

Thriving in Construction | 06 – The Power of Learning for Self-Development in the Construction Industry with Yvette Vasquez

INTRO

Before joining Lunacon Construction Group in 2019, Yvette Vasquez served as the Administrative Assistant of Kohl's Department Store for eight years. A highly skilled individual with Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, time management, teamwork and team building. Yvette has a demonstrated history of working in the retail industry and is now the Administrative and Talent Management at Lunacon Construction Group. Today, Yvette joins us to share her journey and how her position helps Lunacon take an entrepreneurial mindset to succeed.

Patricia: Yvette, how are you?

Yvette: I'm great. How are you?

Patricia: Thank you for being here in the Thriving in Construction, the Podcast.

Yvette: I'm glad to be a participant.

Patricia: Thank you for being here. It's an honor to have you. So we're going to talk about construction. And I know you're relatively new to the industry. Personally, I know you've had people in your family that have been in construction. So tell us about you. What's your background? What happened to you? Where were you before you enter into construction? And what are you doing today?

Yvette: Well, my name is Yvette, I am in the construction industry. I got here two, three years ago fairly new. Definitely I was in the retail industry for about 10 years. I started there from a seasonal cashier and grew into being an administrative manager. As well, I started there, my seed was planted into construction back when I was about in about sixth grade. I started doing woodshop and architecture and I just liked the compassion to civil and see what I could do and things that I've got from a piece of scrap wood that I developed it into a cabinet, or I did something to it. That's where my love for being hands on. So throughout that time.

Patricia: So you actually build, you know with your own hand?

Yvette: Yes, I do. That's my hobby spare time. I like woodshop like scrapwood.

Patricia: how did you learn

Yvette: I learned since in sixth grade. I took it as an elective. And it became a passion.

Patricia: Really? Yeah. In middle school?

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Really?

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Where did you went school or middle school?

Yvette: [inaudible] Middle School.

Patricia: And they teach [inaudible] do it?

Yvette: No, not anymore, they close down the shop.

Patricia: Really?

Yvette: Yeah, it was always awesome.

Patricia: So they had like a trade school?

Yvette: Yes, they have a little small one. It was just one class, you pick that along with technology. So I definitely went into the woodshop area. And it was just cool machinery and everything. That's how I got involved into it. And then throughout high school, I ended up choosing the same thing workshopping architecture. So then that teacher kind of saying, "Why don't you get in the and she says you're good at this, you would thrive in that atmosphere."

Patricia: And what happened? Did you follow that?

Yvette: I did.

Patricia: Well, you went to retail,

Yvette: I went to retail because I became soon a mother. I ended up choosing what was the path that was at the moment. What was the most convenient time for me and my son.

Patricia: So you felt that construction was not for you? And in the moment because you became a single mom. And so you thought retail was going to accommodate your new life.

Yvette: My new life, yes. It gave me flexibility. Because you know how they said she's very demanding. So that I ended up just going seasonal. Like I said it was a holiday season. And I just took there to 10 years.

Patricia: It amazes me. And this is what I really would like to convey to people or women that want to enter this industry. And men also, obviously, we're not discriminating that this is a teachable industry, you know, you have this passion for construction, and you are in a retail space for 10 years. And then you enter into a construction company into Lunacon, and I really have seen you flourish and grow in. Tell me about your experience in in our real construction industry which is happening now?

Yvette: It's very real. It's very true. It's definitely been very rewarding with all the challenges and all the growth. It's an ever, ever learning career. So it's as I started out about a year ago, I didn't have any knowledge I just took a leap of faith into what I thought would have been a successful uncertainty. You just have to take that leap into the next step and push forward in everything you want to do. So it became real once I came in. Honestly, they know the verbiage didn't know a lot of things, but I have seen myself flourish in two years [inaudible] in Lunacon. So it's been everlasting growth. It's been challenging, rewarding at every aspect in career wise and personal life.

