



# Attendees lend insights into 2012 and what lies ahead

If there was one thing that attendees of the second **Women in Commercial Construction & Facilities Retreat** walked away with it was that good things happen when you keep moving forward.

In an industry still moving past a continually sluggish economy, executives from some of the industry's leading brands and vendors spoke optimistically about projects in the queue for this year and what lies ahead.

Attendees took part in the event, held in August at the **W Hotel** in downtown Atlanta. Executives participated in three days of discussions and networking opportunities,

which included a tour of the **High Museum of Art**. *Commercial Construction & Renovation* sponsored the event.

Following is the first installment of our event coverage, including the wrap up of our Friday morning open forum. For more information, visit us at [www.ccr-mag.com](http://www.ccr-mag.com).

**CCR:** What is the most pressing thing on your to-do list these days?

**Jo-Ellen Askew, Starwood Hotels:** My two most pressing items are the new Four Points Hotel in the Memphis area and the new Westin Hotel in Southwest Florida we are opening.

**Cindy Rotton, Solutia, a Subsidiary of Eastman Chemical Co.:** The most pressing thing these days is showing a new technology called EnerLogic®. It is designed as an all-season window film to create energy savings all year-round, not just summer solar control. We are training our dealers and also working with engineers to show how the numbers work in their favor to create better energy savings.

**Courtenay James, Retail Design Institute:** I'm working with our partners overseas to develop stores. My biggest challenges include different codes and restrictions per country, setting brand expectations with new contractors, while overcoming language barriers.

**Kay Barrett, Cassidy Turley:** We've experienced a lot of growth, so therefore we have a lot of new clients. My focus is on staffing for those new accounts. Because of the economy, I've seen a huge shift over the past five to six years on hiring. There are many available project managers out there. A large number of people who are available have 25, 30, 35 years of experience. We're flooded with resumes. So, it's a matter of finding the right balance of experience, insight and technology.

**Janis Williams, Tuesday Morning:** Each month, we open several stores along with relocations. So, right now, I'm getting all the new stores





## Participating Retail, Hotel and Restaurant Companies

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Guess?  
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Retail Design Institute  
Starwood Hotels  
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## Open Forum

ready for opening along with processing paperwork and working with Landlords. I also work with the relocates, because those are new stores in our department, too. We strive to make sure all closed stores are done professionally.

**Vember Stuart-Lilley, Guess?:** I work on minor retrofits, minor remodels and rollouts. The hardest thing for me is to take all of the different directives we have going in at one time and try to streamline them into one project. It's about juggling all the different facets that go into all the different projects.

In addition, a lot of our general contractors do their work at night, which means the work may go from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. So that's a lot of



**I started back in the '80s. When I started, it was an interesting experience. Every day someone would question or challenge me on something.**  
— Sandy Severson, Brown Shoe Company



## Retail, Hotel and Restaurant Executives



**Courtenay James**  
Project Manager  
International  
Store  
Development  
*Retail Design  
Institute*



**Vickie Berry**  
Assistant VP/  
CRE Retail  
*AT&T*



**Sandy Severson**  
Director of  
Corporate  
Facilities  
*Brown Shoe  
Company*



**Kelly King**  
Construction  
Project Manager  
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**Vember Stuart-Lilley**  
Special Projects  
Manager  
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**Diane Kelley**  
Capital Project  
Manager  
Facilities  
Department  
*Multnomah  
Athletic Club*



**Jo-Ellen Askew**  
Senior Project  
Manager  
*Starwood Hotels*



**Paula Manning**  
RDSM US  
Real Estate  
*TD Bank*



**Janis Williams**  
Director of  
Store Facilities  
*Tuesday Morning*



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**Kay Barrett**  
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**Amber Matas**  
Director of  
Operations  
*Nest Environments*



**Gina Noda**  
Marketing  
Manager  
*Sargenti  
Architects*



**Julia Versteegh**  
Business  
Development  
Manager  
*Storefloors*



**Ann Terrill**  
President  
*TerCon Construction*



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late-night phone calls. And you still have to have the store open and ready for business at 10 a.m.

