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What Being in the Stone Business Means to Me...As a Woman

September 22, 2014 · No Comments

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I consider myself rather lucky that I am a woman in the stone business who has a father as her mentor. Working as a father-daughter team adds depth to our business, International Stoneworks. It also allows us to appeal to different types of customers from homemakers to property managers.

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But what makes me different? What differentiates me from my dad? Yes, he is my boss; yes, he is obviously more knowledgeable about natural stone (he has been in the business for 32 years and I started 5 years ago).

What do I as a woman have to offer not only our company, but also the stone industry?

I am sure the answer is different for every woman, but here are my thoughts on the matter: I think women have to work a little harder than men to establish credibility. When I show up to give an estimate in someone's home or a building, I start by looking professional and I do my best to sound self-assured and smile. Sometimes acting cool isn't easy when the customer opens the door and says: "Oh wow you look young!" I think maintaining composure and looking presentable is half the battle. Knowledge comes with experience in the stone industry and I am still learning, but it sure does feel great to walk through a customer's door and see etched marble countertops because I absolutely know how we as a company can fix this issue.

In addition, some customers appreciate a father-daughter team because it gives a sense of continuity to the business.

Going back to the question, what makes me so different from my dad when dealing with customers? I think that I am more perceptive when it comes to the customer's design aesthetic, likes and dislikes. I try to explain our restoration processes as I understand them. Example: compound polishing marble surfaces is a lot like exfoliating your face. Trust me, my dad would never have come up

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with that one!

There will always be bozos out there (men and women) who just don't want to speak to me about their natural stone because I look and sound like a young woman, but I find overall that clients and coworkers listen to what my thoughts and opinions are, especially when I sound confident in my answers.

In certain cases, some customers are happy to deal with a young woman. It makes a welcoming change for them. Many of our customers are women working in a man's world: a perfect example of that are buildings property managers.

As Assistant Vice President, I work with and manage some of my coworkers. I may not be everyone's best friend, but I am always friendly and courteous. I do not feel the need to be overbearing and I want to maintain a good relationship with everyone in our company; I think that is just good business sense.

Women in stone may need to work harder to prove themselves to be experts in their field, but overall, I think any one of us would say that we feel empowered to be working in this business. In fact, I think it's pretty darn cool that we get to step it up in this typically male dominated industry.

Want to learn what other women feel about working in the stone industry? Of course you do! Join me and a panel of prestigious women at the Marble Institute of America Women In Stone Connection Conference on October 19, 2014 at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

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