

# WTC 'Stay Curious' with Misha Homara

[00:00:02] **Angela Gardner:** Hello, everyone. This is Women Talk Construction, and I'm Angela Gardner, one of your co hosts, and I'm here with Christy Powell, my co host. Hey. How are you doing today, Christi?

[00:00:13] **Christi Powell:** Good. How are you, Angela?

[00:00:14] **Angela Gardner:** I'm great. And we have yet another incredible, incredible guest with us today, don't we?

And we're going to open this up with our icebreaker and this one, we're actually going to talk about events that are coming up and she has a really special one coming up on March the 9th. And so Misha, why don't you open it up and tell us more about this event?

[00:00:45] **Misha Homara:** Yeah. Thanks Angela. Thanks Christi for having me on the show.

I'm super excited to be here. Um, you are both amazing rock stars and incredible powerhouses in our industry. So I appreciate you both for making this happen. I'd love to touch on the event that we're hosting at Tricor Panels. So just a little bit about me. I'm Nisha Homara, currently CEO of Tricor Panels and also president of WCOE California.

And Women in Construction Week is a week that's super near and dear to my heart. And for our celebration for this year, we're going to be hosting an event called Plant and Play. And that's going to be hosted on March 9th at our headquarters in Santa Clara, California. We're partnering with a non profit organization called the Celebration Nation and their main focus is to help farm workers and their families with resources such as food, education, clothing, um, et cetera.

And so we're going to be partnering with them that day. Uh, TriCore will be showing all of our participants how to use our design programs, such as AutoCAD. They're going to be designing a panel that's going to be turned into a planter box. So they'll see, we have the largest CNC machine in the Bay Area.

So I'll get to see that in action while it cuts and routes the aluminum panels. And then, uh, they'll be able to actually fabricate and put together this planter box. Um, while Celebration Nation will be coming in and teaching about food sustainability and just the importance of knowing what we're eating and also teaching us how to grow, um, certain foods.

So you'll get to actually put some soil and seeds in the box that you're going to be making out of ACM. So it's a really fun way just to kind of get to know a little bit of the construction industry. A big part of our mission is to build a successful future together. And so that means. Um, not only our projects, but our communities.

So this event will really be a time where we can kind of get to know, like who's in this network. And I really encourage, uh, anyone that can attend to sign up and join us.

[00:02:46] **Christi Powell:** Gosh, I wish I could be there. Oh, that sounds like an amazing event. I love the fact that most of the people that we have on our podcast.

Are very focused on the community and helping others and Misha, you're a great example of that. You've been doing that since I met you, which was what? 2, 3 years ago. Yeah, it was a while now. Um, maybe in part of W. C. O. E. women, construction owners and executives. That's where we met the 1st time. It was a pretty amazing day that day, but we love what you're doing for the community for.

It's not just this particular event. You're always reaching out to the community and finding ways to support others. And we love that Angela and I are really big proponents of serving the community. We feel like it actually makes our jobs better and it makes our heart happier. So, that makes a better employee as well.

So, um, I'm sure you encourage that by having your event at your track or panels plant. You're obviously, um, being a great influence on your employees to also be serving the community as well. So thank you for that. So we want to get into a little bit more about what you're doing for the community and one of the other things that is really a big focus of yours is getting the kids involved and learning about the construction industry.

Tell us just a few things that

[00:04:05] **Misha Homara:** you're doing with that. Yeah, that's a great question. A little bit more about like what we're doing as a company. So we're a subcontractor, just to give everyone that's listening like insight about who we are. And we specialize in designing, fabricating, and installing all different types of architectural panel systems for commercial projects.

So one of our team members, she says, anything that has a screw in it, we can, you know, install it. So I kind of like to say, and, uh, what we are doing currently is we really get, uh, involved with our future leaders, which is the youth. So we've partnered with a program called ACE. It's the architecture, construction and engineering mentorship program that works.

So it's underprivileged schools. So there's a few schools in our network. There's three high schools that we work with. Uh, we spend last year, we spent about 30 hours going and working with them to actually plan a project from like start to finish where it comes to site planning, permitting. You know, designing, coming up with materials, a plan, proposals, all this kind of stuff.

So you, it's really cool kind of spending time with these kids who don't really get exposure to people in our industry very often and, uh, helping them kind of push this project through. They have a panel of judges they present it to. So it's, it's a really cool and unique opportunity. And I'm so grateful that my team, uh, also really believes in this.

