

WTC 'Girls Diggin It' with Katie Page

[00:00:00] **Christi Powell:** We are live. Thank you for being here today. I'm here with Angela Gardner with Women Taught Construction. She is my co host. We're also here with Katie Page. Katie's with Hoopaw Grading and we are really excited about talking to her about playing in the dirt. We're going to title this podcast Girls Diggin It.

So um, you know, that was my creative dorkness, but anyway, hello Katie. Hello Angela. How are you today?

[00:00:30] **Katie Page:** Good. Doing great.

[00:00:31] **Christi Powell:** Good. Good. So we want to talk about a quick challenge that we have being a female. Well, we talk about the challenges that we have being a female in the industry, but today I'd like us all to just highlight one or two things that we really love about being in the construction industry.

And I'll start just to make it easy. Um, I loved strategizing. Fixing things that, uh, look like they need some tender loving care, right? So, um, those are the things that I've really enjoyed and there's never a dull moment. Angela, how about you?

[00:01:03] **Angela Gardner:** Well, that's exactly true. There's never a dull moment. You know what I love?

I grew up in it. So the people because I have family members in it and but beyond that, I love the people and I love the fact that you can be outside inside everything and just everything that you mentioned. So I'm curious to know what what Katie thinks. What does she love about construction?

[00:01:24] **Katie Page:** I'll have to agree with you on the people part.

You know, I'm newer to the industry and just work with a lot of really great, soft to the earth people that want to go out and problem solve and move dirt and get things done. And I do love, too, when I do get to go in the field, the huge equipment that's out there and just the, the technique that it takes to get that done.

Um, it's just always, I'm always amazed. I'm always out there videoing because I just love it.

[00:01:53] **Christi Powell:** It is cool. Thank you for sharing that. So Katie, tell us a little bit about what you do at Hoopa.

[00:01:56] **Katie Page:** Yeah. So I'm the director of team development group. And so this team, we're basically the support system for the company and we do the recruiting, hiring and onboarding, marketing, our training here at the Academy in the classroom, on the simulators and out in the field.

And then also our safety team is a part of this, this group as well.

[00:02:19] **Christi Powell:** Nice. So you're a strategist, obviously. Big team. As someone who's passionate about fostering strategic leadership and solution focused outcomes, can you share an example of a challenge that you've encountered in the construction industry and how you developed a streamlined process?

To solve it.

[00:02:37] **Katie Page:** Yeah. So for me, it's a little bit different because I am more on the office side. So I'm not managing the actual construction projects. But when I started there, there wasn't really a team development group and there wasn't an academy and we didn't really have necessarily a road map as to what we wanted to achieve other than when we wanted to be a company that trains and invest in our people.

So, um, When I came in, it was, it was a little, um, overwhelming. Because like I said, I'd never done this before, and this, it's not an industry norm to to focus on training in a classroom setting and on simulators, and I don't have an education background. As far as I'm not a teacher, I've never developed curriculum.

So. That was my challenge coming in, and instead of focusing on what I didn't have, I was focusing on what I did have, and that was a supportive leadership team, and also the subject matter experts that are here on the team. You know, we've got between 750 and 775 teammates, and there is a wealth of knowledge about all the things that I don't know.

And so just relying on and building those relationships so that I could take all that knowledge from, from what's in their mind that they know and getting out

on paper and turn that, turning that into actually training. And so it was just a matter of kind of taking that big project and breaking it into smaller steps and, you know, thinking all the way through the process.

And I listened a lot, I observed a lot, I asked a lot of questions and you know, I was okay to say. I don't know what I don't know. And going back to what I said earlier about loving the people. I mean, everyone has, has always been so gracious and, and want to share their knowledge. Nice. And so just kind of pulling that all together, it was a process that took a lot of time and I'd have to go back and reevaluate and pull different people around the table.

But from that, we've streamlined it and that we have templates now to, to build a curriculum. So. We know the key things that we want to include in the training. Um, also evaluating the best way to train it. Is it hands on? Is it a video? You know, what all is entailed to make it an engaging class? And just developing, you know, those standards and expectations of what it looks like to come into the academy to train and who needs to come in when.

So we've got a A system behind that now, and the other thing we did to streamline it was always making sure that we're getting feedback and surveying the attendees for classes to make sure that we're, we're teaching what we need to teach. And if there's something missing in there, then we want to add it in.

[00:05:18] **Angela Gardner:** Nice. That's great. Yeah, I love the dirt world and what y'all are doing just to lift up the industry and show how cool it is. Cause he was doing that. You should check them out.

Hoopa grading company is Charlotte's leading site contractor for a large scale construction projects in the commercial residential and mission critical markets, we are looking for the best talent in the area to join our other 775 teammates to help make us the best interested in joining one of Charlotte's award winning top workplaces and best places to work.

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I'm going to move into the next question for us. It's clear that you thrive in an environment that fosters a shared vision. Y'all all do, leadership, everyone, teammates, 750 of you. How do you unite your team to work towards a common goal, especially in an industry like construction where teammates are essential, but they're all over the place?

