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Being a WBE in construction: Is it an advantage?

ACC Construction is a certified WBE, a woman-owned business in the extremely competitive world of New York City construction.

Owned entirely by Michele Medaglia, the company's president and CEO, ACC has grown rapidly over the past 28 years; 16 since Medaglia has been at the helm. She and her team have focused tightly on sales, performance and customer service

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— MICHELE MEDAGLIA

in the close community of midtown building owners.

Although ACC is a regional business, registered to work in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, the firm has found opportunities to work with national companies, large corporate clients who have at least a base office in New York or the New York area.

Interestingly, one of the most straightforward ways to approach a Fortune 100 client is by being a WBE.

M/WBE certification has been around for years. Companies have been talking about diversity in services and hiring for years. But it's only now that there is an active outreach, and ACC has found excellent opportunities in meeting those inquiries.

Major financial corporations who have reached out to ACC because it's a WBE include Capital One, Wells Fargo and Citibank, as well as others.

Additionally, ACC has created relationships with clients who want to encourage WBE participation, who have been happy to include ACC on their roster of qualified contractors because they both support and employ women and minorities.

ACC was part of a larger team that designed and built the new corporate headquarters for Toyota Motors North America last year, which, according to Wendy Schwingel, the project's Owner's Representative, spent 71% of its budget on MBE/WBE vendors.

The architect-designer in that case was TSC Design, an MBE owned by principal Bill Sotomayor; the furniture dealer was Meadows Office Furniture, owned by Rosalie Edson; ACC Construction was the general contractor; and Schwingel is a WBE owner's rep. As recently as ten years ago, this would have been a rare occurrence, if not impossible. TJ Maxx first hired ACC Construction for the 39,000 s/f store at Columbus Avenue and 99th Street that opened in late 2009. Based on the success of that project, ACC successfully bid to build a Marshalls store in Manhasset last spring, which was also a positive experience.

ACC continues to discuss future projects for both TJ Maxx and Marshalls.

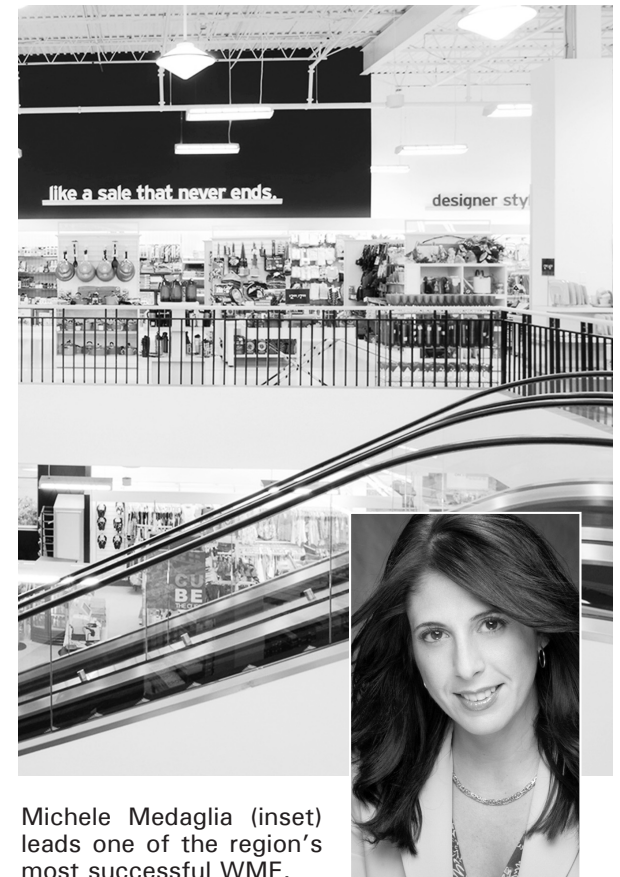
Con Edison met ACC Construction at a PWC (Professional Women in Construction) luncheon; as a company, ConEd is fiercely committed to supporting women in the trades and in construction management.

ACC followed up after the luncheon, starting a process of qualification and verification that eventually led to being added to the bid list.

Lastly, when ACC Construction reached out to CBS's New York facilities staff, they started a qualification process that led to a Master On-Call Service Contract for one of the trades.

Medaglia finds herself in the position of having the best of everything: ACC is in the unique position of being a WBE construction firm with a portfolio that is deep and broad because she was one of the earlier firms to become WBE-certified.

She explained: “Our firm became WBE certified in 2000, but because ACC had been in business since 1984, we had a lot of credibility and solid experience right away. Eventually, there will be more parity in the workplace, including the building trades, but we still find ourselves unusually well qualified, as a WBE, for substantial projects.



Michele Medaglia (inset) leads one of the region's most successful WME.

“How many WBE contractors can say they’ve built public transportation projects like Amtrak’s High Speed Rail Improvement, big box stores like TJ Maxx or super-luxurious stores like Tiffany’s Wall Street?”

It's an enviable position, one that's paying off on a large scale for this boutique-sized firm.