So, um, my team has come with me multiple times, right. As volunteers too. Talk about like estimating, for example, and one of the foreman came once and was explaining kind of their day to day and gives these kids an opportunity to speak to people that they typically wouldn't really get the opportunity to do so.

Um, so that's been really, really wonderful. We actually hosted a intern in our office last summer, too, through the same program. So they were with us. for about six weeks and super excited that he'll be joining us again, uh, this coming summer. So it's really fun and it's a really incredible way I think for the team to also be able to kind of share their experience as well.

Not typical where we have someone that's kind of new to the industry, super excited and hungry, uh, asking all these questions. So it's, it's really cool to kind of see that whole experience. Well, like you're too excited

[00:06:19] **Christi Powell:** too, doesn't it? Like the, it just brings the excitement up to another level. Of being in their industry when you see their eyes get big and they just seem like, wow, this is cool.

It just really just sparks a fire in you.

[00:06:34] **Misha Homara:** Yeah. It's exciting.

[00:06:35] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. Well, I love planter boxes, so I mean, I hope y'all are selling there or something wherever you are, because that's, that would be an awesome thing to make. So my, I'm going to ask the next question and we'll phrase it up as this too. We know that you have the strong background in construction management and business development.

Totally. All of it. What advice and insight would you offer to aspiring professionals looking to enter the construction industry? And I mean like, what advice either to them or leaders on how to do the community involvement like you're doing? And that might be, you mentioned ACE, the ACE program. Get involved there.

But there are there other ways that they need to seek out to get involved with in order to follow the same path that you've

[00:07:25] **Misha Homara:** taken? Yeah, it's a great question. I think the biggest thing that I would say is stay curious and ask questions. So I think for me, I like my background, actually, I came from the cosmetology world and I knew nothing about construction 10 years ago.

And so I was sitting in, um, meetings, uh, you know, as just like writing down like what is a COI? What's an RFI? And Googling these things like behind the scenes and then asking questions, right? Asking the project managers, like, Hey, like, can you explain this to me? And I think that's like the most important part is just ask questions and there's no silly question, like any question that you ask.

Not only it's going to help you get that insight, but also whoever's around you, maybe the person sharing that, you know, answering the question, they'll also be learning something as well. So I think no question is a silly question. So I just encourage people, you know, ask them. And I always say that your, your network is your net worth.

And so the more, you know, expose yourself to events. And I know it's hard. Like sometimes I struggle and I'm like, You know, like I'm, I'm going to this event. I have this incredible opportunity to, you know, network, but it's hard sometimes to push yourself to go there. And then it's overwhelming at times too, right?

You go and there's like a hundred people and you're like, okay, like, what am I supposed to do here? Shut down. Yeah, I encourage you just like set a small goal, right? Like I'm going to talk to three people today. Yeah. Right. And then like follow up with that, because if you go to these events, it's incredible, but.

The, the part two, I think is following up and like ensuring that you build that connection, right? It's kind of like a friendship. If you don't want to keep that friend, right? You check in with them, you know, you meet up with coffee every once in a while you have lunch. So I think kind of the same way when you meet people, like at these events, right, and connect with them and you'll find the people that you kind of have a vibe with and your energies really sink.

And I think, right, like building and. Growing with them is, it's really important. Those are great tips. Thank

[00:09:23] **Angela Gardner:** you.

[00:09:29] **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 a, EC, decision makers and influencers in our two state region.

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share some insights. We talked before the podcast started about ai. Which really interests me, like the minute it was out, I was playing with it. Like immediately. Yeah, I love it. And I'm always trying to make it do things that it doesn't do. Yeah. Like I'm constantly pushing the envelope. No, no, no. I can't do that.

Oh, sometimes it tells me you've exhausted me. I can't talk about this anymore, which is hilarious. And I really like strive to do that. So that's funny. I'm very curious. So that's probably what's gotten me where I'm at today. Can you share some insight on how the implement of AI technology and drones. Now, what I think is very interesting about what you're doing is that you've integrated drones into your Tricolor panels and what you're doing with them through your manufacturing facility.

So how has that enhanced safety measures at Tricor panels? How has AI technology and drones been able to help that? This is kind of a two part question, so I'm just going to stop

[00:11:00] **Misha Homara:** there. Yeah, no, that's a great question. I, I think. And I always feel like we're like so lucky to be alive right now because of everything that's around us.