Yeah,

[00:06:39] **Katie Page:** yeah, well, I, you know, this is a focus here at Hoopa too. It's about relationships and our, our teammates are most important. That's, that's our most valuable commodity is our teammates and the relationships that we build. And I was at Habitat for Humanity prior to being at this role and, um, I moved into the executive director role.

But my predecessor was mentoring me and coaching me into that position and every morning he would come in and he would stop and talk to everybody in each office. And, um, I'm a nose to the grindstone type of person. But I learned as I was developing into a leader that you've got to build those relationships.

You're putting the work in when you're building those relationships. And so he and I were chatting 1 day and he said, Katie, you've got to care about the cat. And I care about the cat and you think, yeah, when you're talking to people and you want to know what's going on in their lives, because you've got to have that work life balance.

And when people know that you care, then it's easier to get them on board with all the strategy and the goals and all of that. I think a huge part of that is also explaining the, the why, you know, you can tell someone what they need to do and you can explain how they need to do it. But understanding the why and taking the time to walk through that and, you know, they may have suggestions to do it a better way or something may not be clear.

And so that is an important part of kind of getting everybody around the table to be on the same, the same page, focusing on the same goals. So, you know, We have, we have meetings with, um, within the team and, you know, the other part, we have our weekly huddle. We have a monthly team meeting. And then once a quarter, we try to get outside of the office and go throw axes or, you know, go bowling or something like that.

That's awesome. And again, it's just kind of that work life balance and explain in the why. And once people understand why, there's generally no issue with with everybody kind of going in the same direction. Yeah, for

[00:08:39] **Christi Powell:** sure. Well, and one of the things I think you guys are really good at, and I know Caroline has a lot to do with that.

Is your expertise in marketing and public relations and it's an interesting skill set that you have and now being a leader and bring in pulling the teams together.

How do you apply the skills in the construction industry and what impact do they have in your work? As far as marketing and public relations go.

[00:09:07] **Katie Page:** Yeah. So, um, you mentioned Caroline and she heads up our marketing and she is incredible at it and when she first started, it wasn't, it wasn't long after I came on board, we brought Caroline on board and she was our first internal person to handle marketing and really it was just building a brand and she, she's done a great job at building the brand and building that across our social media channels.

And then of course now we have the podcast and. So now it's more about we've built our brand and now we're able to talk more about some of the things that we offer, such as our internship program and just sharing about the industry as a whole and promoting the industry across the board to show that it is a cool industry to be a part of.

And then the other, the other side of that coin is marketing internally. Um, our, our goal and our mission again is to, as a team is to support. The company and, um, so we really focus on employee relations and those touch points and, um, giving opportunity for our leadership to do internal podcast or, you know, if it's donut day, we're going to go out and take some donuts to the site or, um, having a cookout.

And so those are all types of marketing within the company. And, um, just ensuring that everyone knows who, who buy is on the inside and then who buy is. From an outside perspective. That's amazing. The

[00:10:31] **Angela Gardner:** dirt industry must be doing a great job because I just want to share an example of something that we just heard from somebody else, of course, communication has been the highlight of every conversation today, but we just heard an executive director, CEO of an ABC in Florida share with us, they were at a NAWIC event for little, you know, little kids, little girls, and one of them, a six year old little girl said, guess what she wants to be when she grows up, an operator.

[00:10:57] **Katie Page:** Oh, wow, that's awesome. That's awesome. So, yeah, she wanted to be an operator. Yeah, we have a program that we do go into different schools and we actually go into elementary schools as well. And we have a presentation called the ABCs of construction. And go through that. Yeah. And one of the principals at the school that we went to, she's like, I have never heard so many children talk about construction for so long.

I love that.

[00:11:25] **Angela Gardner:** I love those conversations, but I'll move us into the next question. And oh, my gosh, you, you and your team have so many multiple projects so much going on. I just don't even. I don't even know how you do it. Can you share some of the insights into how you manage this juggling act and ensure that each project receives, you know, the full attention it deserves while contributing to the, you know, the broader goals of the organization?

How do you do that?

[00:11:52] **Katie Page:** Well, I think the first step is, you know, we've got a great team. You mentioned that earlier that we've got a big team. There's 18 of us on the team development group. And so, um, everyone. It's interesting that they all kind of vary as far as what our focuses are, you know, for marketing to training to recruiting, but there's a common denominator there.

And so, again, we have that monthly team meeting where everybody's got a voice and we can talk about what's working. What's not working. And then as a company, we use the entrepreneurial operating system. So EOS. And so our 10 year goals is clearly defined, and then you break that down, you know, we've got our 90 day goals, our one year goals, and our three year goals, and it's, it's a lot of prep time, and it's a lot of just making sure that you've got your, your hands at least touching each of those different groups.

But really, you know, they all know the why and they all know the how and it's, it's just making sure that there's those touch points and allowing team members to to try things, giving them the latitude. I mean, I've grown so much since I've been here. Brandon, who I report to. He used to, it used to frustrate me and I've, I'm not sharing anything that I haven't shared with him, but, um, I would, I would go in and I was learning.

