



CRE Influencers Stacey Barton, Paul Bertozzi Talk First Coast Trends

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Stacey Barton of Haskell and Paul Bertozzi of Live Oak Contracting have been selected to a national list of notable commercial real estate executives.

The Business Journals' Influencers: Commercial Real Estate spotlights 100 executives having an influence on real estate and development in their respective communities. These 100 executives represent both large, nationally recognized firms and smaller, family-owned businesses. Some are long-tenured executives while others have found success relatively early in their careers. And while some might be familiar industry names and others less so, as a group nationally, these individuals are having an impact on the business being done in communities from coast to coast.

These executives were identified in conjunction with editors and staff writers across The Business Journals' network of more than 40 publications, including the Jacksonville Business Journal. Each has been featured as part of The Business Journals' continuing coverage of the newsmakers in those cities. These are executives to know for entrepreneurs and companies that are looking to expand their businesses to new locations or to grow further in the cities in which they're now operating.

The Jacksonville Business Journal recently sat down with Barton and Bertozzi to talk about construction and industry trends on the First Coast.



What is the biggest change you've seen in the construction industry during your career?

Barton: I've seen the biggest changes in technology, which has made it easier to connect with people globally. Business is orchestrated now by email, linkedin, skype and other communication systems. We also have a virtual collaboration room where we can speak to someone in another country or state. It allows us to electronically display our building site plans and discuss them in a video chat room. This technology has really assisted in many ways. The communication process is much faster and more accurate.

Bertozzi: *One of the biggest changes is definitely technology. When I started in the industry, we had flip phones. Now, smart phones and iPads are used instead of pens and paper. All of our plans are downloaded and integrated into a system. It makes for a much more seamless transition from the office to out in the field. The industry has become more organized and efficient, in that respect.*



What is the biggest challenge in the construction industry today? And what do you think should be done to help fix it?

Barton: The biggest challenge is finding skilled craftsmen and women. I think we have to get better at communicating to the younger generations that there are careers in the industry that they can be proud of. That could mean introducing students to construction through something like vocational training courses. So many teenagers are required to take computer classes, when some of them might be more adept at shop class.

Bertozzi: *The industry is still very much reliant on labor. Man hours get the job done. At the same time, there is a labor shortage. We're not going to have an overnight solution. Right now we just have to work with our trade partners to make sure we understand what their manpower is and have a realistic understanding of what they can accomplish in a given time. Going forward, we're going to need more work-study programs and other types of training programs.*



In which industries have you seen the largest increases or decreases in construction over the past decade? What is driving the trends?

Barton: Right now, because the economy is doing well, many industries are taking on construction projects. One area that really needs an increase but isn't seeing one is infrastructure. I would say we can expect to see more infrastructure work in the coming decade, but so much of that depends on public funding. Until funding is allocated for infrastructure, we won't see many changes on that front.

Bertozzi: *Housing has really come along strong since the recession, but commercial has lagged behind. Part of that is due to changes in retail and office space. Retail is now largely confined to smaller boutique shops or to online shopping. On the office side of things, more people are working from home, so the need for office space has declined. We will see a lot more senior living and assisted living communities over the next few years. We are vastly undersupplied for senior living. Student housing wise, we have overbuilt. So you have a massive population that is retiring and a smaller population that is heading to college. There might be a need to convert unused student housing into senior housing.*