It's like, there's just gold everywhere. And we just get to pick and choose like, what do we want to play with, right? And so AI has been really, uh, cool for us at Tricor panels because it's helped us in all avenues. There's softwares that have come out recently. For example, that have helped with estimating processes where you can plug in an architectural plan set.

It'll actually go through and read everything and, you know, highlight like, okay, there's X amount of square foot of, you know, this material and it actually makes like a list for you. Right. So it expedites a lot of the processes of figuring out like square footage when it comes to estimation. It's just, you know, one example that I can.

share with you another one that's a huge time. Yeah, it's huge. It's like, it's really big and it really works. Right. I think, um, I forget the exact percentage of, uh, but it's very, very accurate. Like it is extremely accurate, which is incredible. Um, another tool that we use is you can make inspection reports as well with AI.

Now you can like walk around and take a video and this will actually turn. Uh, video into like a report for you. So that saves a lot of time for people on the fields. For example, like it takes half an hour to 45 minutes. Probably do those daily logs, reporting all these things. So a tool like this gives them, you know, that kind of time back.

It's almost two hours a week, you know, per person. So figuring out like what are the. tools and resources that, you know, can help. And there's a lot of trial and error, right? Especially now with like everything coming out new. So don't feel like you're married to one system, right? So like test it out, encourage you to ask for trials, right?

Cause these things are also expensive. So you want to make sure that. You're, you're actually getting the most bang for your buck. So do the trials, right? See if it works out. I always say test it on a project that you've already had so you

can compare it to your own data set. Right? And you can kind of, you know, see if what works for you.

Uh, we've incorporated LIDAR technology and drones. So That helps a lot with field measurements, so you can scan a building, um, it avoids having to use like any kind of equipment like boom lifts, scissor lifts, or even, um, going on scaffolding. Exactly. Yeah. So, and it, and time too. So, for example, like to do field measurements, sometimes it could take a couple days, right?

And then you may have to go back and forth and. You know, maybe a piece was missed, for example, exactly, exactly. So this kind of just helps systemize and like make the process flow a little bit smoother.

[00:13:43] **Christi Powell:** Nice. Nice. So, okay. So the second part of this question is what are some specific safety hazards that have been identified and mitigated through these technologies?

I think we kind of answered those. But yeah, just the fact that you don't have to go back. You don't have to be up on a scissor lift. You don't have to climb scaffolding to go get that measurement that you forgot or to go get the initial measurement. I think that's probably a good answer for that. So let's move on to a better 1.

I think Angela's got another question for you.

[00:14:12] **Angela Gardner:** I do, and we're talking about kind of the future of AI, and since you just mentioned you've been to AI conferences, you probably have a great answer for

[00:14:22] **Christi Powell:** us. She gave us an AI tip

[00:14:24] **Angela Gardner:** earlier. For podcasting, but you know, seeing as though you're, you know, you know all about the AI technology and drones.

What do you envision in the future for our industry construction and the potential advancements and innovation on the horizon? What do you, what do you see happening?

[00:14:44] **Misha Homara:** Yeah, it's a great question. I think it's been a really unique time to be in the construction industry. I remember 10 years ago, like everything was paper, right?



And it was an interesting shift to see like people going from these printed blueprints to the iPad. And there was a lot of. Challenges. I think that came a little bit with this industry of accepting it. Right. So I think these tools are incredible, but I think with our industry, the most important is the education part of it.

So teaching people like what impact it does, right. And sharing like the why behind like. reason like, Hey, we're going to be using, you know, this system now, let's say the iPads instead of the blueprints, right? And like, why? Right. So you don't have to drive back and you know, print a new set if there's an issue.

So the same thing with, let's say this drone and LIDAR technology, right? So let's say we forgot to do a piece of that measurement instead of having to schedule another lift to go out there. Making sure we have, you know, the manpower to go out there, making sure the other jobs are covered. This saves a lot of time and resources.

When it comes to that avenue, and I think being able to plan ahead, right? So I think that's another really big impact of having these kinds of tools because you have your forecasting ahead of time. And I think us for being a subcontractor gives a lot of insight to the general contractor of like, you know, what our game plan is, how we're going to approach this.

Um, and gives them a data set as well to kind of lean on, um, with a different technology versus, uh, by like, Yeah,

[00:16:14] **Angela Gardner:** I love the education part because I remember back in the day, um, I, in my family business, you know, we just, we had, I think we were implementing a different, just changing the AutoCAD system to a different plan.