I didn't, I didn't know very much about the company, about the industry. And so I would go in and ask him, uh, well, how, how should we handle this and make sure we're on track? And he would always respond with, well, what do you think in my head? I'm like. Well, I'm asking you, what do you think? I don't, I don't know the answer.

And um, and that's been a, a key strategy that I've used with, with my team to kind of help develop leaders and that yes, you know, be available to answer questions, but give the other person a chance to Yeah. To share. Think it grew. Yeah. And, and now the teammates come and, and I do this with Brandon too.

It's, I come with Right here's the challenge. Here's what I think we should do, or the direction we should head. How does that sound? You know, and so it really does help look at things from a different perspective. And then. Um, give people the opportunity to grow. And so I don't know if that directly relates to your question or not, but yeah, I think it's

[00:14:09] **Angela Gardner:** great.

Yeah. Anyone can use. Yes. Any industry, right? Yeah.

[00:14:17] **Katie Page:** Yeah.

[00:14:23] **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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[00:14:51] **Katie Page:** newsletter.

[00:15:02] **Christi Powell:** So, you know, we're, we're big advocates for narrowing that workforce shortage, Angela and I are. And it sounds to me like the way you're setting up your organization, it'd be a place that a lot of people would want to work, right? You listen to them, they feel safe there. They feel like what they have to say or what they have to contribute to the company is heard.

Um, I think all those things are so important and that's one of the topics I just want to mention to the audience when you're interviewing with someone and maybe you've really had a hard time finding a place to land, especially the women that listen to our podcast. It's really important to ask these kinds of questions.

Yes, it is. A lot of times we walk into an interview and we think, Oh, I want this job. But do you really, you know, do they have a culture of collaboration? Do they have a culture of listening? Do they have a culture of you being able to be, to progress into another job? And that's something I don't think Katie mentioned today, but they have a progression schedule so that, you know, where you can land, or you both know.

What your progress is and where you want to be. Some people want to stay in the same place and that's fine too. But what I love about Hoopa is they're giving you an opportunity to grow if you want to grow. And those are the questions as young women in our industry, when you are interviewing, it's important for you to ask those questions, you know, what is that culture and is it going to fit you before you go to work somewhere and then you find out that it's.

It's not really a great fit for you. So I love what you're doing, Hoopa and Katie, right? And it's just really important that businesses that aren't doing what you're doing are listening and we're starting to see people just paying more attention to their people and, um, love it. The construction industry isn't the easiest thing for us.

Um, it's not the easiest thing for us to do is to stop and pay attention to the people, right? It has to be intentional. Um, but that's the same in my own family sometimes, you know, you get really busy and you just don't stop and listen to your kids or your husband, but thank you for all that you do and the impact that you're making on our industry.

We really, really appreciate

[00:17:21] **Katie Page:** it. Well, and if I could add one thing when you're talking about, you know, going in for an interview and, and making sure that it's the right fit for you. So, when when we're interviewing teammates or potential teammates, you know, looking for those critical thinking skills. And I think that 1 way that we can identify that.

And so, if I'm going in for an interview, you know, asking those questions, like you're saying, and then. Being okay with saying, I don't know what I don't know, and, um, and as women, and there are more and more of us in the construction industry, but but we're still the minority. And I think going in with that confidence that as a woman, we offer a different perspective, not saying I is right and I is wrong.

But, you know, I've learned that through being here that. My brain just works a little bit differently than a lot of the men that I work with, and I've learned to not be the quietest person in the room and not be the loudest person in the room, but getting comfortable with saying, Hey, I don't quite understand that, or I need more information on that.

I think that served me well, um, just as I've, I've gone through this, this growth path with hoopah. Mm. Nice.

[00:18:33] **Christi Powell:** What great advice. And the reason we do our podcast or there's many things that we want women that were young, um, like I was to feel like they belong, right? You, you feel like you're on an island all by yourself sometimes.

So, oh, before we end, you have to tell everybody how to find hoopah. Oh, I forgot.

[00:18:52] **Katie Page:** Yes. No, no worries. So, across any social media channel, you can find us at, and also with give us the dirt podcast. So, yes, that's on all the, yep, the podcast platforms. You can find that across the different podcast platforms and.

On YouTube, if anybody wants to watch it as well. Awesome.

[00:19:13] **Christi Powell:** Thank you and keep doing what you're doing. We really appreciate you and you're making a big impact in our industry.

[00:19:17] **Katie Page:** Y'all are too. So, I'm glad you're doing this. Yes, doing it together. Better together. There you go. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:19:29] **Christi Powell:** Hi, don't forget, womantautconstruction.com has a forum of community where we all get together and talk about what's going on in our lives. We have workforce development opportunities, scholarships available. If you have them, please post them there. We also have jobs, whether you need a job or whether you want a job filled, that's the place to be.

And our network of amazing people are there to help make connections.

[00:19:59] **Katie Page:** Well,

[00:19:59] **Christi Powell:** that's all for this Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction Podcast with your hosts Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time.