

WTC 'Prioritize Communication' with Michele Daugherty

[00:00:00] **Christi Powell:** Podcast world. This is Christi Powell with Women Talk Construction. Once again, we're changing the perception of non traditional roles, one conversation at a time.

We're really excited today. I'm with my co host, Angela Gardner. Hi, Angela.

[00:00:19] **Angela Gardner:** Hello, Christi.

[00:00:20] **Christi Powell:** We're excited to introduce Michelle Daugherty to all of you who are listening, and we're just going to start off today by talking a little bit about, all of us have been in the field. And now have roles where we are not in the field as often as I would like to be.

And I know Angela and Michelle may or may not like it that they're out of the field, but I did miss it when I switched roles. I still miss it sometimes. But one of the things I wanted to share about the difference between, you know, being in the field and being in this position is, and I was going to make it funny because I was just going to say I was muddy and now I'm not.

But, I want to be a little more serious. I needed the support from the me that I am today or the Michelle or Angela back then. And I didn't. So, I think that's important to just note, you are not alone. That's the difference from being in the field and being, uh, in a position that we're all in now. How about you, Angela?

[00:01:20] **Angela Gardner:** So for me, you know what I'm thinking of something that's like near and dear to my heart, so many, but this was a time it's a, it's like this from memory of me and my sister driving the Todd register landscaping dump truck. Because we were all, I was helping them with some hardscape projects and it was Sonia and I, and we would drive that around town and.

Just to get the looks of some of the people, two women driving this like dump truck. It was priceless. And to be with my sister, I mean, I just would say to anyone, just remember moments and cherish them and, and always see the fun and everything. So, and Michelle, how about you?

[00:02:04] **Michele Daugherty:** Well, you know, um, I'll go with a little bit of the funny and a serious.

I remember my very 1st day walking across the job site and back then we're not going to talk about how old, but back then the hard hats didn't adjust quite the way they do today. So I had to wrap my hard hat in lamb's wool all the way through and then use my ponytail to tie basically my hard hat to my head.

So, when it fall off and that I could look like I belonged. So, to your point earlier, Christy wow. The fact that we have podcasts like this, the fact that we have so many women now sharing their stories and supporting the women of today, because man, if we would have had this in the nineties, oh boy, where we'd be, but I will tell you the one advice I have for our women out on the field is ask questions.

If you're worried about asking questions, so is the person next to you. Don't be afraid. It shows your, your dedicated, it shows you're interested and that you want to do good work. So don't ever be afraid to ask questions.

[00:03:10] **Christi Powell:** Great stuff right there. So Michelle, while you're talking, tell the audience a little bit about what you do.

I admire you for a number of reasons. And every time we have a conversation, I learned something, which I absolutely love, you need to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you. Another tip, but tell us a little bit about what you do.

[00:03:28] **Michele Daugherty:** Well, I'm the president and CEO currently of associated builders and contractors in central Florida.

And what I do in that role is I help our members develop people and our members of the construction industry. So I help our members to develop those people that are in their companies from the top of the ladder to the entry level field folks that are just. Coming in for day 1 and we help to develop workers, making sure that they're safe.

Making sure that they have the tools that they can do the job so that then our members can win work and do that work safely, ethically, profitably for the betterment of the community. So, at the end of the day, what I do is I just help people. Christie, that's yeah, I just help people that want to be successful in the construction industry.

That's awesome. Yeah.

[00:04:18] **Christi Powell:** So I'm going to get right into it. We've got some really good questions for you today that are really going to help our audience. We feel like it's going to help our audience as an innovative thinker and expertise in finance, human resources and operational management. What key strategies have you implemented to drive growth and success across multiple areas?

Organizations, which you have simultaneously.

[00:04:43] **Michele Daugherty:** Well, the first thing that we always have to do, uh, when we want to be innovative and we want to be strategic is we have to be realistic. So my first thing to tell everyone is be realistic and planning is key to being strategic. So you can't quite know if you're being realistic or not, unless you lay out where the plan is.

What I do with my teams to ensure that we have the collaboration that we need is we set clear goals and expectations, and I'll share a way I do that here in a moment. Next, we prioritize open communication. And the reason I put that word in front of prioritizing open communication, that word prioritize, because we all hear, in any job we're doing, how important communication is.

But, we don't always prioritize it. So, in my effort, as we're rolling things out and setting those clear expectations, setting those goals, is prioritizing the communication of who's communicating, how are they communicating, And what is the audience that needs to be communicated with to foster transparency and set that mutual understanding by the team?

