



Construction Center of Excellence Interview - Laura Soma

Questions to think about:

1. The nature of GLY's work (especially for those unfamiliar with sustainable design and builds)

GLY is a commercial contractor that has been building in the PNW for over 50 years. We specialize in projects both large and small for a number of market sectors including office, retail, healthcare, education, and life sciences. We offer both preconstruction services as well as design/build services. GLY practices sustainable construction on all projects, regardless of any type of certification pursuits. Some of our sustainable practices include our Anti-Idling policy, which provides our field teams and the surrounding communities with cleaner air around the jobsites and our company wide waste diversion goals, which helps to keep as much material out of the landfills, as we can.

2. What pathways (education, certs, jobs, etc.) would someone interested in working in a role like yours Laura need to take to get to where you are?

My role at GLY is Sustainability Manager. Most of my peers with similar roles received a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies, Architecture, or the Built Environment. It is good to have a solid understanding of both sustainable materials and the construction process. Personally, I have a Certificate in Construction Management, an associate degree in Business Management and am a LEED Accredited Professional. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a building rating system widely used across all sectors and recognized world-wide.

3. What lesser known, unique occupations work with GLY (I am sure there are several) that individuals in construction may not have ever considered as they advance in their career path?

Some of the lesser known roles within GLY include Quality Assurance/Quality Control Specialists, Mechanical and Electrical Specialists, Sustainability Specialists, and Design Engineers who typically come from an architecture/engineering background and focus on VDC (Virtual Design and Construction) as a way to find to review the design, identify conflicts, and find solutions to avoid costly field errors. We also have a variety of positions within our Risk Management, Safety, Marketing, and Accounting departments.

4. How were you inspired to become a LEED AP building design and construction? What did it take for you to achieve accredited professional status? In other words, what was your journey?

After completing my AA and Construction Management Certificate, I was encouraged to find a specialty within the construction community. I was familiar and interested in the LEED Certification process for buildings and the greater impact that this certification had on the environment. When I was offered the opportunity to attend a LEED Accreditation class, I jumped on it. At that time, earning your LEED Accredited Professional credential required passing a 4-hour test. Now people can start by earning their LEED Green Associate credential, which requires passing a 2-hour test that most people pass on their first try. From there you can choose which specialty you want to pursue to achieve your AP status. I chose BD+C (Building Design + Construction) as it best pertains to GLY's work. Other specialty options include O+M (Operations + Maintenance), ID+C (Interior Design + Construction), ND (Neighborhood Development) or Homes.

5. Would individuals involved in operations and maintenance as well as interior design and construction, and neighborhood development be able to talk to what inspired them, and how they achieved their journey/credentials?

Ask any professional about their degrees or accreditations and they'd be quite happy to share their journey. In addition to LEED Accreditation, there's several other sustainable accreditations available to pursue.

- Living Future Ambassador (through the International Living Future Institute, which oversees the Living Building Challenge)
- WELL AP (where LEED focuses on the building systems and materials, WELL focuses on the human impacts of buildings)
- Fitwel Ambassador (also focusing on the human impact of the buildings)
- TRUE Advisory (which Focuses on zero waste in construction)

If you have a passion for sustainability, there is an accreditation waiting for you, the best part is deciding which is right for you.

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