

Bringing others into the room: How Perlla Deluca ensures she isn't 'the only' anymore

Published by [Macey Shofroth](#) on November 10, 2025



As a Latina immigrant working in construction, Perlla Deluca is no stranger to being the “only” in a room.

Deluca is the owner and CEO of Southeast Constructors. Since joining the industry 28 years ago, she’s worked all aspects of construction and experienced all kinds of reception when she walks on to a job site. People have assumed she is unable to answer their questions. She’s been called rude names.

She’s turned that animosity into progress. She co-founded the Iowa School of Construction, where half of the students are women. She also founded the Pink Hardhat Foundation, a nonprofit that provides financial support for women looking to upskill in the construction industry. Deluca believes women can succeed in the construction industry, and she continues to work to ensure the women coming after her don’t have to experience being the “only” in a room, no matter their identity. She shared with us eight tips and examples from her experiences navigating situations as one of the only people with an identity in a given space.

1. Do what you love.

According to the National Association of Home Builders, women made up 10.8% of the construction workforce in 2023. Those numbers might seem intimidating to a young woman hoping to break into the industry.

Deluca believes a genuine love and desire for the work can push those young women past whatever barriers stand in their way.

“I don’t try to convince, because I don’t believe in doing what you don’t love,” Deluca said. “I want girls that already think they have these skills or know they like working with their hands. You should choose what you love and then get trained on it.”

