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In October of 2019, the ambitious Build Your Future Arizona program started with a big kickoff event at Talking Stick Arena in Downtown Phoenix.

The program was unique in that it had the backing (both financially and in manpower) of several major contractors in the Valley, as well as the Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation and it had a strong marketing team behind the initiative. All the pieces were in place and Phase 1 of BYFAZ rolled out in 2020 and was ready to make some inroads in solving a growing workforce shortage issue in the skilled trades. Arizona was projected to be about 155,000 workers short by 2022 in vital construction disciplines like framers, plumbers and pipe fitters, electricians, carpenters, concrete finishers and iron, steel and sheet metal workers.

“Our first goal with BYF, the first leg of it, was having a place where people can go and get all of this information,” said JD Martin, vice president, partner and business solutions manager for Corbins Electric, one of the original investor companies in BYFAZ. “That the big launch that we did for the website, we now had a single point of reference that we can send people to in order to get all of this information.”

The new informational website, along with promotional materials, allowed interested parties to see the different trades in the industry, and learn a little about what a career in the trades actually looks like and what they pay.

The BYFAZ mission is to create a sustainable and skilled craft workforce by creating awareness about high paying construction careers, training opportunities and mapping career paths to employment in these high demand occupations.

The campaign has three major goals: 1. Connecting Dots — Increase awareness of craft professional occupations; 2. Perception — Improve education and training outcomes through business partnerships; and 3. Motivate — Increase the number and tenure of craft professionals.

At the first quarterly report on BYFAZ in February of 2020, the program had solid news to report. In the first three months of the three-year campaign, BYF Arizona tallied more than 8 million media impressions and had already engaged more than 6,000 students and influencers via career days. It also had expanded its partnerships with leading industry associations from 3 to 11, and welcomed several new investors. Notably, Lennar Homes announced, at the February event, that they were upgrading their current investment to the Champion Level, and that division president Alan Jones will be joining the steering committee.

“The first year started off with a bang and then COVID came and that slowed us down quite a bit,” added Dan Puente, founder and CEO of DP Electric, another original investor in the program and a member of the BYFAZ steering committee. “But I do think that the public is open to it. We’re getting a lot of interest. The demand is there, the interest is there and it’s really what we’re trying to figure out now is how to put the pieces together.”

For the construction industry in Arizona, COVID-19 put many projects
on hold for a short time. However, by the time summer hit Arizona, building was back to its rapid pace. For BYFAZ, the pandemic provided some more selling points for a career in the skilled trades.

“Construction is considered critical, so there is some job security in this,” Martin said.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey declared construction an essential industry, so while other businesses faced restrictions, the construction industry did not. The industries hit the hardest were hospitality, food services and retail; industries that normally employ a younger demographic, the same demographic that BYFAZ is looking to reach.

“Our market is still busy and I see it continuing to be busy in 2021. Demand is high,” Puente said. “How do we get these people — whether they are from the hospitality or retail industries, trying to change their careers, or a 17 or 18 year old coming out of high school — how do we bridge the gap from no experience to being ready to work?”

That’s one of the questions BYFAZ will try to answer as it continues to evolve and improve. Recently, BYFAZ rolled out another phase in its development, a career center page. On this page, (careers.byfaz.org) employers can post jobs, job seekers can look for open positions and visitors to the site can see upcoming events put on by BYFAZ and job training opportunities that are available.

Puente stressed that training is key in being able to get those that show interest their first job in the trades.

“When you don’t have any experience, it’s hard to place somebody without some sort of experience unless it’s a laborer position with a GC,” Puente said.

“I know that we’re creating kind of a pre-apprenticeship program that gives a person some basic knowledge of safety and general skills that will help them be productive.

The Mission
Build Your Future Arizona’s mission is to create a sustainable and skilled craft workforce by creating awareness about high paying construction careers, training opportunities and mapping career paths to employment in these high demand occupations.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paul Sierpina</th>
<th>Bryan Amarel</th>
<th>Mike Bontrager</th>
<th>Mike Brewer</th>
<th>Alan Jones</th>
<th>Tim King</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President/Senior Project Manager, Suntec Concrete</td>
<td>Operations Manager, Hensel Phelps</td>
<td>Senior Vice President, Alston Construction</td>
<td>Founder and CEO, The Brewer Companies</td>
<td>Division President, Lennar</td>
<td>President, HACI Mechanical Contractors, Inc.</td>
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PROJECT MEMBERS

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<tr>
<th>JD Martin</th>
<th>Dan Puente</th>
<th>Sean Ray</th>
<th>Marcia Veidmark</th>
<th>Jennifer Mellor</th>
<th>Paul Sanders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President &amp; Partner, Corbins Electric</td>
<td>CEO, DP Electric</td>
<td>Director of Craft Workforce Development, Sundt Construction</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO, SSC Underground</td>
<td>Project member from Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation</td>
<td>Project member from Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation</td>
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“If we’re having a hard time placing people today because companies aren’t taking people who aren’t trained, then we have to solve that problem before we get more aggressive on the recruitment side.”