Because that's critical. Then the next thing I've learned over the years is forming strategic alliances. The power of the multiplier matters. You know, I sit and try to do something by myself. I'm only going to get what I can get done. Right. What I've learned over the years, as an industry, and in, and in the non profit world, the more partners we can bring to the table, the larger voice we have, the more strategic we can be, the more collaborative we can be.

So I agree. The lighter the load. Oh gosh, take, yeah, take the, take the bags off, we can share, you know. See it on the job sites. Can we all carry the sheetrock? Yes, we can. By ourselves? Yes, we can. Should we? Never. So it's that same concept in anything I do. So planning's key and prioritizing communication are the two biggest pieces of success that I've had in running multiple, um, entities at the same time.

That's just wonderful.

[00:06:56] **Christi Powell:** And it's so true. And we don't talk about it enough.

[00:07:00] **Angela Gardner:** Well, we've talked about it on several conversations today. I think we need to do a live and just a regular one on how

[00:07:09] **Christi Powell:** to communicate and why it's so important for sure.

[00:07:14] **Michele Daugherty:** If I can give a little funny of how I even use it with my own team.

All of us have a different voice cadence. I have a very. Commanding voice cadence. It's a, it's a blessing and a curse at times. So what I had to learn with my team, because I can come in and make anything like, sound like I want to be part of it just because of the way my voice sounds. So, even with my own team, I use an ABC format.

So my team knows, is this an A priority? A means I want to be all in. I want you to keep me posted at every step of the way. B means I want to know the beginning and I want you to bring me back in at the end. Just tell me what you're doing and then the end results. And C means I have complete confidence in you to handle it from beginning to end.

So that's really what my team now uses. I love it. Hey, Michelle, is this an A for you or is it a B for you? So that they know their expectations as well on how, how engaged I need to be with them. So little tricks like that can really help as you're working with your teams. I

[00:08:20] **Christi Powell:** love it. You

[00:08:20] **Angela Gardner:** know, sometimes you get like, like I always send my teammate and say, Hey, can I have, can you look at this over?

I always say, and can you do it by this time? Because I mean, so many times we leave off that due date or that whatever, and then it just never gets done. But I love that, Michelle. That's awesome. Oh my gosh, your role. encompasses so much of managing so many different, you know, entities within the association.

Can you share some of the insights into how you balance the diverse needs of these entities while working towards a common goal?

[00:09:01] **Christi Powell:** Yeah, we all know pulling different organizations together isn't always easy.

[00:09:05] **Michele Daugherty:** Sorry about that. I had to throw that in there. No, it is not. It is not. Well, and it's bringing, a lot of times for my world, it's also bringing a lot of volunteers that are already carrying the weight of the world.

A lot of weight. Their families, their other civic involvements. So coming in, um, what I kind of put together over the years is four house and four wise, and the four wise are always the beginning. Whenever I'm trying to approach a new complex situation is making sure that everybody at the table knows the, why we've heard this, it's getting old.

We're like, can't we come up with a new way, but it's still what works. It's still the why. Yeah, by explaining the why there's 4 things that I've seen that come out of the why you get an increased confidence from everybody. If everybody understands the end result of why. Then they can cast their vision and along with your vision and make sure the visions.

And that, and that's why digging deep into the why of why, you know, why are we doing this task? What does it do to the community? How is it going to impact our business? How's it going to help us get this job that's been scheduled back on track because we're behind schedule. Re engaging with the team to cast that vision, making sure your vision and the vision of those around you match really can speed things up, which increases the productivity.

If everyone understands the why behind something, if something goes sideways, Then you have a team of problem solvers, and it doesn't have to just be you. So that's an important piece. And it drives, it drives that thinking and innovation. Because if they understand how to get to here, they may come up with something at the beginning or near the end saying, Hey, wait, if our, why is this project?

We had it, uh, not too long ago, we were doing a nonprofit project. And we, once we, we were all asked to do our individual pieces. Once somebody came in the room and said, our end result is X, we're trying to produce this to help this, uh, underrepresented community. You would not believe the explosion of conversations that started nice.

Once people knew the end. So, that's whatever job it is, if it's a, you know, uh, in field project, if we're estimating or planning on something, make sure

everyone knows the end result so that you can get there. It's it increases everything it does.

[00:11:41] **Christi Powell:** So, when you're doing that. How do you maintain high levels of integrity and energy throughout the process, because sometimes in the nitty gritty of the day and the hard things that people are off doing in their own little worlds, right?

