

# ClientSpotlight

## Constrio Inc.

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By Lisa Hegedus

Houser Henry & Syron sat down with Anna Vetter; Vice President, Operations, and Marie-Michelle Carrier; Vice President of Sales, to talk about leading edge products and services, customer service and how two dynamic women have made Constrio successful in the construction industry!

### 1. Please tell us about Constrio Inc.

Constrio is a professional sales firm that represents manufacturing companies in the construction industry. Our extensive network and knowledge of building materials facilitate the design process for architects, designers, developers, and industry professionals.

We establish links between manufacturers and industry decision-makers to ensure that building construction specifications include quality, eco-responsible and innovative products. We offer tailor-made solutions to manufacturing companies so that they can build better buildings.

### 2. Why/how did you start your business?

Anna: My family is involved in manufacturing construction materials, and they were looking for a sales agent to represent them. They were not successful at finding the type of sales agent they wanted, so I offered to take on the role which is where I gained experience.

My background was in finance, so I needed a partner who knew the ins and outs of manufacturing. Marie has worked for many manufacturing companies so we decided that working together would be a great opportunity. We knew we were capable and could provide innovative sales services to support building professionals.

We started by representing the architectural industry. We targeted architects who could use our clients' products in their designs. Business began to increase quickly, and we started developing relationships and identifying other manufacturers who needed our assistance.

Now we have 8 manufacturing clients that we represent across Canada and two offices, one in Montreal and one in Toronto.

We have been able to continue to grow by identifying areas where we could confidently provide better services or solutions to niche areas of the industry, and we now deal with every stakeholder involved in construction projects.

### **3. Tell us about your relationship and how you became business partners?**

We have known each other since high school. We were always friendly with one another but associated with different groups of friends. We ended up going to the same university in Ottawa, and then residing in Montreal. We reconnected at a wedding and became great friends. When this business opportunity arose, it made sense for us to take on the endeavor together.

### **4. As two women running a business in the construction industry, what are you doing differently than what men do?**

Marie: There are more women in the architectural world today, so that has opened doors for us. Being a woman, or otherwise a minority in this industry, could be difficult, but we have proven that we are capable and are very knowledgeable about the industry, products, and client needs. We stay focused and get the job done.

That said, we do run our business with a special touch which our clients appreciate. Women are very receptive to us and we connect well with other women in the industry. They are our biggest allies.

### **5. What made your business a success?**

Our ability to constantly go with the flow. We have never been shy to change course or take on new opportunities. We constantly challenge ourselves and acknowledge when we need to adapt.

### **6. How did you build your brand?**

We have been fortunate that we have not had to market to clients. We sell other people's product and have relied heavily on our clients' branding. We have grown organically and gained clients over the last eight years through word of mouth. However, over the next 12 months we will redirect our focus on building our brand. We

want to expand into different markets and that will require a marketing and business development strategy.

We want to inform customers on who we are and what we do and distinguish us as leaders in the industry through better online presence with our website and social media platforms.

### **7. How do you keep abreast of change in products and business/consumer needs?**

Anna: We have the perfect balance between us. I am always looking for new ways of doing things, investigating new products, and sourcing better systems, while Marie remains focused on service and managing our clients. Marie is in touch with our clients' needs, and I look for new opportunities.

### **8. Have you encountered any lessons, and what would you have done differently?**

There are so many lessons that we have learned over the last eight years, but most importantly, we don't take anything personally. We adjust and keep moving. Failure has generated our success and every failure has been viewed as an opportunity to regroup.

### **9. What do you look for in an employee?**

It depends on the person and the need at the time we are hiring. When a person leaves the company, we redesign the role based on what their strengths and challenges were and the feedback they provided us. There are two things that are necessary in this industry: flexibility and autonomy. We tend to look for people who will want to work for a small business like ours and take this journey with us. We also love encouraging women to enter this industry.

We are very lucky with the team we have in place right now. Everyone brings something to the game to help us succeed.

**10. When it comes to customer service how are your employees trained? Do you have creative and innovative solutions in place?**

We are in sales, so our team must have that skillset. We are also firm believers in providing coaching and having constructive dialogue.

**11. What advice would you give an entrepreneur starting a new business?**

Pick the right partners, love what you do and most importantly, have fun. We genuinely love what we do, and we love doing it together.

**12. What do you hope to accomplish over the next year?**

Launch a new branch of the business. We have been pushing other people's products and would now like to push our own. During COVID we were able to identify many opportunities. Over the next year, we want

to review the opportunities and determine which ones are worth investing energy and resources.

**13. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?**

Putting our feet up and having a day of no responsibilities.

We enjoy taking family trips, traveling, eating good food and drinking good wine. We look forward to when we can do this together again.

**14. What did you look for in an advisor for your business?**

We are looking for an advisor who is an expert. We need someone who will walk us through the process and facilitate everything. We have enjoyed working with Houser Henry & Syron because you were able to project manage all our business-legal needs, which made things really simple for us. We also appreciated how details were broken down into easy-to-understand terms.

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