

# Celebrating Women in Construction & Legal Services

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## **Angela M. Otto, Partner in Ball Janik LLP's construction and design practice group.**

1. What are the advantages of being a woman in construction?

Angie: The advantage is that women can bring different perspectives and approaches to a dispute when an issue arises.

2. Tell us about the moment you knew law and construction was the career you wanted to pursue?

Angie: I didn't know I wanted to be a lawyer until I was well on my way to getting a psychology degree. My advisor sat me down and told me I didn't have the patience for patients, but I could analyze, dissect, and diagnose problems – skills I use every day in my practice. I was lucky enough to “fall into” construction law during on-campus interviews. It highlights the best of my blue-collar roots, growing up around excavation equipment, and my white-collar education. This mix has allowed me to communicate effectively with the owners of multi-million dollar construction companies, along with the laborers who are often my witnesses.

3. What makes you proud of working in the construction industry?

Angie: The camaraderie at all levels and the parties' general willingness to meet and try to resolve their disputes. I am privileged to represent such a hard-working, devoted group. Even more meaningful to me is that this fellowship extends to the lawyers that I practice with and against – though we advocate fiercely for our clients, we genuinely respect each other.

4. Would you describe your career path as a relatively smooth road?

Angie: Not at all. I've been doing this for more than 20 years now, and I'm glad to see more females in the industry. That was not the case when I started, and I certainly struggled to find a balance between trying to be “just one of the guys” and being true to myself.

5. If so, how did you overcome those obstacles?

Angie: Perseverance and faith that good work above all else leads to success.



6. If you could provide advice to a young female interested in a career in construction or law, what would it be?

Angie: If you have the interest and drive – do it, but do it your way. Find people that you admire in the industry, get to know them, and learn from them.

7. For our readers who might not be as familiar, what can you tell them about what you do?

Angie: I consider myself a problem solver: I assist clients at all stages of construction, from contract negotiation, developing and following risk management procedures, site visits, pre-claim strategy, and resolution, to representation in mediation, arbitration and/or litigation as needed. My goal is to get contractors back to building projects, not litigating disputes.

8. Is there anyone you'd like to thank or give credit to?

Angie: The list is long, but at the top of that list is my former mentor and partner, Arne Gray, who taught me that you don't have to be an [insert colorful expletive] to be an effective advocate.