendees take part in four 80-minute workshops per day and practice skills many incorrectly presume women and girls are not interested in or capable of.

"The campers are excited when they see the photos, but when they arrive on the first day they can be timid or shy," she shares. "On the last day, we invite all of the parents to the camp to see what the girls have built. It's very loud; the girls get so excited to show off all that they've done. They aren't nervous at all."

Becoming the teacher
As a child, Hughes sharpened her skillset in her family's backyard, building fences, repairing animal pens and fixing things that broke around the house. After high school, she spent a year volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. "We worked on 11 houses over the course of a year, doing everything from building forms for the foundation to painting the walls." With more than ten years of teaching experience under her belt, Hughes hopes to help women and girls across the country feel more comfortable strapping on a tool belt.

Changing the statistics
Skilled trades offer plentiful opportunities for women seeking a thriving career: high pay, affordable education and a path to becoming your own boss. But still, in the United States, women account for just 4.86 percent of professional welders, 2.4 percent of electricians, 1.7 percent of carpenters and 1.2 percent of HVAC technicians. Hughes explains that employers have reached a long overdue tipping point. "[Employers] want the best workers, and they see now that often times the best workers are women. They want the top, and they're finally coming around to the idea that the best can be any gender."

The path to encouraging women and girls to pursue careers in the trades begins at an early age.

Talking shop
Hughes believes that the path to encouraging women and girls to pursue careers in the trades begins at an early age. "When something needs to be built, invite your daughters to build it with you," she urges. "Advertise shop classes with photos of girls taking shop. Go to other classes and encourage girls; say, 'We want you in our shop class. You are welcome.'"

While Hughes hopes that Girls Build will narrow the gender gap in skilled trades, her main focus is instilling confidence in young campers. "One of the girl's parents said: 'She's been having trouble in school and she has really low self-esteem, but over the course of this week, we've seen her become incredibly confident,'" she recalls. "It's heartening to know that it's working and that girls are leaving camp feeling stronger."

By James Diabri
Constructing the Perfect Career

A licensed architect and general contractor opens up about running a business and using her skills to help rebuild lives in the wake of disaster.

The morning after Hurricane Harvey hit the city of Houston, Kim Huston found herself standing in the chest-deep river that was now her street.

Her house, perched on a hill, had been spared. But just four houses down, the water had taken over. Huston, a licensed architect and general contractor born and raised in Houston, knew she could help.

“I dropped my kids off at my neighbor’s house, put on a pair of shoes and started swimming,” Huston recalls. “We cleared all the houses at the end of the street. We carried a lady from the second floor in a wheelchair all the way out. It was a very surreal experience.”

Weathering the storm
Six months after the storm hit, she’s still helping hurricane victims — only now it’s about helping them rebuild their lives. “Those same people who I rescued, I’m helping them to rebuild their houses. So I’ve seen it all — from literally pulling them out of the houses to helping them get back,” Huston says.

Huston works in an industry with one of the lowest percentages of female workers. She’s often the only woman on a job site. She’s endured the distasteful graffiti, the condescending stares, the doubt that she could do things like build stairs and raise a 50-foot trailer over a bridge.

“There’s a stigma involved: ‘Here’s a cute little blond girl, and she thinks she wants to be on the job site.’ I understand that, but I’m also willing to prove it wrong,” she says.

Finding the right fit
In a way, Huston has been working toward a career in construction her entire life. “As a kid, we didn’t have handymen around the house. If we wanted to fix something, we would fix it. If we wanted to build a piece of furniture, we would build it,” Huston recalls.

While her friends were playing with dolls, Huston was working on puzzles. She loves to hunt and fish, and loathes the idea of spending her days cooped up in an office.

That’s why her first career track — architecture — wasn’t a long-term fit. “A lot of architecture is lost behind a desk. You have to be able to learn from your clients and understand their lives and who they are to understand how they’re going to function in a home,” Huston says. “One of the things I love most about what I do now is the people. I get to be on the job site every day, and I get to interact with my clients. You learn so much about people and the way they live.”

“One of the things I love most about what I do now is the people. I get to be on the job site every day.”

Possibility and flexibility
Huston, a single mother of two young children, has run her own architecture and construction firm, Huston Design Build (HDB, LLC), since 2012. But over the past year, demand has skyrocketed, along with the need for good work and honest contractors.

