

YAHOO!

Construction company introduces gender-neutral 'at work' signs to hammer out sexism in the industry

December 21, 2018



As part of a gender-neutral initiative, Plaza Construction began to use “Men and Women at Work” signs on its job sites earlier this year. (Photo: Plaza Construction)

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Now this is a sign of the times. A New York-area construction company has scrapped the traditional “Men at Work” sign for an updated version that reads “Men and Women at Work.”

“It is inspirational — being in the industry for over 30 years, this is the first time that I’ve seen signs that are all-inclusive,” says Jacqueline Horowitz, a project executive in construction management for Plaza Construction in New Jersey. “Women are the minority in any construction job site. Depending on the

team, women can be treated fairly. However, the common situation is that women are constantly undermined.”

The updated signs are part of a gender-neutral initiative to “raise awareness and consciousness that women are included in the industry” started by Plaza Construction, which is one of the largest construction companies in New York and has regional offices across the country. The company has instituted mentoring programs for female employees, separate bathroom facilities for women on construction sites, support for women balancing life and family (via maternity leave, for instance) and more. With these programs, the company hopes to encourage more women to pursue a career in the construction industry.

Women make up a small proportion of the construction workforce, currently around 9 percent nationally, although it is one of the few industries with virtually no gender pay gap. In construction, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics information cited in [a recent *New York Post* article](#) on Plaza’s signage, women earn an average of 91.3 percent of what men earn.

The new “Men and Women at Work” signs appear on Plaza’s job sites everywhere from Brooklyn to Miami. Horowitz, who oversees the work on job sites in New Jersey and deals with everyone from clients to architects to contractors, believes that the signs are a great contribution to hammering out sexism in the construction industry.

The inclusive sign has started to appear on Plaza construction sites from New York to Florida. (Photo: Plaza Construction)

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“Certain men assume that women should not be in construction. They think we’re not smart enough, don’t have enough experience or cannot handle stressful situations — this has to change,” says Horowitz. “The new signage is subtle but with a big message. Plaza wants everyone to be treated as people, not by sex.”

“The intent was to create awareness that this work is performed by both men and women — it is gender neutral,” says Rosie Toscano, Plaza’s corporate compliance director, who created the sign. “We want to encourage more women to consider the construction industry as a viable career path.”

According to both Toscano and Horowitz, so far the signs have been a success, garnering praise from male and female employees despite some opposition.

“Women are very excited about the signs, and men are taking the initiative to start practicing what we preach,” says Horowitz. “The signage makes everyone feel welcomed, respected, and it creates trust between the team. It’s the start of new beginnings.”

