

## FIRMS breaking new ground

WillisTowers Watson



Image courtesy of BT Construction

BT Construction's Jordan Hurd and Perry Silvey (center left and center right) accepted the first-place safety award from AGC and representatives of Willis Towers Watson in Orlando.

### Colorado's BT Construction Honored By AGC for Firm's Safety Program

BT Construction was recently honored by AGC of America for having one of the nation's best construction safety and wellness plans during 2020. The Henderson, Colo.-based firm was given the award during the association's Willis Towers Watson Construction Safety Excellence Awards, an annual recognition of construction safety programs. Forty-three other companies were also selected as winners for the quality of their safety programs.

"Having a successful construction project starts with having a safe workplace for your employees. It is crucial, now more than ever, for a firm to build its safety culture," said Bob Lanham, AGC president and the president of Williams Brothers Construction Co. Inc. in Houston. "These award recipients are leading the industry by showcasing the safest worksites in the country."

Lanham said BT Construction was selected as a first-place winner because of its exceptional leadership in safety. He noted that the firm developed and implemented an exceptional safety and risk control program through continuous improvement and maintenance of safety and health management systems. Lanham said the company's commitment to protecting its most valuable asset, its workers, makes it a leader in the industry.

The AGC-Willis Towers Watson Construction Safety Excellence Award winners are selected by a panel of five independent safety professionals within the government, corporate and insurance industries. The awards are given in a number of categories, based on the amount and type of work performed. Final judging for the awards program took place during AGC's annual convention in Orlando.

"Willis Towers Watson is proud to be an AGC partner in safety and to sponsor long term the AGC's Construction Safety Excellence Awards, a partnership that began over 30 years ago," said Mike Fredebeil, North American director of construction safety, Willis Towers Watson.

## NEWS briefs

### Architecture Billings Index Is Up Again in September

Architecture firms continue to report increasing demand for design services in September, according to a new report from the American Institute of Architects.

The Architecture Billings Index (ABI) score for September was 56.6, which is up from August's score of 55.6. Any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings from the prior month. During September, scoring for both the new project inquiries and design contracts moderated slightly, but remained in positive territory, posting scores of 61.8 and 54.7 respectively.

"The ABI scores over the last eight months continue to be among the highest ever seen in the immediate post-recession periods that have been captured throughout the index's history," said AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker. "However, it's unlikely that revenue increases at architecture firms can sustain this pace. Given that growth in both new design contracts and project inquiries have moderated in recent months, we expect to see a similar path for the ABI."

Key ABI highlights for September include:

- Regional averages: Midwest (57.7); South (57.0); West (56.0); Northeast (51.5)

- Sector index breakdown: mixed practice (58.8); commercial/industrial (58.1); multifamily (56.1); institutional (53.5).

The regional and sector categories are calculated as a three-month moving average, whereas the national index, design contracts and inquiries are monthly numbers.

## RUSH - TIME VALUE NEWSPAPER

## COMMENTARY

### Minority Perspective: 'Now I Bring My Full Self to Work'

By Maryam Ghatee

I spent most of my formative years in Shiraz, a city in southwest Iran famous for the gardens, poets, art and hospitality of its people. Social clubs and organizations were almost non-existent. Shiraz is also a place where friendships that often lead to lasting relationships are easily made with neighbors, classmates or colleagues.

In the U.S., however, where I moved in 2005 and became a citizen five years later, I found it a little harder to get to know people and fit in at work. Although many construction employers have started an Employee Resource Group (ERG) in recent years, the industry has yet to integrate many American minorities into its overall workforce.

