

WTC 'Dream Big' with Jeanine Froke

[00:00:05] **Christi Powell:** Hey, good morning, Angela. How are you?

[00:00:08] **Angela Gardner:** I'm great! How are you, Christi?

[00:00:09] **Christi Powell:** Good. This is Christi and Angela with Women Talk Construction. And we've come to you today through a very, very busy week, really excited about the guests that we have on today. We're so appreciative of our guests who come on and just share their wisdom for free.

They're busy people. They love what they do. They're really good at what they do, and they'd rather be on here pouring into you today so that you can be better too. We want to talk a little bit about our week. This week, and we're going to let Janine introduce herself in just a minute. I know, Angela, your week's been busy.

What's been going on with you?

[00:00:44] **Angela Gardner:** Well, I mean, I've, I've been lucky enough not to have to be on a plane, but we are doing a lot. And we missed you last night. We had the main construction for him. Fun. We did have a lot of fun. We had a lot of students from Rachel's class that came and I think they might actually have hooked them up with internships.

Nice. I know. I know. And then I went to a woman in manufacturing. inaugural awards event, which was really cool to see. I think 10 fabulous women in manufacturing get recognized. And you know, all of the things that they said on that stage, they also had a panelist. They're so similar to our industry, what we hear and what, what advice we give and just everything.

It's crazy how the similarities are, you know, and you and I've heard it for the political world too. And tech, right? Yeah. So I'm interested. Hear more about your week and Janine's week.

[00:01:42] **Christi Powell:** Well, I mean, Philadelphia was great. We got to train some teams on what it means to be a woman owned business and. When you have a room full of people that are really on fire to want to learn and want

to go out and do some things that are going to make our company better, as always, it feels like, you know, when you walk away, you've done your job.

And like, I love that, right? Like when people are excited, they have more tools to do some things. And I just love seeing people in person too. And we've been on teams forever. And it was just really great to see that group in Philadelphia. So now I'm in Denver. We have a conference on Monday, Women Construction Owners and Executives.

And, uh, we get to talk about our two new stores, locations in Denver, Colorado. So yeah, it's been a little crazy week, but my daughter lives in Denver too. So I'm going to have some really nice dinners. My oldest is here. So Janine, how about you? I know that you're running some, you're running some big things right now, and I've heard a couple of things about you.

So I heard you have boundless energy. Your optimism changes the room. You can make order out of chaos. And you've been called the lightning rod of the marketing group. Wow. So listen to that and now you get to hear from our guest today, Janine, thank you for joining us.

[00:02:56] **Jeanine Froke:** Oh, Christy, thank you for having me.

And I just want to let you know that I live the life that you're living right now. Last week I was in four different states. So it's like waking up in the morning and where, where am I, video shoots going four different events. Like life is definitely crazy. I am home today in Livermore, California. And so I'm excited to be here.

Take off again on Monday, but it's really nice to be home. So thank you very much for having me on the podcast and I'm just excited to be

[00:03:25] **Christi Powell:** here. Well, thank you for taking time out of your life to do this and pour into the folks that are listening to us. We appreciate you. So we're going to start right off.

Well, actually, why don't you introduce yourself and just talk like where you are now and what you're doing. And then we have some great questions for you.

[00:03:42] **Jeanine Froke:** You bet. So my name is Janine Proak and I'm the vice president marketing for builder. first source. And I have been in the industry over 20 years or just about my entire career.

And I just, we'll get into that later with your questions, but I love the industry that we're in for a variety of reasons. And we have so many exciting, transformative things that are happening and It's a good place to be

[00:04:07] **Christi Powell:** nice. That's awesome. So we did a little bit of homework about you as someone who started as a marketing coordinator and eventually grew into your dream job in the construction industry, which you don't hear that every day, right?

Women like dream job construction industry. What advice do you have for women who aspire to advance their careers in a male populated role?

[00:04:28] **Jeanine Froke:** You bet. So our industry is full of hardworking, genuine people that want to make a difference. And my favorite part about this industry is that many people start sweeping the floors, building trusses or a marketing, like a marketing coordinator, in my instance, and through hard work and tenacity, you can really build a strong, successful career.