“You want to help everybody, and every story is so heartbreaking. It’s an opportunity for me to take a horrible situation and try to help people find light through all of this,” she says.

That commitment means long days and late nights. But having her own business also means she can set aside a good chunk of time every day for her kids. It’s the kind of flexibility that is making the industry increasingly attractive to women, Huston says.

“The wife of one of my subs came to me, and she said, ‘You know, I see you doing all of this, and I just love it. It makes me think that I can do this.’ And I told her, ‘There’s nothing I’m doing that you can’t do, if you want to.’

By Mary Johnson, Director, Content, Pink Petro
THE WOMEN
BEHIND THE BIGGEST FLEET
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A Female Truck Driver Discusses Her Take on the Road

A seasoned driver opens up about the tricks of the trade, memories from her years in the industry and what it’s like to live life behind the wheel.

Big rig dreams
“I always wanted to drive something unique,” Elisha recalls. Before becoming a trucker, she bounced between jobs as a waitress, a cashier and a tax preparer. When she heard an ad on the radio for paid training near her home in Illinois, she jumped at the chance to finally hit the road. “I heard this advertisement and I knew it was my chance.”

When her previous employer, who had leased their drivers to Swift, shut down unexpectedly, Swift “saved all of us,” she shares. “They were there to help us stay on our feet, not be without a paycheck and keep running. Swift is a lifesaver, I can tell you that.”

Now, Elisha is based out of the Gary, Indiana Terminal, and her “little area” includes Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas and, every once in a while, Kentucky or Memphis. Last year, she spent 316 days on the road.

“Just to say, ‘I helped. I brought stuff to help build that,’ is so exciting to me.”

Making it work
Elisha has a husband at home in Illinois, but laughs that the distance works for them. “For me and my husband it’s good not to be on top of each other all the time.” And though they aren’t in the same location, videochat keeps them connected. “We talk everyday, multiple times a day ... I’m there even though I’m not there.”

Elisha shares that it takes a while to get a hang of the work, and stresses the importance of having someone to talk to on the tough days that arise once in a while. “Just to get it out to someone else helps a lot.” She also credits audiobooks as a great way to pass the time, and says she listens to hundreds a year. “It takes the time away and before you know it, you’re almost through the book and you’re at your destination.”

A part of it all
And for Elisha, the ever-changing destination is what makes her job so special. She tells a story of when she arrived early for a delivery in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. “I unhooked from the trailer and went down to the beach. I got to go out there and have some fun and splash in the ocean and see all of the little fish swimming in the surf.”

“Just to be a part of so many different things is what I love,” she says. “I can be a part of building a motel. I’ve been a part of helping build dorm rooms for a college down in Louisiana. Just to say, ‘I helped. I brought stuff to help build that,’ is so exciting to me.”

110 percent
In October, Elisha will celebrate a decade in the industry. There are always naysayers, she shares, who don’t think women can get the job done as effectively as a man can. But that just makes it all the more satisfying when she gets in and out on a big delivery while male coworkers struggle behind. “It’s exciting when you get people like that, who then have to admit, ‘Wow, that was awesome.’”

“Yeah, I did it,” she tells them. “I’m a woman and I did it.”

By Emily Gawlak
Three Women Share Their Tips on Work-Life Balance

In any industry, it can be hard to balance work, family and fun. Hardworking women share their strategies for staying sane while chasing success.

Ever feel like you’re walking on a tightrope, struggling to find the “sweet spot” between work and home? You’re not alone.

For inspiration, see how several Women In Trucking members are tackling the challenge.

Live with purpose
Ramona Hood started out at FedEx as a receptionist 25 years ago. Today, she is vice president of transportation management at FedEx Supply Chain. While there, she has earned a bachelor’s degree and an executive master’s degree. Hood is also a single mom with two daughters and very involved in community service. Needless to say, she knows a thing or two about managing work and home life.

Hood tries to stay away from the word “balance.” “Everything is not equal at all times,” she admits. “Instead, I try to be purposeful.” Hood says she identifies what’s most important in each area of her life: health/wellness, relationships, success, etc. With these priorities in mind, she sets long-term goals and continually thinks about how she can support them in the next 90 days.

Hood’s online calendar helps her stay on task. Activities are color coded by goal, so she can see at a glance how much emphasis she’s giving to each area. “When I look at the calendar, I reflect on the visual and see if I’m living up to my purpose,” she explains.

