

USGlass Celebrates Women in the Industry

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The labor shortage is a continuing challenge for all facets of the glass and glazing industry. During Women's History Month, women in the industry are reflecting on women's role in the industry and how companies can appeal to the younger generation. USGNN™ is highlighting some of the women in the industry and their thoughts on why women are a valuable asset to the industry and how to get more women involved.

Tara Brummet—Vitrum Glass Group

Tara Brummet, business development manager of U.S. markets for Vitrum Glass Group, has been in the glass fabrication business since 1998. She says she joined by chance but stayed because of the wealth of opportunity and variety, and because she was able to work with a versatile product and amazing people.



Tara Brummet

Brummet says that women should consider a career in the glass industry because the people are fabulous, welcoming and helpful. She has been most excited to see the development of automation on the manufacturing side of the industry, though she also finds the glass itself interesting.

"It's an exciting product, used in so many different applications, whether for design or functionality, it can change the look and feeling of a space," she says. "Products are always evolving and we are finding new ways to use glass both interior and exterior."

More women have been getting involved, according to Brummet, who says there's been a big change from the first trade show or conference she attended.

"We have fabulous female mentors already in the industry so I think our involvement will just keep growing," she says.

Brummet emphasized the importance of female representation, but says there are already many women in the industry.

She adds, "We need to somehow get it out there that there are women in the industry, doing a great job and enjoying it!"

Barbara Kotsos—Giroux Glass

Barbara Kotsos recently celebrated her fifth anniversary with Giroux Glass, where she works as director of marketing and public relations. She says she always loved architecture and design and was interested in the company, which started as a small family business in 1946.



Barbara Kotsos

"To go from that humble start, to building the Sky Walk over the Grand Canyon, was so impressive to me," says Kotsos. "Then I met a few of the women who run the company, knowing what an anomaly it is to find a female-driven executive team in this industry, and I really liked everyone I met that day. (I still do!)"

She appreciates the longevity of the buildings created by the glass and glazing industry. She believes that women should consider a role in the industry so they can continue to shatter the "glass ceiling."

"We are a minority at just 9 percent of the workforce, and that is the absolute saddest statistic to me. It's a fascinating career that could so benefit from smart, motivated female employees – in fact, it's an industry that screams out for more women to join it," says Kotsos. "There are such a diversity of different roles women can play in this industry and we need more women at every level: from design, to the field, to engineering, to project managing and estimating. There is no reason that more women shouldn't consider working in glass. It allows creativity, doesn't require being stuck behind a desk all day, pays well, is constantly changing and offers a wealth of different job opportunities. What is not to love?"

Kotsos is on the board of the Los Angeles branch of NAWIC.

"It's been a heartwarming and inspirational activity for me to learn more about all of the different jobs in the industry, and to meet the diversity of wonderful women who perform them. We are a support network for other women, and I recommend it highly," she says. "There are other more role-relevant industry associations as well – like WCOE; WiOPs; AIA, AWA+D; Structural Engineers Association; ASA, to name a few."

Kotsos recommends that women in the industry attend a few meetings, meet some of their peers and network to get more involved.

"The more industry women you meet, the more you learn about what everyone does, and what's going on in your city, while having a great time meeting a really caring support network. Every one of these groups welcomes visitors," she says. "Taking young women under their wing is another way to help nurture others into the industry. Women can also become mentors; speak at school or Girl Scout events; companies can attend career fairs; and encourage bringing students to work to shadow women; hire interns; support contests and scholarships for young STEM students . . . There's so much we can do—and should do—to spark the interest in young students. If every company made it a mission to have a regular presence at these events, or do a few of these activities, we would drastically move the needle above the current 9 percent."

Stay tuned to USGNN™ throughout the week for more spotlights on women in the history in celebration of Women's History Month.



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