

WTC 'Do More with Less' with Amy Marks

[00:00:00] **Angela Gardner:** Hello everyone. This is Women Talk Construction and I'm Angela. How are you doing today, Christy?

[00:00:13] **Christi Powell:** We're doing great. Thank you. How are you? You got a lot going on. Some things with Mercy.

[00:00:18] **Angela Gardner:** We do. Don't wait. Yes.

[00:00:20] **Christi Powell:** And how's she doing?

[00:00:22] **Angela Gardner:** She's doing well at school, but we're dealing with a few little challenges with her game of golf.

And, you know, I know that you and I share stories to each other about just watching our daughters and well, for me, a son struggle at times, but then how awesome is it to see them persevere like through that struggle, because, you know, sometimes at a younger age, learning how to do that. It's like powerful.

So powerful. So for her, you know, her game of golf this summer was like, awesome. It got so much better. And then during high school golf, it actually, it, it fell off the wheels. She, it was the first time she didn't go to state. She cried the whole way home. And then recently she shot a 17 on one hole, but you know what?

I remember those days. Yes, what I watched was another parent tell me, I can't believe how Mercy is acting after shooting that one hole. She was like laughing and just being okay with it, but yet understanding that she needed to work on her game.

[00:01:31] **Christi Powell:** I bet you were so proud.

[00:01:33] **Angela Gardner:** Yes, I mean that, I'll cry. But yes, I mean, then you know as a parent that you're, you're on the right track.

Yeah. So how's it going with you, Christy and then Amy? I mean... Good, good, good. Both got daughters.

[00:01:47] **Christi Powell:** Madison's had some big things happen this week, but I'm going to refer to Amy because she's like the rugby queen as well as the queen of prefab. So I know that you, Amy, have a daughter. Is that right? That is in rugby and you played rugby yourself.

So I think you could probably relate to what Angela's talking about, helping your daughter.

[00:02:09] **Amy Marks:** I mean, so I played 15 years competitive rugby. My daughter is 15. She's a sophomore. She also plays competitive rugby for a very competitive regional team, Morris rugby, and, uh, it's interesting to watch her. She plays actually in the front row.

And so did I, but in different sides of the front row. Um, so I watch her, her play and, uh, I watched just how, you know, it's funny, I always say I'm great at strategy, I think, cause I could see the whole field of business. And rugby was such a big part of that for me. And I watched my daughter, her rugby IQ is so high and.

And man, she's just a beast out there. She's much taller than me. She's, she's like, I don't know, five, eight and I'm five, three and a half. So she's very menacing out there. And just recently in a game, I watched her, uh, they were protecting the goal line and she just, she just hauled off and tackled some girl and the girl didn't get up and I thought, oh my gosh, I hope she's okay as a mom.

And then I, and then they stopped the game and she ended up getting up. And then I thought, okay, that's good. That was my daughter that hit her. You know, like, then I was like really excited once I knew the girl was okay. But I, I watch her play this game and she wears all my old kits. So she looked, it looks like me, but just much taller out there playing.

So. Yeah. Rugby is a big part of my life for sure. Nice.

[00:03:20] **Christi Powell:** We probably need to get Amy to introduce herself. We're just like having fun talking and we haven't even introduced her. So, all right. Just start whenever you're

[00:03:28] **Amy Marks:** ready. Hi. Uh, thanks for having me, you guys. My name is Amy Marks and I am the, uh, executive vice president of global strategy for symmetry.

And we are a tech company. We're, uh, one of Autodesk's largest channel partners, and we have a, uh, symmetry tech, our own technology to I work with customers and do training and that augmentation. So yeah, I'm, I just left Autodesk and I'm now over at Symmetry. Nice.

[00:03:54] **Christi Powell:** All right. So tell us a little bit more about your big news that Angela was talking about.

We definitely want to make sure everybody knew who Amy was. She's like the queen of blue Bob and the queen of rugby again.

[00:04:06] **Amy Marks:** Yeah. So I had this epiphany last year when my daughter, I was talking to girls on her team and they had four girls that weld on her team, four high school girls. One actually is a process pipe welder, by the way, stainless steel welder.

And I was like, man, uh, and then I met just by chance, uh, the U S women's rugby foundation was doing this traveling museum. And I saw actually my old team pictures and some of my girlfriends that had played. Uh, and some of the museum picks and I thought, why am I not putting two and two together here and connecting construction companies with the game of women's rugby and girls rugby?