It may be hard to handle that, keep that energy up and to keep the integrity levels high.

[00:12:03] **Michele Daugherty:** Yeah, it was Lewis Carroll that says, um. If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. Right? I'm totally that girl. Right? So, I mean, it can be a success either way, but it's, it's really important to as a leader.

You're also a cheerleader and that's what you've got it. You have to be able to. Once, you know, the why. You have to be able to then envision the plan around that. Why I'm a big fan for those that don't know, and you can YouTube the, you know, entrepreneurial operating system is a great 1. there's a lot of ones out there that help you to be clear about what you want to achieve once you set the goal.

You have all the other rocks that have to come in. You have the pillars, there's different acronyms we can use, but you have to identify those and you have to, you know, set them up into like a scorecard. I'm a big fan of scorecards and tracking. So that you can be honest about where things are and that's why, you know, when you use a system that says, what's our goal for the next 3 months again, having the end of the year goal, but you've got to can't wait till the end to find out where that where you need to reintegrate, you know, introduce the passions.

Sometimes when you see a pillar, maybe not getting where it needs to, that's where you have to slide in, re engage, see what are those stop gaps that are holding people hostage from success. So I'm a big fan of setting up, once you know the why and the end goal, then beginning with the end in mind and working backwards, set a plan, communicate and over communicate and when they're responsible for it.

Because you can give people, Hey, this is your piece. But if you don't set the deadline expectations, like Angela mentioned, right, by here, you know, if, if we don't set the expectation and one of the things that I've also helped to share with

folks is the causality. If you don't get that goal, how does your, if you're, if you've got team members and they've got a goal, they have to know how their goal date that's been set impacts others.

Right. It's one thing if it's one thing to miss a deadline, if it only impacts you, right? Right. When you are aware of all of the other folks that it impacts, it increases commitment. I've seen it. It increases loyalty to the project, whatever that project might be.

[00:14:46] **Christi Powell:** And it probably increases the priority level in there.

In there.

[00:14:49] **Michele Daugherty:** Oh, absolutely. Right. Yes.

[00:14:58] **Christi Powell:** 84 lumber company is the nation's largest privately held supplier of building materials, manufactured components and industry leading services for single and multifamily residences and commercial buildings. The company operates 310 facilities, which include stores, component manufacturing plants, custom door shops, and engineered wood product centers in 35 states.

84 Lumber Company also offers turnkey installation services for a variety of products, including framing, installation, siding, windows, roofing, decking, and drywall. For more information, visit 84lumber.com.

[00:15:44] **Angela Gardner:** Well, that's the other thing too, is knowing, like, that's the other thing with my team that I had to do was tell them what was priority first. Mm hmm. I do

[00:15:51] **Michele Daugherty:** that.

[00:15:52] **Angela Gardner:** There's so, it's so complicated leadership. Well,

[00:15:56] **Michele Daugherty:** and sometimes we

[00:15:57] **Christi Powell:** have to do that daily too, right? Yeah. Emergencies pop in during the day and you've got the next morning.

You're like, okay, we got to reprioritize this list today. Yeah, exactly.

[00:16:08] **Michele Daugherty:** Yeah. With that, you also have to, like, with your team, you want to teach them how to be structured. You want to teach them how to stay and let deadlines, but to your guys's points. You also have to teach them a little flexibility, right?

And creativity. The

[00:16:24] **Christi Powell:** world's not going to come to an end if something goes wrong, right? I think that's so important as leader is what's the worst can happen. Oh, yeah.

[00:16:33] **Angela Gardner:** Oh, yeah. We

[00:16:34] **Christi Powell:** miss a deadline. Well, it's not the end of the world. Nobody's going to die from that, but how do we recover? That's, that's the real solution, right?

That's the real mindset

[00:16:45] **Michele Daugherty:** that we should have is, yeah,

[00:16:46] **Christi Powell:** we want to hit that goal. But if we don't, we have to be prepared to pivot and make things happen.

[00:16:53] **Angela Gardner:** Well, that kind of leads into the next question that I have for Michelle is, do you have some examples of some challenges that you've faced and how you've overcome them, you know, to drive a positive result within your team or organization?

Because it sounds like you'll have a very well oiled machine there. Can

[00:17:14] **Christi Powell:** you come to my house?