Patricia: So what have you learned in the retail space? Because I'm a firm believer, there's everything you learn in life serves a purpose later on regardless, so what have you learned in the retail space that you have been able to utilize that skill, and it has empower you, and allow you to grow in the in construction?

Yvette: I think in the retail space, you'd learn a lot about customer service, and you learn a lot about giving to others, because at one point, the customer is always right. So the customer always been right. You always try to see how you help you become resourceful on things that how do you fix that situation? How do you fix that moment? How do you make that person's experience great for them to leave from your store. And that is something that I think we've translated, it's also works with your employees peer to peer. You become very, very services here to your teammates, because you guys are trying to accomplish the same goal. Have this customer these with a good resemblance of retail.

Patricia: So now that you are in the construction industry, what do you see now that you're inside, and you've experienced in the role that you have? What's the role that you have, by the way?

Yvette: I have tagged slash administrative manager,

Patricia: And we'll talk about that. So now you have experienced in construction? What do you think of construction is all about?

Yvette: Construction's about servicing others, client servicing your coworkers, your peers, and always be there for one another to push the team to make this [inaudible].

Patricia: So do you like the industry?

Yvette: I love the industry.

Patricia: So what do you like about it the most?

Yvette: What I love about it is the growth and the learning that you always have, there's always a new challenge every day, there's always a new obstacle to accomplish. There's always something that you want to get better at. And something where you could improve any aspects of the project, the office, anything you could, there's always some room to grow, you don't become just a schedule. It doesn't just become monotonous you just push forward to something new, something amazing that at the end, you know, there's going to be an impact for you.

Patricia: And keeping that in mind that is constantly ever changing, is it possible to thrive in construction, if you cannot adapt to change?

Yvette: It will be difficult, and you can cut your own growth if you do not adapt to change. So at the end of the day change makes your stretch up to your new levels.

Patricia: Excellent. And let me ask you, what three things should a person keep in mind in order to be able to adapt to change and thrive in the process?

Yvette: It's always growing, it's growing, learning, taking education, it doesn't have to be a college course, it doesn't have to be any of that. It could be a seminar, it could be a webinar, it could be anything that lets you add value. Always add value to where you're you want to go where you want to accomplish. always find a mentor in where you in construction, you find your mentors, you find those people that give you that push that give you that belief. I think that's one thing, getting a mentor and being happy. Be confident in yourself that you can learn it.

Patricia: So in order to adapt to change, you need to be confident. You want to have somebody that is mentoring you that you can go to if you have run into challenges. And you want to be growing so that when the opportunity shows up, you are prepared.

Yvette: You're prepared to tackle that new challenge.

Patricia: Is that what you do?

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Who's your mentor or mentors?

Yvette: Mentors in the construction industry? It's my team. And I'll say it's you

Patricia: So you're learning from your team?

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Your team is mentoring you.

Yvette: My team is mentoring me. It's a group of people. It's an effort. And that's the beautiful thing about the construction industry.

Patricia: What's the biggest learning that you've had from your team?

Yvette: From my team is is to be able to know and what you don't know, they are there to support you. That's, that is the biggest lesson.

Patricia: Your team?

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: And how do you grow your team?

Yvette: By building connections and communication and having that desire to help them and service them. And once you add value to them, they add value to you.

Patricia: Absolutely, absolutely. Tell me about the talent management space.

Yvette: The talent management space is endless. There's no glass ceiling to it. There are always ways to improve. It's always finding that right person for the right position and having them be joined the culture of the company. And the culture that we have built in is the one of diversity inclusion, it's everyone supporting each other and reaching out for that same goal.

Patricia: And tell me about women in the space. How do you think we contribute with a woman contributes to building a culture of contribution of accountability?

Yvette: I believe women are more nurturing, they're more empathetic. We Have more listening skills, we thought we have more. It's just that it's something that comes natural for us. And we believe that we want to provide for our team want to service them. So having that those skills always change the construction where we can grow. And it's always building teamwork. It's always having everyone together reunited and being able to push forward any projects or any milestone to accomplish.