Because I always say it like this. I'm like, they know how to use a porta potty. They're outside with, you know, very little, very little P. P. E. Although they know how to wear P. P. E. As a mouth guard. And they have a good sense of humor. You get a great diversity of, you know, the population in it. A lot of them are into STEM and they're all local teams around the, around the country that we could be connecting with these construction companies and the trades.

Wow. I would say all rugby players are tough and we have a good sense of humor. So if we're looking for diversity. We have not tapped this, this group. I, you know, I'm going to a thing at Thanksgiving, a tournament. There's like 4, 000 girls and women right across from Manhattan. And there's not one sign up for any of those construction companies, not one sponsorship.

So we're actually looking, I'm not aware of corporate partnerships for us women's rugby foundation. They just announced it this week. So I'm looking for you guys to come out. If you say you want women in the construction industry, you better call me because I've got some girls and women. I need good partners that want to come in and sponsor some of these teams that are big conferences in January.

So yeah, it's big news.

Neves

[00:05:50] **Angela Gardner:** construction, a general contractor and woman owned business specializes in assisting instruction companies with finding and creating short and long term solutions for employee placement in areas of professional and skilled trades. NE Construction further provides construction services owners and developers, including owner's, rep, interim project management, and supervision, fight inspections, and lending progress reporting.

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[00:06:34] **Amy Marks:** Tell us where that's at. The conference is actually in, uh, the DC area on Martin Luther King weekend. And I'm looking for people that want to actually have a conversation about how we make that marriage. So. If you're in the trades or a company that has, you know, if you're the diversity and inclusion specialist for any construction company, architecture company, engineering, call me, DM me, because we looking to have an open conversation about how to get more women into your companies from the rugby community.

So yeah, it's going to be all college and high school coaches and in the room. So you can. Impact the people that have, you know, the impact on these women and these girls all the time. Yeah. So smart.

[00:07:11] **Christi Powell:** That's awesome. I love it. You're so innovative. Like just forward thinking. I love that forward thinking.

[00:07:16] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. Well, we'll definitely put that link on our website too, with your post so that it will direct people to that as well, but I'm going to get us started on the first question. So. As a leading provider of digital BIM and product design solutions, what role do you see technology playing in the future of architectural engineering and construction?

[00:07:36] **Amy Marks:** So it's everything, right? In some ways, obviously, you know, look, we have to do more with less. So we, uh, by, you know, by 2030, we have, I don't know, you know, half of our people are retiring and there's like, you know, 40, I think it's like over 40 percent of everyone's retiring by 2030. And we have. You know, 200 million construction jobs and, and same in the AEC space.

We are, we're losing great people. We're not replacing them. So I think you have to really take technology to use to sort of, you know, digitize your domain expertise right now. And I think there's a lot of places you can do that. Aside from you can use the Autodesk products as an underpinning for many of the activities you have to do.

But there are so many other ecosystem technologies that are necessary to connect them together. So yes, um, there are things like navigate to allied BIM and for BIM to fabrication that don't exist in the, in the, in the big products and things like navigate zero when you're trying to do decarbonization and there's an ecosystem of all these great tools.

When you want to use, you know, again, less clicks and less people to do things and tracking the information, I think the connection of that technology and. And really, again, taking the domain expertise while it still lives here is just critical right now. Wow. Yeah, it

[00:08:52] **Christi Powell:** really is. Yeah. What a great answer.

Okay. So let's just pretend for a moment that, uh, some of our listeners are young people, right? That don't know much about our industry. Let's just pretend for a moment. Everything that you just said was like Greek to them. Can you simplify because it might be right. Yeah. Can you simplify that in a, like a very basic way that I think that would be awesome for these kids to think about.

What she says sounds really cool, but I don't really know what she means, you know?

[00:09:27] **Amy Marks:** Absolutely. The best way I can describe it to the, I would say the digital natives out there, right? The young people who are, I always, I don't like when people say less skilled labor or things like that. I think we should start addressing the digital natives that have skills that we don't have.

Right? Yeah. So. What is their expected experience in the ecosystem of the built environment, the construction, architecture, engineering. Look, they order pizzas these days with more technology than we do on a job site, right? They, I could order a, I could order a pizza on my Apple watch. I could pay for it, customize it, know when it was showing up, check my ring doorbell, make sure my dog doesn't bark.

And do you know, cashless payments when we are looking for a critical piece of equipment on a job site, mostly they're calling somebody's cell phone to call somebody else's phone to call somebody, to call somebody, to see if a half a million dollar piece of equipment's showing up. So I would say to the young people, there's a lot of places you don't necessarily even have to hold the quote unquote, a hammer.

