

What is your job/role in the industry?

- Deborah Baum is a partner at the law firm Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pitman, where she runs the global litigation section and represents clients. After almost 40 years in the industry, the fact that her job entails doing various tasks on different days has kept her interested and engaged. Moreover, relating to construction and architecture, Deborah has done a number of construction cases for a number of different general contractors and real-estate development clients.

As Deborah has learned more about and worked with several clients in the construction industry, how has her experience been altered by the fact that construction is a male-dominated industry?

- When Deborah first started working in law, there were hardly any women. In fact, she recounts never having worked for a female partner litigator. However, as time has progressed, she has noticed a general uptick in women interested in the industry. Moreover, besides a lack of female role models, her experience has been altered by the fact that she has quite often been underestimated by those around her. However, she honestly believes that that underestimation has given her an advantage.

How would the construction and law industry benefit from having more women?

- Deborah believes that every industry could benefit from having more women - and, while nothing is perfect yet, she has noticed that the amount of women in the law and construction industries has increased, a sign of progress. Similarly, she believes that people have started taking advantage of the differences of opinions that women can bring, recalling another story about the importance of learning to “disagree agreeably.”

Are there any misconceptions that she has noticed or faced about being a woman and being a lawyer or being a woman and educated about construction?

- Deborah has noticed that, in the industry, many (men) get nervous when people different than them (women) come into their space and start competing with them. She thinks that as more people work with smart, engaged, interesting young women, more men will figure out that they will do better by surrounding themselves with a diverse crowd of people. Moreover, she wants younger women to know that, despite any assumptions or misconceptions made, there is nothing a smart girl can't do.

Is there any particular achievement she would like to complete or anything that she is proud of completing?

- Despite the risk of sounding cliché, Deborah believes that her proudest achievement is having a great career, which she likes and finds interesting, while having three incredible daughters there to watch and support her. She covets the feeling of being able to have both an amazing career and family while being able to make an impact in the world.

What is the best advice she can offer young females interested in getting involved in law or construction?

- She wants young females to know that learning as much as they can on the ground floor, taking every opportunity possible, and pushing themselves even in uncomfortable situations are integral parts of growing as a person and being able to find success in the industry. Moreover, she advises young females to surround themselves with people they can learn from and to own whatever project they are working on, for she has noticed that once people understand that you have something to add to the conversation, they will want to support you and your career.

What strong mentors has she had?

- Although her mentors were all men, since there were so few women in the industry when she got out of law school, they have been the people who have given her opportunities and pushed her to do the things she would never have done on her own.