So the more work you put in, the more you're going to get out of it. Not a lot of industries have that kind of opportunity. And I think that's what makes us special. Yeah. So back to your advice. So what advice would I give, uh, women in our industry? So to be successful, you're going to have to first figure out what it is that you want.

Unfortunately for us, your dream job just doesn't drop in your lap, even if you deserve it. Right? You're going to have to figure out what you want, determine if you have the skills and the expertise necessary, and then work for it. Once you get there is the hard part. You're going to have to ask for it.

Asking for it is the most important part, and many women forget that you have to ask for what you

[00:05:33] **Christi Powell:** want. Yes. Oh my gosh. What great wisdom. Oh, that was like, I don't even know what to say next,

[00:05:40] **Jeanine Froke:** right? That's a mic drop.

[00:05:47] **Christi Powell:** Groundbreak Carolinas is focused on connecting the design, construction, economic development and commercial real estate communities in the Carolinas. Their wide range of exclusive content and thought leadership is intended to help design and construction related businesses

be successful. Groundbreak is the only platform that reaches key AEC decision makers and Influencers in our two state region.

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Sometimes we don't even think about it, right? Did you know that 20 years ago that that's what it took? No, but that's the next

[00:06:30] **Jeanine Froke:** question. There was a woman, a mentor that helped me understand that and it transformed my career. And we'll talk about that in a minute, but just amazing. The power one person can have on your entire career.

Absolutely.

[00:06:45] **Angela Gardner:** So I want to start this one off with actually a comment in your bio is I watched people go from walking down the halls with their heads hanging low to seeing an immense amount of pride with their heads held high. And so my next question is, could you share a specific challenge or obstacle you face during your journey in the construction industry?

And how did you overcome it? And what lessons did you learn from it? That experience? I feel like you might even have some stuff to say. Within that statement that you made, which is very powerful.

[00:07:19] **Jeanine Froke:** You bet. So that's a two part question. So I want to clarify the point in my bio. So I was working for a construction supply company in California very early in my career.

And they were struggling financially, and you could get one of this. This isn't doing very well. You can feel it. And so that's what I was trying to articulate. And what I was able to be part of is a CEO came in and really understood the value of marketing, culture building, defining where your organization is headed, mission, vision, values, and through marketing, We instilled a level of pride within the company that helped transform the business.

So that is, that is separate. Okay. Another discussion on that a different day. But I want to talk to you about challenges. Christy and I, before we hit the record button, we're talking about challenges and how you push yourself and you grow. Like so many challenges you encounter over the course of your career.

I could talk to you right now about my dyslexia. I could talk to you about My fear of public speaking and being on podcasts. But what I really want to tell you is, is what happened to me in the very beginning. So I was a marketing coordinator, fresh out of high school, and I was so hard on myself and I had super low self esteem, but I had the most amazing.

Boss, she saw something in me that I did not see in myself. And she decided that she was going to mentor me. And what she did next transformed my career. She gave me a book and the book was called what to say when you talk to yourself by Shad Helmstetter. And she helped me understand that if you believe that you can do something, you probably can.

But if you believe you can't, you absolutely can not. She helped me understand that I have the power through the. My own thoughts to be my worst enemy or my greatest advocate. And that really helped me in my, in my career more than anything else. She helped me learn that confidence is not something that you were born with.

It's something that's cultivated, just like going to the gym every day. Yeah,

[00:09:22] **Angela Gardner:** that's awesome. Yes. Confidence is cultivated. And

[00:09:26] **Christi Powell:** I have to say, I'm jealous. I did not have that opportunity in my career, but because I didn't have that opportunity, Women Taught Construction exists. Yes. I, you know what I'm saying?