Patricia: When you say, being able to move, move forward and accomplish or overcoming any milestone, what is necessary in order to do that, in your opinion?

Yvette: For my opinion is communication is key. Having a goal, knowing where we're going, and why we're trying to get and then it's making that vision know, making sure that everyone sees where is that we're trying to accomplish, and why it's important for us.

Patricia: Share the vision, or why. Understand the outcome and being able to communicate.

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Excellent. Very good. Very good. Why would you tell... now that you have experienced, you know, you've been a single woman, and you have a beautiful son. I know, I know, he is. He's amazing. And you've been able to overcome this challenge of life, right at early age, and you've done a beautiful job with him. I know he's your hero. So there's no denial on that. What has allowed you to you know, you still have, you're still a single mother, but you still went into construction 10 years later, what is different now?

Yvette: is being confident in myself, it's believing that I could do it and not having a glass ceiling into where [inaudible] I can go. So knowing that the construction industry, there is no glass ceiling. When you have your ultimate potential you could reach any milestone, you set your mind to, I think that's the beautiful thing. And I took the leap at the end of the day was because my son was already getting older. So if he didn't demand that much time at that moment, so that I was able to have more flexibilities with him.

Patricia: how does he feel about you being in construction?

Yvette: He's excited, he enjoys it. He definitely takes on this Superwoman knows that he is my Superman,

Patricia: You're a superhero, Coco. I know. I mean, and he's right, you are so cool. And you make a lot of great things for other people. And you allow people in this space to be great also. So I know that about you. And I congratulate you for that. Your ability to work hard, is what has gotten you to where you want. And I really, really believe people that are in in the retail space, whether it is in sales, any area that construction has open arms to receive anybody skills, as long as you can work hard, right? And focus on that outcome. You can build teams, you can just push and persevere right and have the discipline. But what are you going to tell you have your speaking into existence, and you're speaking in front of a lot of younger women, and they are trying to decide "What do I want to do? Where do you want to study? What do I want to do?" What are you going to tell them?

Yvette: I will tell them believe in yourself and the construction industries like I said, it's, it comes with challenges like any other dream. Construction industry gives you a sense of accomplishment, when you see something that is starting even as a talent manager, you know that you have to hire that right person for that project. And if successful,

because you're a great candidate out there. And to decide the construction industry. So I got to tell you that you can do it because it is a male dominated industry full time. Anybody that tells you can't do it, because you're a single mother don't tell you that you can't do because you won't have time, or you have a family or anything. Everything is possible. It just depends on the priorities.

Patricia: So we have in your company in our company, we embrace a lot of Microsoft Office, Microsoft tools, Microsoft 365. Do you think that has been relevant? So allowing people to kind of thrive, do more, plan more be more efficient. Do you think that has been useful?

Yvette: Yes. Any skill that you learn technology wise, is just expands your brain and you can definitely adapt all those skills are transferable into the construction industry. They when it's not just with those skills, they give you an open end to other skills that you can learn and then you can adapt your skills to those skills just to make it better. So all of Microsoft Office, all the programs, they always come with a second, second growth to it. We could always.

Patricia: So you say construction, the construction industry needs more women?

Yvette: Yes, it does. I think we come with discipline. We come with the ability to reach our goals become the ability to also nurture at the same time and build teamwork and build the company. We always wherever we go and try to strive for the best because there's more expectations from us expected at this moment in this shift.

Patricia: Do you think in the construction industry is for every women or a type of women that has certain qualities? And if you if that's the case, what are the qualities?