Imagine like the ecosystem is like my Apple phone. And right now that's where we're at. There's a lot of great tools as an example. I just mentioned some from Autodesk on my Apple phone, but there's a whole ecosystem of apps that make my Apple phone work the way I want it to. So what's missing right now, what's really on the up, right?

What's happening is that. We're getting more and more apps. We're getting more and more Waze. Like I always say, to go to a restaurant, probably I use 14 apps on my phone. In order to build a building, you can't just use the big, uh, your anchor tenant technology. You know, you can't just use Revit and the Autodesk Construction Cloud.

You have to actually have these to connect them, right? You have to use, uh, again, like I always say Waze lives on my Apple phone, just like Apple Maps and Google Maps. I have to have choices. So the young people, there's so many opportunities to build technology, to capture what we're doing on the job sites, to figure out what the right technology is, to implement technology on these job sites, to work side by side with people that are not necessarily digital natives.

And they can teach you the craft while you teach them what digital natives expected experiences are in the way you would do something, uh, just like you would order a pizza. So I think there's so many opportunities. And again, not just in tech and the, and the trades, like, you know, there's marketing, there's social media, there's legal, there's, you know, there's so many jobs.

Right now we need all of those critical positions filled. And so there's, there's everything from tech to tools really for you in the space. And, and as women, I mean, look, the sky's the limit. So we only have three women in the trades and 10%, maybe women in the industry. You could be smart and great, and you can move up very quickly.

And I think, what are we at? Like 98 cents per dollar on parity in the construction space. You want to go somewhere to get paid. You could probably make over a hundred percent of what men make just being a woman that's smart in this ecosystem and build your own path. You know what I mean? Yes. Yeah.

[00:12:22] **Christi Powell:** Wow.

That, that's really cool. And what a great message for our young people or even women like me who, who just fell into the industry. Uh, I couldn't make ends meet as an accountant, but I could make ends meet. When I started working in sales for Lowe's 13, 33 years ago. And so that was really cool to see that.

And I was a single mom, so I really needed that. So talk, let's talk a little bit about symmetry and what you're doing there. Um, they've recently joined forces with Autodesk and D3 in the United States. Am I right there?

[00:12:55] **Amy Marks:** Sort of like, so Symmetry is a company that, um, they're actually owned by the AdNode group out of the Nordics and they, they basically own technology companies around several areas like design and make and, uh, process and product, you know, manufacturing.

So what they did is they, they have Symmetry Europe, which actually was an Autodesk partner already, and they bought two companies, Microdesk and Team D3 in the United States, who were two of Autodesk's largest partners in both the AEC space and manufacturing. So this great company, Symmetry, part of Adnode, came to the United States and bought the two biggest partners that were already partnered with Autodesk.

So now we are a global partner, the largest platinum partner of Autodesk with just unbelievable people and technology and consultants. Like if you're a small company and you need staff augmentation, like somebody wants you to do a big VDC job, they'll send in the staff to help you for that job. Or you want training around the Autodesk products and other products.

They have a whole authorized training center. And so, yeah, I, you know, for me leaving Autodesk wasn't, this was important that I could serve more customers in a meaningful way. Right. So at Autodesk, I worked with a lot of the top of the top companies in the world, uh, in strategy and, and what they want to do.

And I always say what companies want to be when they grow up, but now I actually get to serve so many more companies, uh, that I get to be in touch with globally. That are, you know, different places along their journey of, of whatever it is they want to be in there as they're grown up in digital transformation.

I would say.

Groundbreak Carolinas is focused

[00:14:30] **Christi Powell:** on connecting the design, construction, economic development, and commercial real estate communities in the Carolinas. Their wide

[00:14:37] **Amy Marks:** range of exclusive content and thought leadership is intended to help design and construction

[00:14:41] **Christi Powell:** related businesses be successful. Groundbreak is the only platform that reaches key AEC

[00:14:47] **Amy Marks:** decision

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[00:14:50] **Amy Marks:** two state

[00:14:51] **Christi Powell:** region, visit [groundbreak carolinas. com](http://groundbreakcarolinas.com) and be sure to

[00:14:54] **Amy Marks:** sign up for our free bi weekly newsletter. I'm

[00:15:04] **Angela Gardner:** going to change up my next question a little bit. So Chrissy, so in Chrissy, you probably are getting these two now, but I actually recently got an email from a peer asking me, do you know any professors at the technical schools that teach AI in the manufacturing or construction industry? So my question for you.