Because I wanted people to see that we need them. Right. You know, I think it's really important. I

[00:09:46] **Jeanine Froke:** love that, Christy. I love that you guys are giving women a form to learn and to share. And it's transformative. And not

[00:09:54] **Christi Powell:** feel alone. Yeah. Sometimes we feel alone, right? In this industry. We do. So in your opinion, what are some, um, key strategies or initiatives that we can implement to encourage more women to be.

Uh, to want to be in our industry and then how did you overcome it? It's not easy, right? It's not like taking a job where you see mostly women and what lessons did you learn from that experience? So, you know, as you're younger, you, you join something and you think you like it and it's dynamic and it's family oriented, but then you have your challenges.

So what are your strategies or initiatives on not only helping yourself get through those days, but also the young ladies that are probably watching

[00:10:37] **Jeanine Froke:** you. Okay, so I want to say that I've been in this industry so long, like you, that over the last 20 years, sometimes I was the only female in the group. But I do want to acknowledge that over the last 5 years, I have seen tremendous progress.

I have the pleasure of traveling from coast to coast, and I'm seeing women in so many different, incredible positions, and it makes me happy. I would say the number one thing that helped me is finding the courage. To speak up when you have a good idea, not being afraid to fail. So you're going to say some things that are stupid that people aren't going to like, but you, you learn from those things and, and men are so forgiving.

And I just love the, the element of the element of diversity that we're bringing to the table in the construction industry for

[00:11:26] **Christi Powell:** sure. Yeah. It is amazing that now you're not the only one in the room, right? There's still only 20, 30%. But at least you're not the only one in the room.

[00:11:39] **Jeanine Froke:** So challenges excite me.

And so I see this also a challenge, right? I know, Christy, we're going to be great friends. We have a labor challenge in this industry, and we have an aging workforce. So there are going to be so many incredible jobs available in the future. And we're going to need both men and women to fill those. Exactly.

Yep.

[00:12:01] **Christi Powell:** Yeah, we're missing half the population. Yeah. That could fix it. That one thing could fix the whole industry, right? And our shortages of jobs.

[00:12:10] **Jeanine Froke:** No, I feel like that's the industry. We need to do a better job marketing outside of our industry so that people understand how much opportunity and I've hired so many people from outside of the industry.

And as soon as they come in, they're like. Wow, yeah, the culture is so much better and so genuine than everywhere else. And so I think that's something that

even as we start growing and bringing more people in that, we're going to have to be very protective of that. We keep that keep that culture in the heart.

[00:12:40] **Angela Gardner:** How do you retain them? Yeah, Christine, I always meet women all the time that are wanting to transition from either banking or being a lawyer or accounting. So as a guest on Women Talk Instruction, which we are so excited to have you on our podcast, what message or insights do you Hope to convey or, you know, inspire and empower other women who are considering or already working in the industry of the field, which we kind of already chatted about a little bit.

But how do you see that moving about? You know, because you mentioned that you're even having some people outside the industry want to come work. So how's that all working out?

[00:13:18] **Jeanine Froke:** So, um, when people come from outside, our industry is definitely different. So you can't bring them in and say that it's going to be the same because it's not.

And so, but I think once they see the level of genuineness and, um, how we have each other's backs and how hard we work, if you're a hard worker, and if you care about people, you're going to. Fit here, no matter where you come from. So I spent a long time thinking about the answer to this question, and it's my favorite question.

And so I would like to read from my notes a little bit, if you guys don't mind, just to capture my thoughts. So I believe that every person has the ability to shape their future in this industry and in any other as long as you grab it and take control of it. So my advice, dream big. Take the time to figure out where you wanna be in five years.

And then visualize it. You're going to have to write those goals down or else they don't exist. So writing them down as part of the process. The next thing is believing in yourself. What you say in your head could be your greatest asset or the thing that's holding you back from what you want. Believe you can do it or it won't happen.

And don't forget to speak up, work hard, figure out what you need to do to accomplish your goals and work at it each day. Don't give up when you fail, fail forward, take the pain and use that to motivate you to the next level. And most importantly is stay positive. You are absolutely not going to reach your goals overnight and people are going to wrong you.