**Julia Versteegh, Storefloors:** I'm working on a new website for our company, which will help increase incoming calls. We're changing the focus. Because we sell all types of flooring, Storefloors is highly focused on the consulting aspect of flooring. We're making it more product-focused, which means there will be more visuals. I think it's really going to increase traffic and calls.

**Paula Manning, TD Bank:** TD Bank's fiscal year ends on October 31, so this time of year is very busy. DeNovo growth is a core competency at the bank, and in the past year a new renovations team has been established to drive and execute the TD Brand within the existing store portfolio.

Over the summer, 40 stores were targeted to be renovated by FY end. That is a tight turn around for design, permits and execution, but also very exciting. The difference between the DeNovo growth model and the Renovations model is that most of the construction management for renovations is executed with outsource firms and requires a different way of management.

**Dina DiNunzio, Identicom Sign Solutions:** I handle a lot of the administrative functions. We're a very cyclical business, so we were very fortunate. We've had a pretty good season so far. While we have been affected by the economy with store openings and things like that,

we're very excited. We have a lot of new projects, like America's Best Value Hotels that are happening. We do a little bit of work in Canada with medical facilities, so we're handling a lot of the project management for that.

**Sandy Severson, Brown Shoe Company:** We are about to launch a complete remodel of the second floor of our corporate office. So we have been meeting with contractors. We're moving people and remodeling all at the same time, so it's a matter of controlled scheduling.

**Amber Matas, Nest Environments:** One of our clients has a really big roll-out at a lodge at Mammoth Mountain and their deck in California. It's a five-year brand sponsor. It's an enormous amount of work in a short period of time – from initial design conceptualizing, all the way to building it out and installing it. All of us are up at night for that one. It's going to be a cool project, so the sleepless nights are worth it.

The other thing is the expansion plans that we have in place, as well as outlining the next five months of growth. We are moving into a bigger production facility. We're in California, so things like paint booths and all of the regulations that go along with moving equipment, machinery and production is logistically keeping me busy.

**Diane Kelley, Multnomah Athletic Club:** We're open 364 days out of the year. We only close from 11 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., so we have a six-hour work shift. On top of the two-dozen proj-



**They have to give you the respect to be able to ask a question, and they must be willing to offer that feedback on a professional level.**

**— Janis Williams, Tuesday Morning**

ects I have ongoing now, I'm planning for next year's projects because we have to get approvals for all the funding and capital requests. So we're in the middle of budgeting right now.

**It's important you know what you're talking about. If you do, you're golden. If you don't, it's an issue.**

**— Gina Noda, Sargenti Architects**





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**Find a mentor. Whether it's a man or woman, find somebody who can help you learn the industry.**

**— Amber Matas, Nest Environments**

### **Kelly King, Dollar General:**

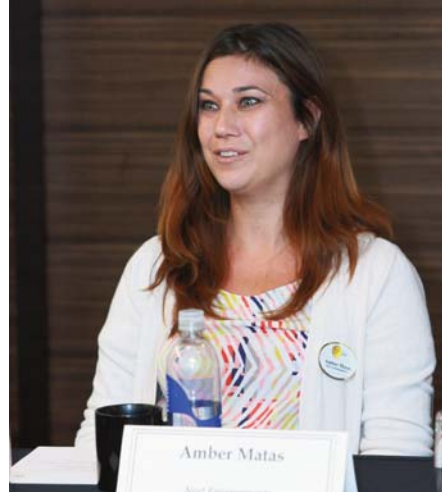
Dollar General is growing like gangbusters. The recession actually has increased our sales. And, in turn, we've increased the amount of construction projects we're doing without increasing the project managers significantly. So our biggest issue is meeting the number of stores we have to open in a timely manner each month.

We have to fixture a 10,000-square-foot store in six days. It takes

a lot of coordination to make that happen. Working in all the different areas, with different regulations and inspectors, can be challenging, especially as fast as we turn our stores over. So that's really my biggest focus is getting those stores turned over on time.

### **Milissa Garrity – Chain Store Maintenance:**

We're finally getting out of the recession and people are getting busy. They're starting to



spend money. Projects are coming in left and right. So we're trying to make sure we're fully staffed. We've been really busy with projects and even just regular maintenance work. It's around the clock – lots of sleepless nights.