And, and by the way, there aren't any yet, so that's going to be fun. But how is AI affecting you and your industry right now? Like, and also yesterday, a manufacturing female talked about how it was, how they were actually using it to help their customer service reps enter less data. And be able to do other things that help them grow in their jobs.

How are y'all doing something kind of like that or

[00:16:10] **Amy Marks:** I think we're doing so many things. I mean, so again, we own our own technology and symmetry tech. We're using things like

machine learning and AI and. You know, the way I look at our tech is it just makes using a lot of the other products that exist out there easier.

So it's like, you know, they they've done so much consulting over the years that they figured out where all the gaps were and they started basically building apps, if you want us to call it like that, my last reference. And they took these apps and they're using, they're stringing together micro automations.

So instead of something taking like 50 clicks, it takes one, but instead of you doing a workflow that takes, you know, 150 clicks, it now takes two or three. And I think, yeah, we're, we're touching, you know, automation. We're touching a lot in machine learning and AI. So things like, um, when we're looking across people's libraries of component parts.

We're using things like health checks to understand we're using AI in that to figure out like, do you actually need 50, 000 parts in your, in your library? Or do you only really have 7, 000 parts, but they're called three different names. You know? So we're using it in really great places in the technology places again, to decarb about decarbonization.

So we really, our company is all about sustainability as well, which I really like about the company. But I think if you really think about what AI machine learning is, the promise of it for us is that. Right now, many of the big companies are doing some cool stuff that they're attaching to tech, but if you truly want to use it and train large models, right?

Which we are doing also, like we're scanning lots of spaces and training big models. It's not quite down to the fastener level detail, as I call it right now, people are using a lot of this AI and like omniverse for, um, you know, visualization right now. So looking at things where they can actually see how things will be put together built together.

I think where I'm really excited about is I'm seeing now more in the manufacturing informed design space, like taking the make data of the fastener level detail and using AI and machine learning to start informing the designs. So really informed design is where I think this will have the biggest impact.

But you need to have the data to start training things. So if you think about by the time in our space, it gets to fabrication level drawings, we fabricate. And then really that BIM model goes in the trash. So one of the things I think will help in the AI space is how do we reuse that information? How do we take

when we spool and fabricate things, you know, like pipe, how do you make that assembly a product?

And how do we, you know, associate data around carbon and cost and. You know, and supply chain availability, how do we use that? So the designers can consume that information. And I think that will only be possible, you know, really, as we, we think about how to utilize AI and machine learning is happening now, but I think, I don't know, it's not going to happen as fast as we think, because you need data in order to really do that and, and until you start recycling and reusing our data.

It's, it's just, it'll be pretty, it'll be great. We'll get good stuff out of it. But I think if you really want to be like, you know, using voice text to, to design something real, you need the real information about how to design a wall or a, you know, a distribution rack, or you just can't build a dumb box, you know what I mean?

It can't be a pretty box or. Assumption based. Humans will be needed. Yes. Yes. By the way, I, I say it like this all the time, and I'm going to steal this from my friend, Nick Wolf, who works with me at Symmetry. He's like, humans just have better things to do with their time. That's really what AI does for us, right?

Yeah. It's like, I don't need to make 50 clips. What? And by the way, that's the same thing I always say about prefab and industrialized construction. It's not how much time you save. It's what do you do with the time you're now saving because of AI or industrialized construction? If you, if you think about it, that's the benefit, not that you save time.

It's like, if you do nothing, you get, you get nothing out of it. If you all of a sudden take mental health days on purpose, if you all decide you're going to do. Slows out one day, or you're all going to take that time and figure out how to do better documentation process, whatever. It's not about the time saving.

It's about what do you do with the time you save from this? It feels like

[00:20:07] **Christi Powell:** we gained extra time. Well, yeah, I know that we all struggle right in our industry. I think every single person that's in our industry struggles with. Just managing time because we're reacting and trying to be proactive at the same time.

That's literally what our industry lives like. Absolutely. But one of the things that I think is really important is partnerships. And I'm going to end on this question because, um, gosh, we could talk to you forever. I wish we could have

an hour. I mean, I'm sitting here absorbing it. I love learning. And you're just talking about things that I just never thought about.

And it's so cool because it just opens up my mind. But one of the things that I think that you've done really well out is as a C level relationship builder. is collaborate. How do you build strong partnerships with clients ensuring the success of digital solutions?