Yvette: For me, it's open to every woman, I believe anybody can accomplish whatever goal they want to no matter what stage of their lives they're at, or what they need to grow in or what they need. But at the end of the day, you will need to be confident in your own space and your own ability to learn to grow. And you have to have more. The communication at the end of the day is what makes you be successful. Because if you can't communicate, you won't be able to accomplish the job and accomplish if you want to be in leadership. Leadership role. always speak to what you want. And definitely anyone could join industry and learn any skills any transferable. You just have to have sight in the world to grow.

Patricia: So have you have you been in the shop back to the shop again?

Yvette: To the shop? I'm trying to get back in there. I have bought a few tools to get me back into that as a hobby.

Patricia: What do you feel when you're doing this?

Yvette: To me it feels it feels good. I'm building something. I'm creating something. I'm bringing something to life.

Patricia: Do you relax when you're doing it? This is a way of also relaxation, like mindfulness?

Yvette: Yes. This piece at that moment is just near that machine. Via that piece of wood in that moment. I'm enjoying the moment from the waist down the wood. Everything,

Patricia: You know Emilio, I think we should do like a woodshop competition or something new, we should do something because he's really good with wood too. There's a lot of people that are and that's something I'd like to do a podcast, a live one where you were doing workshop, that would be nice.

Yvette: Oh, that would be awesome.

Patricia: What's the nicest, you know, piece of wood? What has been the nicest creation in that you have done in wood?

Yvette: My countertop, I mean, my countertop in my house.

Patricia: For the kitchen?

Yvette: With the kitchen.

Patricia: In wood?

Yvette: And I have zebrawood cherry wood and just bought the whole thing.

Patricia: And it came out?

Yvette: You want to see it?

Patricia: I would love to see a picture.

Yvette: It didn't exist anymore.

Patricia: What happened?

Yvette: I took it out to fix it. And it wasn't the way it was, but it definitely was my best piece of art [inaudible].

Patricia: Do you won an award?

Yvette: In the school I did well when I was in high school.

Patricia: Really?

Yvette: So I took it to a competition, and I won first place.

Patricia: Well, you have pictures..

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: We want to see pictures. Is there anything you want to ask me?

Yvette: Watch it.

Patricia: Watch it. She was like, "Ahh, revenge time." I'm just kidding.

Yvette: Definitely. Where do you see yourself in the next 10 years?

Patricia: Where do I see myself in 10 years, I see myself impacting in creating change in the consulting industry. I want to see an industry where there's less suffering, were more creating, we're building people in the process of building buildings. I want to see an industry where there's less suicide or no suicide, I want to see an industry where people really can thrive because they're focusing on getting things done not on arguing and pointless arguments, I want to see an industry that it's also focusing on the resources. We're not destroying people, and we're not destroying a resource, were more conscious of the people. And I say people because I believe there's no way of building anything without the human enterprise.

I want to see an industry that everyone understands the value of a human in this process. And everyone understands that the resources around us are critical to what we do. And I believe there's when we take that into consideration, were being more appreciative of what you know, the universe has already been. I think we build and we just focus on the transaction on the building, but we're not focusing on building the person around. And if we allow ourselves to focus on building the person and building the human enterprise in a way where we can create is endless. I believe we will reduce a lot of the stress we have because we're empowering people in the process. I see myself creating change, making constructions easier for people to come into the space. That's what I want to do.

Yvette: That's an awesome answer. Thank you,

Patricia: And where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Yvette: Where I see myself? I will be honest, I could run, I could grow in a leadership role, more in leadership role than I am now, to opportunities that I've gained in the last two years. But I do see myself running a firm, completely, not just proportion, learning more skills, learning more departments, learning more of the whole construction

industry as a whole, not just focus on time, or just focused on administrative. I see myself being more in a senior level.

Patricia: So who do you need to become?

Yvette: I need to become a confident person. I need to become the person that believes in her own growth, the person that believes in her own success. At the end of the day, if I don't believe in it, then I will never achieve it.

Patricia: In what areas so you're really embracing the talent space, and you're growing. And of course, there's so much more to learn, right? Like you said, learning is endless, you can always be so much better. But what are the areas in the construction that you think you want to really master in order to get to that goal that you have, in 10 years?