Martin said that the next phase for BYFAZ is getting more involved with middle and high schools. BYFAZ will work with these schools to provide information about careers in the skilled trades and help develop curriculum that can introduce students to concepts they can put to use in their careers. Martin said that this next phase will be the most difficult because the industry will be competing for the students’ attention against post-secondary institutions and community colleges, as well as long-held misconceptions about what a career in the trades is like.

“We want to be able to get in front of them and explain how technology has become such a critical part of construction,” Martin said. “These kids are borrowing their world view from their parents.”

Martin noted that a large number of current tradespeople in the industry got interested in that career path by someone they know. For Martin, it was his step-father, who was an estimator for an electrical contractor.

“We’re trying to attract people who have no one in their lives who were in construction, so it’s something that hasn’t been talked about,” added Martin. “We have to come at it from a different angle. More and more schools are trying to get CTE programs and schools are looking at CTE as a way to get kids interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields as a path to college. But there’s a whole lot of that in construction that non-college bounds kids can take advantage of.”

Educating the teachers and students about careers in the trades is just one part of the equation that BYFAZ must solve. The other part is changing the minds of the parents.

“A lot of these parents have succumbed to the marketing that the education community has done for the last 20 years,” said Mike Brewer, founder and CEO of The Brewer Companies and a member of the BYFAZ steering committee. “In our conversations with teachers and counselors, they are looking forward to the days when they can have the conversation with students about alternative opportunities to college. Parents are the biggest challenge.

“That’s how important it is that BYF, if we can publicize it enough, gets the message out that going through a skilled trades training program is an education, but it’s more about what you get educated on. Like an accountant would get a more formalized education, a framer or a plumber would get an education in their craft. It’s just a different environment, but it is still an education that leads to a reliable career.”

For the early investors like Brewer, Martin and Puente, the key to success for BYFAZ is patience. The program is still in its development phase and has yet to get to its full potential.

“Nothing happens quickly. I think most people understand that and the investors in BYFAZ understand that,” Puente said. “We have been talking about this problem for as long as I can remember and then more recently, before BYF, people were starting to do stuff on their own, but that was more segmented. Today, our message is more visible, so I think if you fast forward another 3 years from now, that message will be stronger and we’ll be entrenched in some of the schools and the community colleges.

“It’ll take a while to get back to where it once was where you learned a trade in high school and you had technical education in high school. I do think that’s coming back and it’s going to take time.”
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The Build Your Future Arizona initiative is designed to educate people about the opportunities available in the skilled trades industry, as well as provide a place to find information on training and available jobs. The goal of BYFAZ is to create a skilled trades workforce to keep up with the growing demand in Arizona and the rest of the United States.

Women in the skilled trades profession are a vital part of the workforce, but the challenge is to get the attention of young women who may not see themselves fitting in the workforce. In Arizona, the industry is fortunate to have a large contingent of accomplished women in the construction industry who have risen through the ranks and have become executives. Three of these women, Kimberly Davids, general manager of Weitz Construction; Michelle Walker, vice president of finance and administration for SSC Underground; and Antonya Williams, senior vice president of business development for the Southwest Region at McCarthy Building Companies; are great examples of the kinds of careers women in construction can create for themselves. These women provided some insight into what challenges they faced coming up through the industry and what are the traits that made them successful.

**Kimberly Davids**

**Q:** What are the key traits for success in this industry?

**A:** Honesty, integrity and accountability. This industry affords us the opportunity to work with various teams on multiple projects at any given point throughout the year. Each team with its own dynamic and each project with its own opportunities and challenges. The ability to facilitate difficult conversations, internally and externally, is vital to the success of a company. Fostering an environment of open communication where everyone can respectfully speak their mind is key.

**Q:** What advice would you give women who are just entering the construction industry that want to advance in their careers like you have?