**Vickie Berry, AT&T:** We're building a one-of-a-kind, 10,500-square-foot flagship store on Michigan

## Dinner with a view kicks off Women's Retreat

Cocktails. Dinner. Networking. A look at the time ahead. And let's not forget about dinner in the **W Hotel's** rooftop lounge and bar area. That's how attendees of the **Women in Commercial Construction & Facilities Retreat** kicked off their three-day networking event. The rooftop lounge area is defined by its infinity-edge pool, a favorite relaxation spot for hotel guests. The retreat was sponsored by *Commercial Construction & Renovation* magazine.



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We've been focused on and continue to focus on our DeNovo growth, especially in the New York market. However; we now are building an equally robust program for renovations using a majority of outsource project managers.

— Paula Manning, TD Bank



Avenue in Chicago – while the design still is occurring. It has an open date of September 1. The logistics of this project have been monumental. We have a car in there, as well

as more than 200 LED screens. This will be our flagship store and we're very excited to have our latest technology for customers to touch and see what's right for them.

In addition, I'm focusing on our construction program for next year – understanding what it's going to be and try to staff up for it. We try to have projects spaced out evenly throughout the year. That means

## Meet me at the High

Networking doesn't get much better than an afternoon trip to the museum. That's exactly where attendees of the **Women in Commercial Construction & Facilities Retreat** headed, taking in the **High Museum of Art's** treasure drove of art pieces.

The High, one of the leading art museums in the southeastern United States, features more than 13,000 works of art in its permanent collection, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; significant holdings of European paintings and decorative art; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. Along with the tour, attendees and their significant others were treated to an exclusive lunch in the museum.

The retreat was sponsored by *Commercial Construction & Renovation* magazine.





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the work is steady, as opposed to trying to get 75 projects done in two weeks. It's tough. You have to be able to have projects defined and funded in advance.

**Kerri Keingstein, Boss Facility Services:** Being on the project side we are facilitating roll-outs, refreshes, relocations, temp spaces, store closings, etc. Each have a unique timeline and scope of work. Understanding the clients' needs, time constraints and expectations is critical in executing the project. Our job is not to meet, but exceed our clients expectations with every job, big or small. Communication is a key factor and one of things our clients are always praising us for.

When there are issues with time constraints, it's our job to roll with the punches and ensure we do everything possible to meet the deadlines put in place. Things may need to be shifted internally, to accommodate a shift or push in schedules, but at the end of the day we make things happen. This year was a great year. We already have a ton of projectwork slotted for 2013. We are extremely busy right now, so our focus is on staffing, processes, procedures and internal controls to continue to support the growth of our clients and the company. In October, we will be

moving into a larger facility, which will enable us to better serve our current and future clients.

**CCR:** What advice would you give about being a woman in the construction industry?

**Kelley:** You must have confidence in yourself. That's the most important thing. And don't be intimidated by what anybody has to say.

**King:** Education, education, education. You have to be smarter. A good manager surrounds herself with people who are better at their jobs than she is. What your people do makes you look better. The type of person I want to work for recognizes that they need that.

**Gina Noda, Sargenti Architects:** It's important you know what you are talking about. If you do, you are golden. If you don't, you have an issue. For 15 years prior to coming to the architectural side, I worked for a GC. I dealt with subcontractors all the time. As long as I knew what I was talking about I had no issues. I never had any issues with any man disrespecting me or speaking down to me. I wouldn't tolerate it either.

**Berry:** I started in the industry 36 years ago – in architecture school. There were three other women in that class. Two of us graduated. It was a male-dominated industry. So, yes, education is



**You have to have thick skin, too. You have to be able to give back the jokes as much as you get them. Having a great sense of humor helps.**

**— Courtenay James, Retail Design Institute**

absolutely a critical component of success. As a woman, I always felt that I needed to know a little bit more than the other guy. Being able to do what you say, and do it a little better, is a huge advantage. And you have to bring value to the job, not so much as a woman, but as the right person for the job.



**It's also about being able to stand side-by-side with that GC when there is a problem and you are both afraid that you're going to miss a date. You want to work together to accomplish the goal at hand.**

**— Kelly King, Dollar General**



**Whether you are a man or woman, you have to be able to build relationships and respect those you work with.**

**— Tahereh Hedrick, FedEx Office**

Over time, you need to increase your education and skill set. Become a subject matter expert in maybe one or two areas. Be that go-to person. Never stop learning.