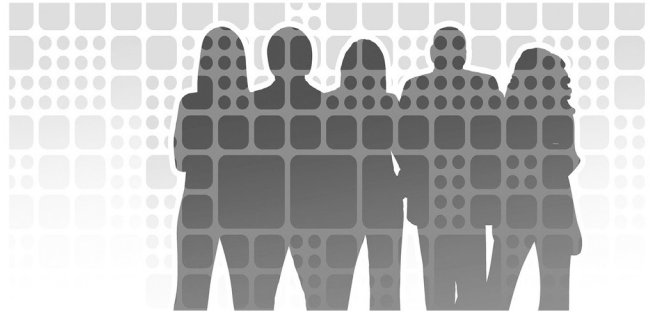
*Over the next few months, I noticed a male colleague going on jobsite tours and attending seminars I had not heard about.*

In my first year of employment in construction, I received an invitation to a women's meeting at the company's main office. It was 2008, when the need to retain women was already clear to industry leaders. I asked the only other female on our 20-person project team if she was attending. We were in our twenties, both childless.

She finished double-knotting her steel-toe boots and tossed back her hair. "Nah," she said. "It's just a bunch of women whining about white men."

The white men I worked with didn't give me any hardship, so I nodded in agreement. I didn't attend either.

But there were obstacles to building relationships and even participating in office small talk. I had never participated in the top three pastimes of my colleagues—golf, sailing and skiing. I could not



contribute to many casual conversations at work, and I often felt like an outsider.

When I became a mother in 2013, the changes hit me harder than most people I know.

Like others, they made me aware of the little support that working parents have in America, but also—unexpectedly—woke me up to the reality of my immigrant identity.

No matter how much I dressed, spoke and acted like someone who was born and raised in this country, it did not alter the fact that I was a Muslim immigrant from the Middle East. After a lonely attempt at being a stay-at-home mom, I joined the workforce again and while at work, I kept my immigrant identity to myself. It wasn't others' responsibility that I had sought a better life.

When I received the company email about launching its ERG in 2018, I shrugged and assumed the firm was doing it just to tell the world it was inclusive. I hit the delete button. "These groups only bring division, not inclusion," I heard someone grumble.

Over the next few months, I noticed a male colleague going on jobsite tours and attending seminars that I had not learned about. I asked how he had heard about them, feeling left out.

"It's by the Young Professionals ERG," he replied, double-knotting his steel-toe boot.

Job tours and seminars? I thought, I'll take that. So I scrolled through the list of ERGs and joined the groups for Young Professionals and Women.

Concurrently, on my personal journey of coming to peace with my immigrant identity, I learned that in order to adjust and assimilate, I shouldn't be sitting around waiting for support from other people. Instead, I should be actively supporting other minorities.

Soon after this realization, I became an active member of all the ERGs in my organization, even though I only identify with one of the seven. It goes without saying that each minority has a different story and a unique identity.

But what I have found is that as a minority, how we experience the world around us is quite similar. Conscious or not, we all keep a part of ourselves in check, in an attempt to blend in at work. Even though my identities didn't fit within most of the ERGs, my personal stories were relatable to others.

I started to bring my full self to work.

As it turns out, the leaders of my company, Gilbane Building Co., show up regularly in the ERG meetings, and for the first time in my professional career, I am proud of the people I work for, seeing the humanity in them as they see me for the human I am. I look forward to coming to work every day, and I finally feel at home. The ERGs have become the caring heart of my organization.

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### September Contracts for Future Construction in Cheyenne metropolitan area

(in millions of dollars)	2021	2020	% Change
Nonresidential	\$0.9M	\$0.4M	+++
Residential	\$13.9M	\$7.5M	84
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION	\$14.8M	\$8.0M	85

### Construction starts, year-to-date on a cumulative basis

(in millions of dollars)	2021	2020	% Change
Nonresidential	\$29.6M	\$36.8M	-20
Residential	\$105.3M	\$83.1M	27
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION	\$134.9M	\$119.9M	12

- Nonresidential buildings include commercial, manufacturing, educational, religious, administrative, recreational, hotel, dormitory and other buildings.
  - Residential buildings include one- and two-family houses and apartments.
- +++ means greater than 100% change

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