**A:** Ask questions. Challenge the process. Offer to take on stretch assignments. And most importantly... don't quit!

**Q:** What were the biggest challenges for you early in your career and what did you do to overcome those?

**A:** As I was obtaining my Civil Engineering degree, I couldn’t wait to apply the theoretical curriculum to real world construction projects. Upon starting my career, I found myself unmotivated and discouraged with the mounds of paperwork and documentation (i.e. shop drawings, submittals, etc.) required. I experienced the same frustration during college when I just wanted to build something, but instead I felt stuck behind a desk. One day, I walked into my Project Manager’s office and voiced my concerns.

He immediately started to explain the relevance of the tasks I was asked to perform, the importance of proper documentation, encouraged me to take site walks, and exposed me to financials; all of which made all the difference in my attitude and performance.

I am driven by understanding the “how” and “why” of any given situation, so asking questions and challenging the process was just what I needed to keep me engaged. As I have progressed throughout my career, I have held every position so I can understand the perspective of each member on the team and how they impact the success and culture of a project, and thus the company overall.
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Michelle Walker

Q: What advice would you give women who are just entering the construction industry that want to advance in their careers like you have?
A: Have humble confidence — don’t act like you’re out to prove something, but feel comfortable that you have an important role to play. Don’t try to be one of the boys — you’re a woman, in construction — you can be both. If you get treated differently — examine the intent before getting offended. Are they trying to diminish you, or just be gentlemen? 99 times out of 10 I’ve found that any sort of different treatment comes from a place of care, not discrimination.

Q: What are the key traits for success in this industry?
A: Perseverance — sticking it out when the going gets tough. Faith — knowing that when it looks hopeless, things will get better. Courage — being willing to take risks and do things you’ve never done before. Teamwork — no project can be built by one person or one company or one trade. It takes us all.

Antonya Williams

Q: What were the biggest challenges for you early in your career and what did you do to overcome those?
A: The biggest challenge I faced as a young project engineer was building confidence. I made a point of communicating this area of development with my manager, and through his support and encouragement, we identified opportunities that allowed me to lead and take on new assignments. I started leading owner meetings, trade partner meetings, and site visits. I took on challenging new assignments that helped me to grow confidence in problem solving. Seeing these challenges through to completion was ultimately what stretched me outside my comfort zone and expanded my leadership potential. I learned that a great manager who is invested in the development of others is key to the success of teams in overcoming obstacles and reaching their full potential and strive to do this with our teams at McCarthy today.

Q: What advice would you give women who are just entering the construction industry that want to advance in their careers like you have?
A: My first piece of advice is to go for it. Construction is an industry with so much opportunity and it provides an extremely rewarding experience for those who commit to it. My second piece of advice is to be yourself. Having a genuine personal brand will make you stand out and build strong lasting relationships throughout your career. The more you bring your full self to your work, the more success you will have in this industry.
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A clear by-product of the Build Your Future Arizona initiative is a willingness to collaborate on solutions to the growing skilled trades workforce shortage in the industry. Contractors and subcontractors that likely compete for the same business are now teaming up on programs, like BYFAZ, that will help not just their company, but the entire industry.

In December, South Mountain Community College had its official ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new Construction Trades Institute, a program that will focus on fast, career focused jobs in the skilled trades for carpentry and framing, plumbing and electrical systems. CTI is the product of collaboration between the college and four industry partners, The Brewer Companies, Haskins Electric, 3-G Construction and McCarthy Building Companies.

“(South Mountain) was trying to put something together, but they just didn’t know what to do,” said Mike Brewer, founder and CEO of The Brewer Companies. “So when we got involved with it, it was a matter of putting together a curriculum. We recruited (vice president) Mike McCrery at 3-G and Haskins Electric and then McCarthy got involved. The more the merrier, in my opinion, because it’s really about the program.”

Brewer, who is one of the early investors in BYFAZ and a member of the organizations’ steering committee, said administrators from SMCC came out to learn about the training program that The Brewer Companies utilizes. SMCC wanted to use The Brewer Companies’ program, but Brewer wanted to keep some of those methods in-house, so he worked with SMCC to develop a curriculum for the CTI plumbing portion. 3-G and McCarthy helped with the carpentry and framing curriculum and Haskins Electric with electrical.