The calendar also helps Hood to establish boundaries. When her evening schedule becomes skewed too heavily toward work, for example, that’s her cue to turn down engagements. “I’ve come to realize that ‘no’ is a complete sentence,” she explains. “There’s no need for guilt or overexplanining.”

When Hood does have time with her daughters, she gives it all she’s got. “It’s less about quantity and more about quality. You’ve got to be in the moment — really be there 100 percent,” she says.

Find ways to delegate
As a mom of two boys and a director of administration for strategic capacity services at Dupré Logistics, Michelle Roger faces a daily balancing act. “In my career, I am a leader in our organization — a driver of major initiatives,” Roger explains. “At home, I have two little boys, and I want to be involved in school and sports for them.”

The past year has been particularly challenging in terms of work-life balance, Roger says. A new promotion and rapid business growth found her bringing work home regularly. “I was giving 100 percent at the office and still couldn’t get it all done,” she says. “I learned that the key is to identify opportunities to delegate. That really helps to lighten the load.”

To help prioritize action items, Roger writes her top three “to-dos” on a sticky note and places it prominently on her desk every morning. Roger also prioritizes her inbox.

“Emails can be overwhelming,” she says. “I’ve learned to sort by sender instead of by date and use ‘rules.’ Basecamp software is useful for big picture goals and planning, Roger says. It allows her to create groups, assign tasks, reminders, etc.

Like Hood, at home Roger concentrates on being in the moment and being present for her family.

Take care of yourself
Work-life balance looks a little different for CFI’s Stephanie Klang. She’s spent the past 30 years as a professional over-the-road driver. Since she spends weeks on the road at a time, her Kenworth 680 really is her home.

“I learned early on that you have to be proactive and take care of yourself,” Klang says. “The key is to make your sleeper your haven.” Her truck is well-equipped to keep her comfortable on the road, with a TV, portable toilet, microwave, refrigerator and even an ice chest. Her cats ride along for company.

Preparation is key. When she gets a load, Klang kicks into planning mode. She looks at Google Maps to verify directions and identify the best route. She plans ahead to make sure she gets a shower and a hot meal. Then she packs up her truck with everything she might need for a few weeks away.

“Life on the road can be chaotic,” Klang says. “Loads get cancelled or changed on the fly, weather can cause issues, roads can be closed. You have to think it through. What are you going to need?”

The Trucker Path app is useful for trip planning, Klang says. The crowd-sourced platform helps her find a safe place to park or a truck stop with showers. Google Maps helps her locate truck-friendly grocery stores.

To stay connected with her husband, who is also an OTR driver, Klang relies on her phone and Bluetooth. Klang is truly at home on the road. “My life is here in this truck,” she says.

By Tammy Monroe, President, Monroe Communications

By Ellen Voie, CAE, President and CEO, Women in Trucking Association
Charting Barrier-Breaking Success in the Oil Industry

An analyst in the oil industry talks about putting in the hard work to land her dream job.

Carmen Segovia has quite a few “firsts” under her belt. She’s a first-generation Mexican American. She’s also the first member of her family to go to college.

Needless to say, she’s comfortable with forging her own path — which has brought her to her current role of advanced information technology business analyst at Marathon Oil, an independent exploration and production company based in Houston, Texas.

Getting her start
"Born and raised in Houston, the oil industry was all I ever heard about," she explains. "So when the time came, I knew I wanted to be a part of it." With that in mind, Segovia pursued a degree in management information systems from the University of Houston. While in school, she was involved with the Management Information Systems Student Organization, which introduced her to Marathon Oil.

After being interested in what the company had to offer, Segovia applied for the Hispanic Scholarship Fund that Marathon Oil sponsored and was brought in to interview for their internship program. Segovia landed the Marathon Oil internship.

Her driven attitude meant she not only got to return for a second internship, but she also continued working there while she finished up her bachelor’s degree. All of that hard work and commitment paid off, as Segovia landed a full-time job following her graduation.

A day in the life
In her current role as an advanced information technology business analyst, Segovia supports Marathon Oil’s SharePoint environment, the company’s enterprise-wide collaborative platform. “With technology always changing, my days are never the same, which is what I like about my job,” she adds.