[00:17:18] **Michele Daugherty:** I'll give you a couple. Um, um, the first example I'll give you is from being not in a leadership position. I still remember back, you know, when I was in the field and not necessarily having the communication channels. And I think that's why it's so pat. Yeah, I'm passionate about it and being in the field and seeing something and knowing, do I say something?

Do I not say something? Do I have the support of my company? If I see a safety risk, we were trying to. Fix I worked in conveyors and motors and maintenances, and we were trying to figure out a system to be safer with our conveyor systems, large, big boulders went in here. Microfine dust came out here and we'd have to play in the middle to repair the systems and do things.

And so there were different safety risks. And I look back at, as a leader today to the young girl back then. And the advice I would give her is speak up, share your thoughts, the thoughts I was having back then, or, wow, I could speed up this process probably by five minutes, transition down every time. But I'm new, I'm, I'm right, but, but yeah, they probably don't want to hear from me.

I look back now and I just want to shake that young me because there was so much money and productivity lost because I thought you have to be at a company a certain amount of time before you can share ideas. And there's a right format to sharing ideas. Um, I think that's very important as well when you're giving that advice.

That, you know, go with that humble, you know, right attitude to your managers and say, I have an idea. I just thought I'd share with you change doesn't happen overnight. So don't get discouraged if you don't see the suggestion you made. Make a big difference overnight, but you as a leader, and every 1 of us are leaders, you as a leader have an obligation to share if you've got that great idea.

So, even with my own internal staff, each of my different departments. I go to each of the department heads, and you're the CEOs of your departments. I may be the CEO of the company, but you're the CEOs of your departments. I tell my chairs of my volunteer committees, you're in charge. I'm here to serve you.

So, I think that's 1 of the things that when I face those challenges. Another challenge you have, um, that I face a lot is time, right? Yes. Everybody's facing that. Time management and people management. We're trying to bring more and more individuals into our different organizations and companies. And making sure that we recognize and we're honest about our time management and our people management.

I face that all the time. I want to boil the ocean. Right? Um, yeah, sometimes sometimes I just got to be. You know, cognizant that I might only be boiling the cup of tea that I'm going to be drinking that day. So those are my challenges. I love it.

[00:20:32] **Christi Powell:** So I want to talk just a moment about, we love all the insight that you're giving our listeners today.

Yeah. Unbelievable. You're such a great leader and it's really, really cool to be able to watch you lead and see all the inspiration and the impact that you're making in our industry. The Associated Builders and Contractors. I just want to hit on this for a minute and then I've got another question for you.

The merit shop philosophy is so important to me. That's why I'm part of ABC. I think it is. It literally eliminates diversity, equity, inclusion conversations, because if you get a job based on merit, it doesn't matter what you look like. Doesn't matter about anything because your own merit and the work that you've done and the education that you've put yourself through it just fits.

Right? So there's no reason to have conversations surrounding things that people are tired of speaking about. Unfortunately, Absolutely. The merit shop helps members develop their people when work and deliver projects, which I love that too. How do you align your leadership vision and the core values of the organization?

I mean, this is kind of a redundant question because I feel like you've already answered it, but we want to know how you do that to foster growth and achievement within our industry. So something just quick and easy because we got a really good

[00:21:49] **Michele Daugherty:** question for you. Okay. Well, one of the things I'll look at just even from this year.

So, ABC Central Florida turned 50 this last year. Wow. Wow. Yeah, pretty

[00:22:00] **Christi Powell:** exciting. Congratulations.

[00:22:02] **Michele Daugherty:** Yeah. You know, we don't often get excited about the 50, but hey, we're very excited over here at Central Florida. That's awesome. And what we did in our strategic planning, like I told you, I love to plan. Yeah. So, in our strategic planning, we really have to see.

sit back this year and I encourage any company that's been around for a while to take that time. If you've been successful to ask yourself, are you significant? And so this year that is what we've been focusing on is taking from success. And I'm with ABC now, uh, since, you know, the early 2000s because of the developed people and the helping our members to win work.

But the two biggest pieces for me are developing people and bettering the communities in which we work and live. And I'm telling you, when you can show that people are growing and the community is thriving. Everyone wins. And so, you know, that's where for the merit shop. Again, you said it best, Christy. I can't say it any better.

Uh, the merit shop gave me the opportunity to break concrete and then to break a glass ceiling. And that's why I believe in the merit shop so much. Awesome.

[00:23:14] **Angela Gardner:** Obviously our audience has seen all of your passion. Um, we see your passion, you know, supporting women in the field of construction. Can you tell us what drives that passion for you, Michelle?