CTI will feature hands-on laboratories, and a dedicated student success space, as well as faculty offices. Students can finish a certificate in just one semester, and will receive training not only in the program skills, but in additional skill sets such as leadership, motivation, oral and written communications, problem solving, time management and OSHA safety. Students can get two certification levels in just two semesters, so about one year.

An added element of the program is that every student that goes through the initial, 16 week program is guaranteed an interview at one of the partner companies.

“If the student is willing to go through 16 weeks, they are showing commitment to the discipline,” said Brewer. “So, I’ll take a chance.”

Mike Gonzalez, vice president of the Education Building Group for
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the Southwest Region of McCarthy Building Companies and a member of the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation Board and its Workforce Development Advisory Committee said that work is ongoing with the other community colleges to improve their programs. The CTI program will likely see improvements as well.

“While the initial phase of CTI is focused on residential construction needs, we are collaborating with the district and our industry partners to develop commercial construction curriculum and will be supporting graduates of the program with career opportunities, including future internships and jobs with our self-perform teams and with our trade partners,” Gonzalez said. “McCarthy certainly sees potential here.”

“One of the things we heard loud and clear from our industry partners is they need qualified people and they need qualified people yesterday,” said Dr. Clyne Namuo, Vice President of learning at SMCC during a televised interview. “Our hope is that the CTI here at South Mountain Community College will help fill that demand for qualified trades professionals.”

The CTI program at SMCC is the latest in a growing number of programs that focus on developing a skilled trades workforce. One of the most successful community college programs in the state is at Central Arizona Community College. That program focuses on trades like heavy equipment operations, pipe welding, structural and fabrication welding. The companies behind the CTI program at SMCC hope that it will grow into the go-to place for people looking for the skills to join the workforce in one of the areas the program focuses on.

“Graduates of programs like CTI will be employed if they are employable,” Gonzalez said. “It’s an excellent track for students with an interest in building communities who are not pursuing a traditional college route but want to have a rewarding career.”

Slowly, the industry is making progress in developing programs at the high school level. The East Valley Institute of Technology and West-Mec both have strong education and training programs for young people. A new program, ElevateEdAZ, was launched by the Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation, which is matching businesses to schools to develop classes and curriculum that aligns with workforce needs. The Foundation has partnered with the Phoenix Union High School District to pilot more strategies to increase the amount of technical and skilled trades courses at the high school level.

“We’re not selling jobs, we’re talking about careers,” said Brewer. “Careers in the trades, if you’re doing it right, by the end of year 2, you’re going to be making $50,000-$60,000 in Phoenix, at least on the residential side. I don’t know where else you can do that.”

Behind many of these recent advancements is BYFAZ, which has served as the collaborative hub for the industry’s efforts on workforce development.

“The role that Build Your Future is playing by bringing together the construction industry, educational sector and the community has been quite effective,” said Gonzalez. “The SMCC CTI program and others like it are the result of this type of collaboration. It’s helping to provide job training programs that allow members of our community to start on a rewarding career path in the trades.”

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**CTI Program Snapshot**

The South Mountain Community College Construction Trades Institute offers classes in three trades areas: Carpentry/Framing, Plumbing and Electrical. The program offers two levels of certification, the first one requires 16 credits - one semester, and Level Two requires 11 credits - one semester.

These four basic classes are required for each trade area:

- **CON 103:** Safety
- **CON 104:** Power Tools
- **CON 105:** Calculations
- **CON 107:** Blueprint Readings

These are the classes in each specialty area:

**Carpentry/Framing**

- **CON 110:** Flooring
- **CON 111:** Wall Systems
- **CON 112:** Ceiling and roof framing

**Certificate Level Two (11 credits)**

- **CON 213:** Steel Framing
- **CON 214:** Roofing & Envelopes
- **CON 215:** Interior Finishes
- **CON 216:** Concrete Forms

**Plumbing**

- **CON 124:** Pipes and Fittings
- **CON 125:** Fixtures
- **CON 126:** Drain, Waste and Vent
- **CON 127:** Distribution Systems

**Certificate Level Two (11 credits)**

- **CON 224:** Pipe Systems
- **CON 225:** Disposal Systems
- **CON 226:** Fixtures and Appliances
- **CON 227:** Resource Solutions

**Electrical**

- **CON 131:** Electrical Systems
- **CON 132:** Distribution Panels
- **CON 133:** Conduits

**Certificate Level Two (11 credits)**

- **CON 234:** Power Distribution
- **CON 235:** Motor Controls
- **CON 236:** Industrial Wiring
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