**Severson:** I started back in the '80s, too. When I started, it was an interesting experience. Every day someone would question or challenge me on something. They would think, "That little girl doesn't know anything." I had to go home

at night and do extensive reading on HVAC, plumbing and electrical.

My first project was a renovation of two restaurants. I'm dealing with historic buildings and with unions. I learned to listen. That's the most important thing you can do. Ask the sub-contractors what they would do. Ask them if they've thought of something else to do. Never lose your femininity. Above all us, stay true to yourself.

**Keingstein:** Asking the right ques-



tions and other people's advice is important.

**James:** You have to have thick skin, too. You have to be able to give back the jokes as much as you get

## One-on-one meetings allow end users, vendors to talk shop

"And the clock starts...now." That's the phrase you have to get used to during one of the **Women in Construction & Facilities Retreat's** vaunted one-one-meetings, which puts end users and vendors face-to-face in 15-minute business meetings. The sessions continue to be one of the best networking and business opportunities the industry has to offer. The retreat was sponsored by *Commercial Construction & Renovation* magazine.





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When you hire someone, you're hoping they turn out to be that ace you're looking for. I've found that it takes time for them to learn how to train.

— Ann Terrill, TerCon Construction



them. Having a great sense of humor helps.

**Tahereh Hedrick, FedEx Office:**  
A sense of humor is really important. I work with a lot of men, so being able to take it and dish back out is important. Whether you are a man

or woman, you have to be able to build relationships and respect those you work with. I used to work in architecture firms. One day, while surveying on a job, I had a guy come up to me and ask if I knew how to use the tape measurer I was carrying. I told him that I wasn't sure if the

two degrees that I received meant I knew how to use a tape measurer, but that I would try.

At some point, you have to disregard some of those things you hear because they are just not worth your time. It wasn't worth my time to go back and forth with him. You

## Atlanta at 723 feet above

It's one of those dinners you won't forget – being 723 feet above the city in a revolving upscale restaurant that offers a one-of-a-kind, 360-degree panorama view of the Atlanta skyline and surrounding metropolitan area.

Well, the attendees of the **Women in Commercial Construction & Facilities Retreat** will always have that in common. The **Sun Dial Restaurant, Bar & View**, located at the top of the **Westin Peachtree** hotel, was the site of the group's second night dinner. Along with a happy hour cocktail party and dinner, attendees arrived via the hotel's scenic glass elevators, which take you on a memorable 73-story ride to the top.

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— Vember Stuart-Lilley, Guess?



## Stadiums, Cokes, and more

As our attendees were busy powering through their business meetings and one-on-one sessions, their significant others were taking in the sights and sounds of Atlanta, including stops at the **World of Coca-Cola** and **Turner Field**, home of the **Atlanta Braves**.

The World of Coca-Cola tour helped shed some light on the **Coca-Cola Company**, its flagship beverage – Coca-Cola – and the more than 500 brands it offers in more than 200 countries.

The Turner Field tour provided a historical look at the team and its stadium, including stops at the **Coca-Cola Sky Field**, press box, broadcast booth, dugout, clubhouse, **Scout's Alley** and the **Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum & Hall of Fame (BMHF)**, which features more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952), to Milwaukee (1953-65) and Atlanta (1966-present).

The retreat was sponsored by *Commercial Construction & Renovation* magazine.

have to have thick skin. That's so important. Keep building relationships and trust the people you work with.

**Matas:** Find a mentor. Whether it's a man or woman, find somebody who can help you learn the industry. Sometimes, in our industry, it's hard to find a woman who is in a position of rank. But it's easier today than when I started. Having somebody to bounce ideas off makes a huge difference.

**Williams:** I have several male professionals that I can ask questions to when I'm not quite sure of something. They will give me a perspective from a man's point of view on how they would review or approach a situation. But that individual must hold your confidence and confidentiality. He has to give you the respect to be able to ask a question, and he must be willing to offer that feedback on a professional level.

**Berry:** Don't fake things. If you don't know, say you don't know. And then make an effort to find the right answer. If not, you will look transparent, and that will bite you in the end.