[00:23:27] **Michele Daugherty:** Well, I think Christy and Angela, you both have the same passion and I thank you so much for doing women talk construction. I remember when I first met Christy, I just wanted to hug her to death because it's so important that we do this. What drives it is the girl that was in the field, she's who's driving it.

When I look at the 90s and we were at 3, you know, 2.7%, 2.5 percent in the field, and we're still only around 3 percent in the field, 4 percent depending on which ones you look at. We got work to do ladies, because I look to my left and I would look to my right. And there was no one like me out there, but the opportunities that construction gave me, it took me out of low income situation.

It took me into an environment that let me provide for my family. It allowed me to go get a college degree. All that came from construction. So I believe the more we give, the more we always get back in return. And so, you know, even this last weekend, so proud of. Our chapter here in Greater Orlando, the NAWIC, we did block kids this weekend.

And so people are always like, Oh, Michelle, I love you volunteering. I get more out of it. I'm telling you, we were able to. Um, over at the Orange County Public Schools gave us a huge room. We had companies come in, hun, a hundred kids coming in competing and I had this one little girl. She was six and I got to interview her and she was telling me what career she wanted in construction.

And I'm like, she's six. She knew something. I'm like, I love it. Um, I don't even know. I had a sixth grader who built a, a wrecking ball and went through. And so I said, explain how this would be done. And she shared that there's

architects and engineers and project managers, and she knew all of this at sixth grade.

So it let me know, maybe we're starting to make a dent, make it different. What would you want to be if you were in construction? She said, I want to be an operator. I was so excited.

[00:25:45] **Christi Powell:** I

[00:25:45] **Angela Gardner:** know a lot of companies that are happy to let you know right

[00:25:48] **Christi Powell:** now. I kept

[00:25:49] **Michele Daugherty:** her information. I'm like, we're not that far away.

Um, so it's, it's, that's the passion is. Right. There's no, there's no end to opportunity for women in the industry. So my heart is there, but I'm also going to put my CEO hat on for a minute. We have a half a million worker shortage in construction, half a million and women aren't there yet women in all encompassing represent 50 percent of the workforce, right?

So it's incumbent on all of us that have been in the industry that the industry has given so much to us to share that pathway for all those other women out there that are missing the opportunity building women building women. It's it's. Pretty awesome. It is awesome. And

[00:26:41] **Christi Powell:** it's so rewarding. Like you get to go to bed at night, like with a smile on your face and you get to wake up with a smile on your face, knowing that you are making that half a million workforce shortage a little bit better each day.

Right? That's kind of how I have to look at it and making that young Christy or the young Michelle or the young Angela feel more comfortable being here. And that is what we are all about. And thank you again, Michelle. Before we go though, I want to say one more time, the reason that we're doing what we're doing is because we want to fill these gaps of workforce.

We want women to feel comfortable. We want you to feel comfortable speaking up and asking for mentorship and sponsorship, but more than anything, we want you to feel like you belong. And if our podcast is helping you feel like you

belong, please give us a shout out, say hello, say thank you. Give us a like on wherever you're listening to your podcast and get on our Women Talk Construction website.

Listen to all the amazing women that we've had on and men who are supporting women. Yes. And it'll make a big difference in your life. And even if you're in the field, like I was, if you hear these stories in your ears, it's going to make you feel confident in your job. It's going to make you feel like you belong here.

And it's not going to make you feel like you're alone on an island like a lot of us did when we were in the nineties and the eighties. So, um, Michelle, tell everybody how to get ahold of you. And thank you again for reaching. Out to all the people that are listening today and just being such a great inspiration, inspiring other people to be in our industry.

[00:28:19] **Michele Daugherty:** Thank you. Christy and Angela easy to me. I have linked in. I recommend all women. If you don't have your LinkedIn account, get your LinkedIn account and you can find me already there. You can always find me at abc central florida. org or dot com either works. Um, and we are out here, right here in central Florida.

And if you're not in central Florida and you need connection anywhere else in the country, give us a call or go to abc. org and we will get you connected with careers.

[00:28:50] **Christi Powell:** Thank you again, Michelle, for pouring into our listeners. We really appreciate you. Have a great day. Thank you.

[00:28:56] **Michele Daugherty:** Thank you ladies. We'll talk soon.

Well,

[00:29:03] **Christi Powell:** that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the women talk construction podcast with your hosts, Christi Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time.