[00:21:00] **Amy Marks:** I would say probably my like claim to fame and how I collaborate is just honesty and challenge my, I'm a challenger by nature, like my C level discussions are honest.

So it's like, where are you currently at now? What I, I always ask three questions to C level people, like, what does your company want to be when it grows up? What is keeping you up at night? And what evidence do you have of some successes that you could actually be successful at what you just said? You know, you've got to really take an honest look at things.

And then again, like so much of what's going on right now has never been done before. I always tell C level people, if I had it for you to buy it out of a box, I'd sell it. You'd already have bought things that we're doing that are very innovative. But you have to walk hand in hand and there have to be grace for learning and mistakes and collaboration.

Is that right? It's like, by the way, collaboration without conflict isn't really collaboration. So you gotta know there's going to be conflict and change and learning and. And, and doing things when you're doing new things. So if you think collaboration is just all about, let's all hold hands and be nice to each other.

I don't think that was the intent of collaboration. So I think that's always been the secret to my success is that I've just been dead honest about things. And also, I also make people describe things to me over describe, like, I'm like, I don't like these words people use. So I'm like, what does that smell like?

Tastes like act like look like when you speak those words, like, I don't really know what that means. And if you do that, you can actually get to the essence of what some of these when you're collaborating with people to make sure you're on the same page. What they want. I like

[00:22:31] **Christi Powell:** that. I like that too. We need to like totally put that in our book and read it every day.

So I know that this recording is probably going to go out after the big news, but we really are excited to be able to talk to you about something that hasn't hit the press yet. Yes. And we get to be the first to talk about it. So Amy, tell us about this new position that you're going to be taking and it's going to be all over the news.

[00:22:59] **Amy Marks:** Yeah, it's literally, so I, I just, I don't even think the press release is going out today or tomorrow. So the U S women's rugby foundation. The chair of corporate partnerships. It was a new position. And for every one of those men and women that stood up and said, we're trying to diversify. I'm going to say, put your money where your mouth is now come and talk to me because I have access and you can have access to some amazing women and girls that are predisposed to want to be in our industry.

So step on up and let's figure out the best way to partner locally with all of your construction companies. And, uh, and I'm really excited about it. And I think look, women's rugby has been important to me in my life for, you know, accepting, accepting who I am and my body and my leadership and my, my life and my daughter as well.

So again, put your money where your mouth is my friends. Now's your time to step up all you, all of my friends.

[00:23:51] **Christi Powell:** I just can't imagine the kind of leader you are and the way those girls look up to you. I really just can't imagine how much of an impact that you're making in the next generation and the generation and the generation after that.

So we thank you for everything, not only that you do for our industry, but what you're doing for the community, what you're doing for women. You are a rock star. So before we get off here, please let everybody know, how can they reach you? What if they. Uh, do you want to sponsor what you're doing with the Rugby Association?

Maybe they, uh, want to learn more about symmetry. Maybe they just want to know who you are and follow you on, you know, social media. So let us know a little bit about how to get a hold of you. Let our

[00:24:29] **Amy Marks:** audience know. So if you Google Queen of Prefab, luckily that nickname, not a self given name, it'll come up a lot of things, but I'm on every social media, I'm Queen of Prefab on LinkedIn.

It's my name, uh, just Amy Marks, and you'll find me. I answer every single social media DM that I get. I have more DMs in my LinkedIn and Instagram and even TikTok. I'm on TikTok as well and Facebook. I answer more of those than I do emails on a daily basis. So LinkedIn is the easiest way. Instagram as well.

Cut through the noise. You reach out to me, I'll respond to you. And, uh, and that's how you reach me. And I also have the queen of prefab.com website if you want to directly contact me as well. Um, so yeah, I'm at my YouTube channel. You got to treat you almost trip over me if you, if you Google. Yeah, we love,

[00:25:19] **Christi Powell:** we love the leadership that you're providing for our industry, being a woman in our industry and just showing.

Everybody that you're really good at what you do and um, you're passionate about it too. So sometimes it feels like work and sometimes it doesn't. It feels like

[00:25:33] **Amy Marks:** play, right? It's uh, I hope.

[00:25:36] **Christi Powell:** Thank you so much for pouring into our audience and um, we'd love to have you back sometime.

[00:25:42] **Amy Marks:** Thank you for having me.

I appreciate it.

Well, that's all for this episode Thank you so much for listening to the women talk construction podcast with your host Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time