



BICSI President-Elect Carol Everett Oliver, RCDD, DCDC, ESS, and Cyndi Garrison, RCDD

It may appear like women are involved at a satisfactory level within the BICSI volunteer community. We do, after all, have an incoming women president, which represents 7% of the BICSI Board of Directors. So why should we continue to push for a “women in the ICT industry agenda?” If we look at this goal with the view that the glass is only half full, that does not mean that we need a 50-50 split in the number of women and men. Rather, it is about achieving more equality, overall, in the industry. And since that can take generations to achieve, we need to keep growing.

It has only been about the past 20 years that women have even been considered participants in the ICT industry, finally transitioning away from “I’ll take my coffee black with one sugar” duties or being a technical writer or marketing professional with limited field experience. While the

# More than Words from Women in BICSI

## “We Need to Keep Growing Women in ICT!”

By Cyndi Garrison, RCDD, Five Points Infrastructure Services, LLC

industry has evolved, ICT continues to be one of the more difficult professions for women to break into – whether that stems from our upbringing, schooling, or lack of mentorship. Even women supporting women is not always easy.

Recently, I read the following excerpt on a website for a women-owned electrical company:

*“Ever been a pioneer? I have been one since I decided that college was not for me, office work was not for me... working with electricity WAS for me. Imagine being a woman getting into the electrical industry over three decades ago. There weren't many of us. I was always under a microscope. You know what that meant. It was not fun at times, and it was ALWAYS hard work.”*

This woman's experience has become her motto, and it now guides her company's core values. While many women

now entering the ICT industry may no longer consider themselves pioneers, they are still essential in shaping the industry and pushing for women to gain more acceptance from their male peers. However, when men still make the decisions about who to hire based on pre-determined notions—physical strength, emotions, culture, etc.—it can often prevent women from being in the field and limit them to more “acceptable” roles like human resources, marketing, or project management positions. But we have just as much right and ability to be in the field as men.



Cyndi in the field.

Women who have a love for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and find themselves drawn to learn the processes and gain the understanding of technology, usually see the needs and requirements of a project differently than men. We tend to hear or translate different requirements based off the same information and experience. And these skills can enable a business to be more holistic in their approach and what they can offer to their clients. In today's world where communication is essential, there is a significant benefit to the way women approach working in this industry – wanting a deep learning to make sure there is an understanding, feeling the need to “know our stuff” since we are often under a microscope, and needing to push to prove to our peers that we have GAME!

However, the fact remains that the culture of the ICT industry still often feels like a “good ol’ boy” network that makes achieving equalness a challenge. There are certainly practices that can help – like eliminating names and gender on applications so decisions are purely based on experience or skill, or hiring a woman with the same credentials as a man, not because there is a quota to fill or a culture to maintain, but because she just happens to be the best person for the job. Most of the amazing women I have met in this industry do not want an advantage because of their gender or to fill a quota, but being a woman should not be a detriment either. What we really need to do to achieve equalness is to keep growing and bring more women into the industry – especially into roles traditionally held by men.

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