

**CAROLYN
RICKARD-BRIDEAU**

AIA | NCARB | LEED AP BD+C | WELL AP

THINK DIFFERENT



As Partner and Chief Executive Officer, Carol's focus is to make sure that we live up to our brand promise to elevate the performance of our clients, and to deliver regenerative design that benefits our clients, our communities and each other. She is keenly tuned in to how our teams leverage every opportunity to help improve the success of our clients.

"Find something that you are passionate about and bring it to your practice."

DESCRIBE YOUR PATH TO LEADERSHIP IN ONE WORD/PHRASE?

"Make the most of what's in front of you" - Not everything is going to be your cup of tea, but make the most out of what's in front of you; what's the lesson you can learn from it? What should you do, What should you never do again? Embrace every experience as a guide to your future.

"Think different" - when you're young, thinking different isn't always a good thing, but when you become an adult to think different - not "differently" as an adverb, but "different" as a noun - differentiates you from the rest of the pack.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT?

I was born and raised in Asia and Europe. I think growing up in other cultures heightened my awareness of my surroundings and led to a deep appreciation for history, anthropology and art. When I came back to the US as a teenager, my high school in Montgomery County, MD had architectural drafting classes which I took as an elective.

I found that I loved designing buildings - to me this newfound interest seamlessly combined my love of history and art - and my parents encouraged me to follow what became my lifelong passion.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH AND THE POSITIONS YOU HAVE HELD?

I started my career as a junior designer, I worked for a number of small companies and design was my sole focus for what would become a quarter of my career. As a designer I learned the lessons of design and building, of not falling in love with the first ideas that I had and to become a ruthless editor of my work.

Then I was presented with an opportunity with Little, the firm I've been a part of the for past 30 years and I gained experience as a Project Architect, Project Manager, Office President, Corporate President and finally as the CEO.

Those positions taught me that communication is something that an architect has to do well: that asking questions and listening were the keys to really understanding the needs of a client, my co-workers, the community and the natural world where my construction would exist, to harmonize all of those different entities.

“Not everything is going to be your cup of tea, but make the most out of what’s in front of you; what’s the lesson you can learn from it? What should you do, What should you never do again? Embrace every experience as a guide to your future.”

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE IN A LEADERSHIP POSITION OR HAS THAT CHANGED OVER TIME?

I have never sought out leadership for its own sake. Initially, I wanted to increase my ability to help make connections between people, functions and places, and assuming more responsibility was one way to have a larger impact and to continue to learn. That was very interesting to me.

With each opportunity that I was presented with I could see how stepping into that role would help me learn something new and could further my desire to make a positive difference.

HOW HAVE YOU WEATHERED THE CHANGING ECONOMIC CYCLES AND RECESSIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY?

Little is a transdisciplinary practice with multiple creative disciplines and practice groups. That diversity helps us navigate through tough financial times because our practice base is made up of

very diverse clients and project types; when one industry type may be down the others are not and that has stabilized the entire company over our 60-year history.

We also embrace change - in design, services, technology and regenerative outcomes - not as a trend, but to meet the challenges of the extraordinary times we live in. We have been lucky that those things have resonated with a number of our clients and drawn others to us.

WHO MENTORED YOU/ HELPED YOU ON YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS?

Every person I’ve ever worked with - representing both successes and failures - has helped me in some way. If you stay open to learning from each experience you begin to develop perspective which helps you see a larger picture, and over time you begin to determine what you really want.

In addition to being surrounded by supportive personal and professional relationships, knowing WHAT you really want, and WHY you want it are the keys to happiness.

My biggest personal mentors were Bill Little, our founder, and Phil Kuttner, my 40-year predecessor in the role of CEO. They were both exceptionally creative people with generous spirits, and “abundance mentalities”, who were willing to take risks.

They believed in me and saw potential in me in ways that I never, ever would have imagined. Their confidence in me, and their view of the future gave me license to take risks and follow my gut, but also to learn from the remarkable things they did, and the opportunities they created for others.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

I should have told myself to relax and have a little more confidence in myself, but as Popeye says, “I yam what I yam”; confidence is won from experience (for me anyway), and experience takes time.

It’s hard to realize that the arc of your career is a long one. Don’t feel as if you have to accomplish everything perfectly, right away.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES AN ARCHITECT SHOULD HAVE?

The profession of architecture is an amazing platform for the intersection of diverse skills: creativity, empathy, adaptability, consciousness about the environment and people, but maybe the most important are curiosity and the desire to make a positive impact on the world around us. Don't only ask "What?" but also ask "Why?" and "For whom?"

ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES THAT YOU HAVE FOUND USEFUL REGARDING LEADERSHIP?

I find that non-fictional histories and biographies are a great source of leadership lessons, typically showing a person confronted by an unexpected or unimaginable circumstance that they need to navigate and the choices they make to do so.

Joseph Campbell's idea of the hero never beginning as a hero, but becoming one through a metamorphosis of abandoning their former, unheroic self, is a compelling one for me.

I am also a ravenous Washington Post and New York Times newspaper reader - not only is it important to find a source of accurate investigative reporting with global reach to give you information and context, but I can always find some thread that is relevant to leadership.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU WANT TO GIVE TO FUTURE LEADERS OF THE INDUSTRY?

Find something that you are passionate about and bring it to your practice of architecture. I once went to a presentation about a subject I had never heard of - epigenetics - and it unlocked something that became a personal passion of mine and helped to define my entire career.

I began to do more research on the subject which led me to the intersection of architecture and human neurobiology and Well Building Design. Not only does the subject fascinate me, it has become an important part of what my firm focuses on and a way that we keep people at the center of our designs.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?

A genuine interest in something bigger than yourself is important and helps you see a more complete picture. I think being curious and open to other ideas helps you unlock the ways to make a difference, have fun and build community.

And I think that treating people with respect and making an effort to understand their circumstances help you put things into context and ultimately, make a meaningful impact.

TIMELINE

1985
Junior Architect

1995
Joined Little
Project Architect

1996
Project Manager,
Little

1998
Office President,
Little

2018
Corporate
President,
Little

2022
Chief Executive
Officer,
Little