**Williams:** You can always say, "I'll take this under advisement." That way, you're not leaning in a direction that you don't know, but you are informing them that it is a situation you will handle.



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**King:** I applied for my first project manager job in 1984. I got the interview as a favor to the man who I worked for. This project manager looked me straight in the eye and said, "Our company will never hire a female project manager." Said it flat out. We've come a long way since 1984. But a lot of companies still look at it that way. If you visit their construction departments the only female positions you will see are the backup positions and the ones who handle the paperwork.

**Noda:** On the retailers' side, there were not many job openings for director or VP level positions, and there were only a few companies that had those positions filled by a women.

**King:** Dollar General probably is one of the most open companies as far as diversity. The eclectic backgrounds of the people in our company are so impressive. The head of my department, company growth and development, is female and she is impressive. It's all about diversity. I really like working for them for that reason.

**Askew:** It's really a cultural thing.



Until we get females in higher-level positions, it will be really difficult to change the culture of a company – any company.

**Barrett:** I've been out on two maternity leaves over the past five years. I took a break from that management track. It becomes about leaving at 4:30 so that you can dedicate some time to your kids when you're not on the road. But when they go to bed, I'm back on the computer at 8:30 or 9 at night checking emails and getting things done, sometimes until 1 a.m. in the morning. That's my pattern. That's what I do to maintain balance between family and work, and taking care of everything else around me. As a woman, I think we're all project managers at heart because our entire life is that way.

When I started, our company was small. We grew a lot. The people I started with, a lot of men, are starting their own families now. It comes down to developing those trusting relationships. You need to find others who can offer advice on how to manage everything. It's nice to have that kind of support system.

**Noda:** It's better now than when I first started.

**Berry:** Absolutely, but it still exists.

**Rotton:** One of the things I've seen from a vendor standpoint is to become that industry expert.

I was challenged in a construction group located in Atlanta, we were bringing in educational programs,



**I think the epiphany for me was when I became a subject matter expert for our department in writing PIPs. It really helped me feel like I knew what I was talking about.**

**— Jo-Ellen Askew, Starwood Hotels**

they kept asking me to bring in an industry expert to do a presentation on window films. And I kept saying I'm that expert. Another key thing I've found is that whether you're working with architects, engineers, design professionals or construction professionals, you have to have a servant-type attitude. "Let's see what the problem is and what we have to do to solve it." It's about

**That's what's so great about this industry. I sit here today and think about all the things I've learned. Every day is a new challenge.**

**— Kay Barrett, Cassidy Turley**



## Open Forum

We've had a pretty good season so far. While we have been affected by the economy with store openings and things like that, we're very excited.

— Dina DiNunzio,  
Identicom Sign Solutions



working to solve the problem together.

My boss always says that I will do whatever it is you ask me to do. That's the way I was raised. But I love my job. I love solving problems. I always say that if I don't have the answer for you, I will find it.

**Stuart-Lilley:** You need to know your audience, too. Whenever I get to a job site, I assess whom I'm working with and how I need to communicate with them. You have to stand your ground and keep your composure.

**Barrett:** One time, a male manager came up to me and said, "I just made somebody cry."

"Okay," I responded.

"Well, what do you mean?" I said. "Everybody cries in front of me."



Education is absolutely a critical component of success. As a woman, I always felt that I needed to know a little bit more than the other guy.

— Vickie Berry,  
AT&T



At the time, I had all women reporting to me. I think they felt they could. Yet he was shocked. He told me she was the first woman he had ever managed. "I just didn't understand; I don't understand why people get emotional," he said.

I tell the people I mentor today to keep their emotions in check, especially with contractors. Try to deal with the facts and the basics. Letting your emotions go on the worksite paints an unusual and uncomfortable

image.

**King:** You still have to maintain. It's not okay for us to break down and start spitting out cuss words. That shouldn't happen.

**Manning:** It's about composure.

**King:** Exactly. It's also about being able to stand side-by-side with that

We're finally getting out of the recession and people are getting busy. They're starting to spend money. Projects are coming in left and right.

— Milissa Garrity,  
Chain Store Maintenance

## Open Forum

GC when there is a problem and you are both afraid that you're going to miss a date. You want to work together to accomplish the goal at hand. That's where the respect comes from.