Like it's going to happen. Yeah, forgiveness and love are part of it. If you spend your energy being mad that you didn't get something or that somebody did something to you, that's holding you back. So use that energy to push yourself forward and keep yourself motivated. We

[00:15:02] **Christi Powell:** literally stumble on our own selves.

Yeah.

[00:15:04] **Jeanine Froke:** Right. Yeah. And oftentimes we spend so much time thinking about how others are impacting ourselves and not realizing that you have the ability to block all that out and focus on what you want. And I think going back to my. My mentor, Kathleen Roulette, I would just kill myself if I didn't say her name, taught me so much early on in my career.

So thank you for scaring me into coming today, Christine. I'm so sorry. No, please. Thank you. If I could help just one person understand that controlling your thoughts improves your future, then that will be time well spent. Your message is

[00:15:42] **Christi Powell:** so amazing. And we're so thankful that you're willing to share it with the world and with women who are just getting into the industry.

And maybe young ladies that are thinking about it, your message is so inspiring. They've got all these things that they're thinking in their head that I can't lift heavy things. Maybe that's not for me, right? Like all these things. I'm not good enough. There's not very many girls. This makes me uncomfortable.

You know, all those things that your message is so clear and concise and It is the best industry on the planet.

[00:16:14] **Jeanine Froke:** I have so many weaknesses and what I've learned is just to surround yourself with people that are better than you at the things that you're not good at. And so be somebody, have other people fix your weak links and you can help them strengthen and shore up some of the areas where they need you.

[00:16:37] **Angela Gardner:** Electric was founded in 1954 in Anderson, South Carolina, rooted in the upstate of South Carolina. Hill Electric has garnered a reputation as the region's most innovative industrial electrical contractor, providing machinery installations and facility power to countless companies in

the area. Committed to quality performance, valued service, and responsive schedule management, Hill Electric offers.

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[00:17:20] **Christi Powell:** It sounds like you're a great leader and it's one of the conversations our whole country's having on podcasts. I don't know if you've heard it or not, but. Like everybody's talking about leadership. And one of the things I heard, um, Simon Sinek say was that we're taking people that are great at their job and we're promoting them to leadership, but we're not teaching them leadership skills.

So they've got 12 years of knowing that they've done a great job and they were really good at their job, but being a leader is a completely different job. And so do you see the same thing or is that just something Simon decided he wanted to opionate about?

[00:17:56] **Jeanine Froke:** No, as usual, Simon is right and it's natural to promote somebody good in their field because you want to take their expertise and help them spread out, spread the knowledge.

But it's definitely leadership. Just like confidence is something that is learned and practice and taught and yeah, before you take somebody from a role and put them into even a managerial role or a top level leadership role, you should absolutely provide them with leadership experience. And I let them know that they're going to fail and it's okay to fail.

[00:18:28] **Christi Powell:** So given your, uh, experience and expertise, what do you think are the most exciting opportunities for women in construction right now? And how do they position themselves to take a role like

[00:18:40] **Jeanine Froke:** that? Sure. Um, I, I'm repeating myself a little bit here because the opportunities are endless. I see opportunities with women building trusses, warehouse supervisors, location managers.

Sales reps, business managers, we all know that diversity brings a fresh perspective and a few months ago, the marketing team put a call out to the field to have, um, our peers recognize and nominate some of the top women of builders for source. And I just want you to know that over a period of three hours, we received hundreds of nominations.

It just showed me the, not only that there are many women, not as many as we want, but many women within the company that, but more importantly, they're recognized and appreciated for the contributions. So from building trusses to top level leadership, there are roles for everyone. And don't be afraid to start at the bottom because in our industry, if you work hard, you will go to the place that you want to be.

[00:19:47] **Christi Powell:** Yes. And, and really. From what I can tell, most women, they just want to be appreciated and valued like their colleagues. I don't want anything extra. I didn't even want anybody to acknowledge I was a woman for 26 years. So, you know, I didn't want anything extra. We just want to know that we want to know that they see our value and the hard work.

And our expertise and experience really matters. And it's a great thing that we're bringing to the table.