And, and that was really having some of our architects go from drawings, drawing them out. To AutoCAD was a huge challenge. Yeah. I mean, it really is, and really the key is education, right? Mm-Hmm. . Yeah. And, and being gentle to them, you have to

[00:16:42] **Christi Powell:** pitch it to your teams. Yes. Yeah. In a way that they understand why you are considering it, right?

Yes. I think that's the key. Some of these leaders, they will just adapt something new and then they don't get the message down through their teams. And then



you've got this, this idea of, I don't want to do that, right? Why are we doing this? Nobody's explained this to me. I think this is stupid, but when you do it with the, the, here's why we're going to do this.

And this is how it's going to help you in your job. This is not going to eliminate your job. I think that's a fear too of the workers, right? They're thinking, Oh, if I quit drawing these and there's a computer for it, I'm going to lose my job. No, you're going to be more secure. Because we're going to be able to do more blueprints and you're going to be able to get paid more.

So I think it's really important for leaders to do that. So I'm glad you meant you mentioned that, Angela. It is a challenge. Change is a challenge. Yeah. If the leader is not pitching, why? Yeah. Right? Yeah. It's almost like a sales pitch. You don't just have to sell externally. You have to sell in your team internally.

[00:17:47] **Angela Gardner:** Just one more comment, because I think this is important. Michelle probably agree is. It's education, but it's also understanding everyone learns differently. Yes. That is so key. It is. And being, you know, knowing that that person might learn it quicker than the next person, so.

[00:18:05] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. And be impatient with that or are providing different avenues of learning, right?

Yes. Because I'm a, I'm a very visual person. So if you were to tell me to sit down and read a book and, and then for me to learn it might be rough for me. But if you sat me down and showed me what you were doing and just went, you know, I could watch step by step. Oh, that makes all the sense in the world.

[00:18:28] **Misha Homara:** Right. So that kind of leads into, uh, so another tool that we use to help with this it's called loom. I don't know if you've heard of that all the time because it can, you can cater to kind of everyone. Right. Cause I'm speaking, right. I'm actually have my screen up showing you the product and there's a transcript of what I'm saying.

Right. So it. It kind of targets everyone, everyone's learning of styles, right, and gives them an opportunity to go back and look at it and like review, watch. Sometimes maybe someone has to watch it once and they get it. Someone has to watch it three times before they fully grasp it all. So I think communication and like understanding is really important and if we have time, I just want to.

Share a little bit about like how we communicate these kinds of things to our team as we introduced and we run our company on EOS. It's the entrepreneurial

operating system. And that was like the biggest game changer, I would say for us going from this mom and pop style company to this corporation now.

And each department, every single person in the company is a part of a weekly meeting with their team in which they have an opportunity to go over their weekly measurables. Uh, quarterly goals, which we call rocks, which are all tied to our one year plan, gives them opportunities to share highlights of anyone in their team that they've seen, but also an opportunity for cascading messages.

So, let's say the leadership team comes up with, you know, something that we're working on. We put it in exactly, you know, the why, what we're doing. What the steps look like, and then that message gets cascaded to every single department in the company and organization. So it's really an incredible tool.

It's been so amazing for us. Everyone has a voice. Everyone has. You know, knows like what their responsibility is in our pie, which makes everyone kind of work smarter and row the boat in the same direction. So, and they're bought in, right?

[00:20:18] **Christi Powell:** They're bought in and they feel like they're part of something instead of just working for someone.

Right. They're like, they're invested. Well, I wish we could talk more because you have brought a plethora of information to our audience and to Angela and I. Oh yeah. Thank you so much for being on today. Because you are such an amazing human and because you have, and you're running an amazing company, let our audience know exactly how to get ahold of you, where to find you, your website, maybe just wherever that you would like to

[00:20:48] **Misha Homara:** see them connect with you.

Yeah. Thank you both so much for having me. This is amazing. And I had so much fun. Um, if you'd love to stay in contact with me, it's easy to find me on social media. I think I have a unique name, type in Misha Homara. I think there's one and only, um, so you can find me on LinkedIn, um, and happy to connect our website.

We have Instagram. So all of our social media, um, feel free to reach out.

[00:21:12] **Christi Powell:** Awesome. Thank you for joining us today. We really appreciate you.

[00:21:16] **Misha Homara:** Thank you. I appreciate you too.

[00:21:22] **Christi Powell:** Well, that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the women's talk construction podcast with your host, Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time.