**Keingstein:** You have to learn how to deal with people on their level or with their personality. I think women are better at knowing how to change from one mode to the next rather quickly. We know how to play the mother role.

**Manning:** There is a lot to the networking game, too. For example, we don't play a lot of golf. And that can become an issue in a male-dominated industry. With banking, it's not so much a male-dominated industry. There are many senior executive women in the ranks.

Sometimes, there tends to be a networking issue when the men say they are going to get a game [of golf] going. There's an exclusion that can happen. They may invite you; they may not invite you. But it's very easy for them to bond or connect at a level that's more difficult for a woman to break through. We're wives and mothers. I don't go out drinking with the boys. So that's

a little different playing field for women.

**Berry:** I just finished a book that talks about "girl power." It talks about networking for women and networking for men. It says that you shouldn't underestimate the female network. It's a different network, but it's most likely a broader network.

For example, you can build your network through your children, finding other professionals who are mothers and who have kids. You've got a network there, but you don't tap it on a professional level. You don't really realize it because it's on a social level or through your children. So while golf is important, understanding what network you have can get you just as far.

**CCR:** When did you feel like you had this all figured out – you could do this?

**Askew:** I think the epiphany for me was when I became a subject matter expert for our department in writing PIPs. It really helped me feel like I knew what I was talking about.

**Kelley:** It's about reputation. All of a sudden you have a reputation for knowing what you know and people realize that. People start calling you and wanting more.

**Ann Terrill, TerCon**

**Construction:** When I was at Wal-mart, where I worked as a sen-



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**— Kerri Keingstein,  
Boss Facility  
Services**

ior construction manager before I broke out on my own, I actually had a group of peers. There were 46 construction managers at Wal-mart in the new store construction arena. We created a construction managers focus group. We had



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**— Diane Kelley,  
The Multnomah Athletic Club**



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the construction managers select someone who they wanted to lead that group. All but two or three selected me.

So for me, the epiphany was that I gained some real credibility. I was one of only two women in that department and the guys selected me to lead that group. It was pretty incredible.

All of a sudden people are coming to you going and asking, "How do you do it? How do you deal with this? How will you respond to these various opportunities? When you start to see people take note, you think, "Wow, it is so nice to know that I am able to add value and mentor others like the great mentors before me."

**Berry:** I have little epiphanies every day where I'll ask, "How do I know all of that?" That's when I realize that I have come a long way from where I started. And then somebody will ask me something I do know the answer to and I'll think, "I didn't even know I knew that."

**Barrett:** That's what's so great about this industry. I sit here today and think about all the things I've learned. Every day is a new

challenge. That's why I love this business. You take a project, assess what you know, and then apply it. But how do I teach it? That has been a big challenge. Once you realize you know it, you have to figure out how to transfer it and make it worth something to someone else.

**Terrill:** I started an apprenticeship program in my company where we have journeymen that understand how to function in all the various trades we do. But we also have a helper. I won't hire someone to work for my company now unless they actually are willing to train a helper. When you hire someone, you're hoping they turn out to be that ace you're looking for. I've found that it takes time for them to learn how to train. So you must become a good mentor and teach them how to train so that they can share that knowledge.

To me, construction is a dying breed for labor. Everybody is going to various trades besides construction. It's hot. The hours are long. There are so many different variables. It's not a Monday through Friday, 8 to 5 job. So I've learned a lot about the dynamics of taking these young men and women who want to learn and grow. It's about mentoring and teaching them.

**Berry:** I was honored when several different people asked me to mentor them about eight years ago. Since



**I'm working on a new website for our company, which will help increase incoming calls. We're changing the focus. I think it's really going to increase traffic and calls.**

**— Julia Versteegh, Storefloors**

then, I have mentored numerous employees who have continued to advance in the company. They came to me for that counsel and advise and it appears to be serving them well. It's pride that you feel. They are the next generation of leaders. [CCR](#)



**One of the key things I've found is that whether you're dealing with architects, engineers, design professionals or construction professionals, you have to have a servant-type attitude.**

**— Cindy Rotton, Solutia, a Subsidiary of Eastman Chemical Co.**