Yvette: [inaudible] the financier, finance the construction, how it's done, the difference of accounting, different spaces are sort of construction, because once you learn the construction accounting, I feel like you can learn the life of the project, and how it starts from the beginning to the end. And from there, then learn the estimating process, then learn the operations process, and then join them together and see how we can become successful and how we don't have to work harder, we just have to work smarter,

Patricia: Right? What makes people work harder and not smarter. What is that people do that, in your opinion, you know, you're just working, making yourself work harder or taking time to solve a problem. What is it that people do? Or what is it that we shouldn't, do?

Yvette: I think sometimes we focus more on problem defining the solution and focusing on the problem just that begins since cycle. And if we continue the same cycle, it doesn't give us the space to be able to be resourceful. And to learn how to find a different way, there's always a different way, there's always a better way, there's always a better option. It's always about upgrading of what we're currently doing.

Patricia: Absolutely. You're absolutely right. And I believe sometimes when you see a project lingering and it's the same thing is that's exactly what's happening. We're spending more time pointing fingers and worrying about whose fault it is. And you know, focusing on the problem instead of focusing on you know what, let's, let's move forward. Let's keep going. But I think many times the industry if there's a training on, what do you think is that happens? Because you've been around, you've seen this, people that complain, and it's about a story that we have in our heads and why it's wrong. Why do you think that happens?

Yvette: I think it happens because some people are scared of change. So it's better to stay in that story because it's comfortable. And it's and it's easy. You just say hey, it wasn't my fault. It was somebody else's. But if we ask, it's not just an issue. You put it in your personal life, you'll never grow, you'll never change, you'll never be able to be prepared for your next step. Because you're always going to be stuck in your story.

Patricia: So there's you've mentioned construction, you mentioned the talents area. You've mentioned accounting and finance, you have mentioned, estimating, operations, execution, but there's also marketing and sales. Is there something construction doesn't cover?

Yvette: No, construction is actually a whole umbrella. And there's so many other different counterparts that build the construction industry. So people just think you have to pick up the shovel, you have to pick up a tool. And there's no another road into the construction industry. And there is stuff where you don't have to be out in the field. They have the misconception of that.

Patricia: Absolutely outstanding. Yvette, though you do you think this is an industry that has allowed you to have a better life financially speaking? Have you been able to, you know, grow in terms of finances and give your son and yourself a better life? And if that's the case? Can you give specific examples and how does that manifest?

Yvette: Of course, it has been a great growth financially, it has been different from retail. I was at one moment in the government assistance and did have to rely on that to be able to support for my son. But being able to shift my career, being able to shift everything and be able to give that opportunity to another family that's a need. And for me to allow that and for me to grow and financially be more stable. It's been a blessing. It's been definitely an ultimate experience.

Patricia: So what examples have they give you financially? What have you ever been able to accomplish financially because you went to go through?

Yvette: Get me a new car. Yes, I was able to get me a new car, which I didn't think was possible. I did and ended up getting car and just taking it and saying, "Hey, I deserve it."

Patricia: A new car?

Yvette: A new car brand new zero miles. Never did I think I'll go on a lot and take it out.

Patricia: Awesome. That's, that's huge. And in such a short period of time.

Yvette: Yes.

Patricia: Yvette, the pandemic, what I mean, I know you, there's two questions I have one is related to the pandemic, but the other one is related to when you make the shift, 10 years in the retail space, and you have grown already in that space. And now you go into construction, something completely new, was that scary?

Yvette: That was scary. There is going to be what was going to happen. Or one of the newest employees, you don't know, when the economy's going to shift, we didn't know anything, then I hear your retail space, they closed the doors and didn't have

opportunities. But I was given the opportunity to continue to work like normal. It was it was definitely a shift where that's where I knew that I was right at the right place at the right time. And for a reason I made that shift.