While Segovia loves her job, she feels just as confident that she found the right fit at Marathon Oil. “I really enjoyed the company culture when I started,” she explains. “The emphasis on the community, the flexibility, but, best of all, the people.”

But beyond that, it’s Marathon Oil’s culture of inclusivity that she finds especially appealing. “The Women’s Network, for example, allows all women at Marathon Oil to build connections with different women at all levels throughout the organization,” she says.

Moving forward
As a woman in an otherwise male-dominated field, she has some encouraging advice for other women who are looking to make waves in the oil and gas industry. “Be resilient and learn to adapt to change,” she says. “This is a great industry, however one must be ready to adjust when things aren’t going so well.”

When it comes to the very best career advice she’s ever received, Segovia recites a sentiment on which it’s clear she built her career: “Only you drive your career. Always look for and take advantage of new opportunities that may come your way.”

By Mary Johnson, Director, Content, Pink Petro

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Soaring to Success in Aviation

The first African American woman pilot for FedEx charts her journey to new heights in a male-dominated industry.

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Making her mark
Whether by ground or air, it takes an army of people to make it happen, including Tahirah Lambert Brown.

Brown, a FedEx Airbus Captain and Line Check Airman, recalls her very first time in the cockpit in 1992, taking off out of Long Island, New York, and flying to Greenwich, Connecticut, with her dad in the back seat. She was on top of the world — literally. The flight was a momentous occasion for any pilot, but especially for an African American woman entering an industry dominated by men.

Finding a calling
Brown decided in high school she wanted to be a pilot. “At that time I had only flown twice in my life, but the more I learned about aviation, the more fascinated I became. I enjoy traveling, meeting new people and learning about different cultures. Aviation matched my personality. It was an epiphany for me. I decided this is what I want to do, and God put people in my path along the way that helped me achieve my goal,” she says.

Seeking out support
Brown’s parents were uneasy about the decision, questioning whether she was serious. Then there was the money. Brown worked two jobs to pay for flight school and training, even helping to babysit an instructor’s son in exchange for flight training.

She was also a minority woman with few role models in the industry. That’s where the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP) helped. Brown learned about the organization from the first African American pilot at United Airlines, and the introduction changed her life, offering not only mentorships but also scholarships and access to flight programs.

Mentoring the next generation
Brown achieved her goals, working as a pilot and flight instructor with other airlines before joining FedEx in 2002 as the company’s first African American woman pilot. Still an OBAP supporter today, she offers advice to young people who want to follow a similar path.

“You have to make sacrifices, and the road is going to be hard. I let them know that I am here to support them, to give them advice and to listen to them, because that was important to me. But they will have to find it within themselves to know that it is achievable,” Brown says. “I also tell young people to not allow negative attitudes to affect them. This has been true for me. We can be our biggest barriers at times. We have to overcome our own personal barriers to achieve our goals.”

By Jason Douglas, Advisor, FedEx Global Content Production and Brand Journalism
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How to Excel in a Skilled Trade

What does it take to find success in traditionally male-dominated industries? Mediaplanet assembled a panel of women, from students to executives, to weigh in.

What advice would you give to women on breaking in to the industry?

Shari Ruelas: Don’t be afraid to ask questions or challenge the status quo. People who are already in the organization will see you as a valuable addition to the team and will want to help you succeed.

Braydon Davis: If you are a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry, you need to be confident and assertive. You need to be willing to push back and not be afraid to speak up for yourself.

What skills do you utilize every day, be they technical or otherwise?

Shari Ruelas: I lead a team that relies on analytics, but I also use my problem-solving skills, attention to detail, and ability to work well with others.

Braydon Davis: I use my technical skills to design and build technical challenges, but I also have to be able to communicate effectively with non-technical team members.

Stacey Gearhart: I use my technical skills to translate technical challenges into customer language. I also have to be able to work well with others and be able to communicate effectively with them.

How have you navigated the challenges of working in a male-dominated industry, and what recommendations would you give to women looking to ascend the industry ladder?

Shari Ruelas: Be confident. Of all the skills you need to have, this is the most important. You also need to be able to adapt to new situations quickly and be willing to learn new things.

Braydon Davis: One of the best things women can do is to find a mentor or a role model who can help them navigate the challenges of the industry.

Stacey Gearhart: Another important thing is to be willing to take on new challenges and to be willing to learn new things. You also need to be able to work well with others and to be able to communicate effectively with them.

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