[00:20:13] **Jeanine Froke:** So, Christy, you had an opportunity to interview Amy Messersmith, our Chief People Officer. And so she comes from out of industry, and 1 of the things that she did for our company is she provided kind of leadership and communications training to help people understand that.

The way that you, you need to adjust your communication style, depending on who you're, you're working with. And that is 1 thing that we know. Oftentimes, men and women communicate a little differently. So, as our workforce becomes more diverse, having the tools in your belt to make sure that you're communicating with everyone to help them be successful is important.

And so, as we grow and become more diverse, we are all going to need more training to help set each other up for success. Do you think

[00:21:00] **Christi Powell:** COVID helped us get back to a real connected relationship with our teams as leaders? I feel like for the first time leaders were picking up the phone and calling on their people.

And just saying, how are you? And I think that really did impact us in our industry because we're a hundred miles an hour all the time. I just wonder if you saw that too. Did you see, like, even though we were apart, it felt more, we felt more connected because of the actual phone calls and checking on each other.

Seeing your kid, you know, your, your kids in the background on screen. We never seen that before, right? Like it was more of a real situation. I think it really did help our industry a little bit. Let's have more empathy.

[00:21:39] **Jeanine Froke:** I've seen 2 transformative things happen in our industry, and the 1st was with the housing bubble burst.

So we had to trim down to the very, very bare bones. And you were left with these passionate people that could wear multiple hats. And they're very genuine and loyal like. That helps shape the core culture of our industry. So, it was the 2nd transformative thing and I think you're absolutely right. It forced us to get digital and technological super fast.

No choice. I've been telecommuting for 12 years. Like, this has been like, what I've been doing for a long time. I'm like, everybody's on my playing field. Yeah, I agree. Yes, you're spot on Christie. People are, I believe are more connected and willing to jump on a webinar and turn their cameras on. And I do think it's provided a lot of value.

Like, my entire team is remote and we work through teams. And well, let me clarify that since this is going to be like, I have offices in Raleigh and Dallas. So we're not exactly remote, but we're all in different time zones. Yeah.

[00:22:43] **Christi Powell:** Yeah, I understand what you're saying. And really in your role, in our roles, it's really hard for you to be in a location all the time.

Anyway, like you're moving all the time.

[00:22:51] **Jeanine Froke:** And that helps me connect with the field. I can tell them I've never been stationary in a corporate office. I've always been part of the field, just like you. Nice.

[00:22:58] **Christi Powell:** I love that. I do love that. Um, I love you being on today. You have such great words of wisdom, um, and we really appreciate your time.

Builders First Force and 84 Lumber, we're making big, really big impacts in the community by doing great things. And I think collaboration over competition is so important. And that's, um, you know, it's just something that we should think about because it's not going to change, right? We're always going to have competition, but in my mind, if we're, if we're building communities together, we're still together.

[00:23:30] **Jeanine Froke:** That's a high 10 for you. Virtual high 10. Yes. Um, I believe that there's plenty of room at the top, just not enough to sit down and you want friendly competition. So I, I enjoy working with you.

[00:23:42] **Christi Powell:** Is there anything that you want to share with us that that's really on your heart that we didn't talk about earlier?

Is there just anything that you can think of? If not, please tell everybody where to find you. Um,

[00:23:53] **Jeanine Froke:** I don't know if there's anything else I have to say just to sum up, I guess what we've been talking about to position yourself for success. I would tell women in our industry to work hard. Don't be afraid to speak up, ask for what you want and keep trying until you get it.

And Christy, you can find me on LinkedIn and you can visit builders for source website at BLDR. com.

[00:24:15] **Christi Powell:** Awesome. Thank you for being with us today. We really appreciate you taking your time

[00:24:19] **Jeanine Froke:** out.

[00:24:26] **Christi Powell:** Well, that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction Podcast with your hosts,

[00:24:32] **Jeanine Froke:** Christy Powell and

[00:24:33] **Christi Powell:** Angela Gardner. See you next time.