Patricia: What do you think allow you to help you make that reason when you say for a reason, what is it that [inaudible] will push you to do that?

Yvette: To stay in the construction?

Patricia: No, to go into construction,

Yvette: I have this seed that was planted in me, let's say in those 10 years, it was never not watered. I always kept watering it I kept going to school kept in classes or seminars, just because it was something I was I was interested in. And then I got this push and I said, Hey, if I don't do it, now, somebody planted another seed of set. Do it now just take the risks, and just see what happens, if it's good or bad. It's always going to happen. You're always gonna be successful wherever you go. And I took that and just ran with it. And it wasn't just I felt any construction job because I did apart from other ones. But then there was always this connection with Lunacon. From the moment it happened. And it was just a beautiful thing.

Patricia: But what happened before Lunacon because I know you had somebody that you apply to a job and there was a little bit of discouragement.

Yvette: Yes, definitely. I went, like I said, I had like six months interviewing, I had different interviews, some of them will tell me no, we're going to be picky for sure. No, we can't do this to you because we're knowing what to grow or didn't give. And then some of them didn't give that to me because they knew that I had this one person that was like, "You know, I'm going to help you get into a construction industry." But I went to the interview, and they were like, "I'll help you just tell me what you need. You have a bright future." That it discouraged me at the moment because nobody was opening that opportunity or opening that door at that moment. And what I saw on the [inaudible] post, I said, "Hey, this is going to be it. It's either I apply for it, or I don't? Well, I'm just going to go ahead and apply for it. If I get it great. If I don't, it means that the construction industry is not for me."

Patricia: So we're you're about to give up?

Yvette: I know that was the last interview that I was going to do. That was the last application I was going to do Sunday night, I definitely said is this or nothing.

Patricia: And what happened?

Yvette: It became this. So definitely, that's where you know, never give up. If you have something that you want and wish for and you want to grow and you want to become that person that you know you've always been able to be capable of. Don't listen to

those smaller, smaller voices where you yourself, you can give up because it is going to come.

Patricia: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. Tell me about the pandemic.

Yvette: The pandemic was interesting for me, it became challenging, it became the scare. And I know you've probably saw with me, I was paranoid with everything going on, or what's going to happen people in the office. But it was also [inaudible]. So another good thing about it, we shifted the company quickly to remote work.

Patricia: And how long?

Yvette: In a day, we literally shifted in the day. Everybody was successful. Everybody was set up, we transfer people to other offices spread out made a schedule, we followed all the guidelines, and thankfully nobody ever got [overlap].

Patricia: Nobody?

Yvette: Nobody.

Patricia: Except me.

Yvette: But that wasn't in the office.

Patricia: You're right, it's been a blessing nobody has been sick. Awesome. And a lot of it has been you I have to say you have I remember you did this [inaudible and this person this person and I mean you were very creative. You always wanted to have a cleaning company.

Yvette: I did I did I want to.

Patricia: Talking about resourceful because we didn't know how much work we were going to have and how much we weren't needed to serve the client. Because some clients, we have to do it.

Yvette: We have to request to go disinfect anything. Yeah. And we became resourceful. We had everything ready to go.

Patricia: Yes, yes. Well, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for your contribution to the construction industry. And thank you for being an example to your son to many women out there that it's possible that we can everyone to do with [inaudible]. Thank you so much.

OUTRO

Thank you for listening to Thriving in Construction, the Podcast with Patricia Bonilla. If you enjoy this episode and you would like to help support the podcast, please share it with others and leave a rating or review on Apple Podcast, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcast. If you have any suggestions or any related topic you would like us to tackle in our future episodes, feel free to reach Patricia by sending her a message through the website, anchor.fm/thrivinginconstruction or find her on LinkedIn.

Thanks again. We'll see you next week, here in Thriving in Construction, the Podcast.

**=====END OF
TRANSCRIPT=====**