



Victoria Yau

Position: Senior Project Manager

Company: Clark Construction

Years of Experience: 15 years

Education: B.A. in Architecture UC Berkeley, College of Environmental Design

Certifications: LEED Green Associate

Organizations: ACE Mentor Program SF Bay Area, Associate Board Member



We are the leading association for women in construction.

Our core purpose is to strengthen and amplify the success of women in the construction industry.

Our association is committed to championing women to impact the direction of the construction industry. NAWIC provides education, community, and advocacy for women.

At what point in your life did you realize or decide construction would be your career, and why?

Halfway through my career in architecture, I realized what I enjoyed the most about work was the construction administration (CA) phase; only a handful of architects and designers get the opportunity to do CA for the projects they design, and if they do get that opportunity, they are only allotted a few hours on the jobsite per week.

I learned the most whenever I was out in the field, seeing how the building came together, and also through real-time detail coordination and problem-solving with the general contractor and trade partners. I wanted more of that interaction; being in the field during CA invigorated me because it allowed me to learn how to be a better designer and detailer.

With my new role on the general contractor side, I've been able to get the best of both worlds—leaning on my experience and attention to detail from being on the design side but also tapping into my strengths of problem-solving to ensure that the building is being built according to the contract drawings, while still meeting the design intent to keep the Owner happy.



What positions have you held prior to your current role?

2008-2017 (Dreiling Terrones Architecture, and CSDA Design Group)

- Work for (9) years in Architecture as a Designer / Project Manager focused mainly in K-12 Education sector and Acoustical Architecture in Greater Los Angeles, Greater Bay Area, Seattle-Tacoma, and Great Falls prior to switching to Construction Management

2017-current (Clark Construction)

- Past Project: 150 Van Ness (Multi-family in San Francisco, CA); Role: Interiors Trade Manager – Liaison between the AOR and Interior Designer and Trade Partners for all interiors finishes for 420 units and high-end amenity spaces
- Past Project: SFO International Terminal Building Refresh; Role: Site Logistics and Financials Project Manager – Liaison between Client (Airport), Stakeholders, other GCs working in the terminal buildings and airfield, and local AHJs for all construction activities related to our project; also managed the Change Orders, Billing, and other Financials for the project pre- and post-GMP
- Other: Pursuits and Preconstruction – worked on multiple pursuits and interviews, business development, as well as purchasing in Preconstruction



“
Be kind to yourself and give yourself some grace. Speak up and speak often. Keep your head up while you blaze that trail, but don't forget to reflect, look back, and carry your fellow sisters in the industry forward with you along the way.
”

What are your responsibilities in your current role?

Current Project: UCSF Block 34 Clinical Building

Role: Billing Manager and Quality Manager
– I work to streamline and manage the billing process with Owner and Trade Partners, while working with our Business Manager to continue to get paid on time and efficiently; but, the majority of my time is spent as a Quality Manager—managing prep phase meetings, mock-ups, first installs with our internal Trade Managers and Trade Partners, as well as coordinating all inspections with our Design Team, field supervision, Inspection Team and State Fire Marshal.

What motivated you to pursue general contracting rather than a related field (architecture, structural engineer, subcontracting, etc.)

Being on the general contracting side keeps me on my toes. Every day on site there are fires to be put out, problems to solve, and opportunities to learn. I love untying the knots with everyone on site. I like to tell people that my job allows me to be “comfortably unconformable” because I am learning all the time.



Clark is constructing a five-story clinical building and nine-story parking garage as part of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)'s development of Block 34 at its Mission Bay campus in San Francisco.

What advice would you give the next generation of women entering the construction industry?

Be kind to yourself and give yourself some grace. Speak up and speak often. Keep your head up while you blaze that trail, but don't forget to reflect, look back, and carry your fellow sisters in the industry forward with you along the way.

What is your favorite part of working in construction?

Our work is “Result-oriented” – Seeing the tangible results of our hard work in construction is gratifying; progress is being made every day and you can see it as it comes together. Also, “Teamwork” – I love the comradery that our team and Trade Partners build as we work together daily and see the building come together.



What is your proudest accomplishment in your career, and why?

My proudest moment is when I decided to change careers after almost a decade in architecture. It was a big deal because of all the internal pressures from my family about working in a different field that what you “studied” in college. At that moment in my career, after many months of deliberation, I was finally in the right headspace to block out all the noise and tell myself that it was “OK” that I was changing careers. I had mustered up enough courage to take that leap and get into an industry that I knew I could still flourish in based on my past experiences. And I haven’t looked back since!

What initiatives, if any, does your organization have specifically to empower women?

At Clark Construction, we have employee resource groups (ERGs), known at Clark as enERGY Groups, and we have one specifically for Women in Construction—Women’s Insight Network (WIN). I am currently serving as the Norcal/PNW Treasurer and Event Coordinator. WIN’s mission is Building and Empowering More Women Leaders within our company and industry. Clark recognizes that people feel more comfortable when they feel empowered to be themselves and proud of who they are at work and Clark and WIN have helped to foster that environment on all my jobs.

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How does the reality of your job differ from the expectations you had before becoming a construction industry professional?

I didn’t realize that there are so many different roles on the general contracting side and because of this, professional hires like myself, are able to find a way to contribute and use their strength at all phases of a project.

How long did it take for you to feel you were fully grasping your industry and/or current role?

It took me about three months before I felt comfortable with my new role, being on the “other side” of the table. I realized after those months that it was actually “me” who was putting undue pressure on myself—I was the one making myself “uncomfortable,” “being in my head” about being a woman in construction and having imposter syndrome. As I got to know my teammates and trade partners more as “people” and not just “work colleagues, I started being myself again and realized that no one was looking at me because I was a “woman”; the expectation was that I was there to do my job (well), be a team player and that’s what mattered most.



What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy cooking and hosting themed dinners with my friends and family. My husband and I love hiking and backpacking locally and abroad. Since our son, Marcus, was born in 2021, we've been collecting stamps at national parks we've visited with him so that he'll hopefully enjoy it as well as he gets older.

Fun fact about you?

I picked up trombone so I could join the CalBand when I attended UC Berkeley. I played and marched for the University of California Marching Band, which allowed me to travel with the football and basketball team to games throughout the season; we went to Bowl games every winter because our football team was "ranked" during my 4-years in college.



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