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From the Triangle Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2021/12/30/reputations-are-built-not-bought.html>

## 52 Shades of Success: Her Triangle roofing company built a strong reputation in a male-dominated business

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**About this project:** *The 52-week project showcases accomplishments, challenges and opportunities of individuals and businesses run by people of color, women, immigrants, veterans, representatives from the LGBTQ+ community and a few other groups forwarding the mission of diversity, equity and inclusion in the greater Raleigh-Durham metro area. The project also will delve into important trends and issues relating to DEI.*



MEHMET DEMIRCI

Jackie Locklear, CEO of Locklear Roofing in Holly Springs

The best \$25 that Jackie Locklear ever spent was on a pair of Levi workpants (two sizes too big), an oversized flannel shirt and a baseball cap. It was her “dress to impress” outfit, but what she wanted to impress on the construction managers she was pitching was the quality and capabilities of Locklear Roofing.

“I came from the corporate world, back in the day when you still wore suits and heels to work,” said Locklear, CEO of the company her father started more than 40 years ago. “The first couple of

times I went to job sites trying to do sales, I had on my little suit and collared shirt.

“Back then, the purchasing guys were on-site in the construction trailers and, oh yes, they wanted to talk to me,” she quips, with obvious sarcasm. “But not as a subcontractor. I didn’t want to date the guys, I wanted the job. They wouldn’t give me the time of day to talk about roofing.”

That’s when she made the shopping trip to Walmart (NYSE: WMT) and then spent a day on a house with a roofing crew, learning what it takes to roof a house start to finish.

“Twenty-five years ago, there were very few women in construction so I had to earn respect,” Locklear explains. She did that by mastering the trade, holding her tongue in the face of misogynistic comments, and building a reputation for quality roofing in both residential and commercial building.

When she started working with her dad in the late 1990s the company had one crew and did three to five houses a week. Locklear, who had just moved back to the area from Austin, Texas, intended to spend a year helping her father’s business acclimate to new technologies while deciding her next career move.

“Dad was a great tradesman, but his contract was a handshake and his invoicing was done from the back of his pick-up truck on Friday afternoon,” she said.

In her first year, business at Locklear Roofing tripled. When her father retired in 2002, she assumed leadership of the company. Now, the company averages 70 houses a week, employs 20 people and keeps 15 subcontractors busy year-round. Women play a significant role in the company.

“We have two women-led roofing crews and a woman in my service department does our warranty work, which means she’s on top of a roof checking for leaks and repairs,” Locklear said.

Increasingly, women are building careers in construction. According to the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), women made up 10.9 percent of the construction industry workforce in 2020 — but for every \$1 a man earns in construction work, women earn 96 cents. Within North Carolina, there are more than 1,500 members in NAWIC and the Triangle chapter has 391 members.

“I did not use the woman-owned or Native American-owned card when I started out because I thought it was important for the

females coming after me — and for me at that time — to be able to say I made it without those attributions,” Locklear said. “I was coached and [encouraged] many times that I could get a contract because the company is woman-owned and minority-owned. It has only been in the last five years that we’ve started doing those types of bids and proposals, and even now I pick and choose what we put proposals on.”

Locklear’s family is part of the Lumbee tribe from Robeson County and she grew up in Lumberton. Her son, Joshua, who serves as vice president of operations, is the only other Native American in the company. “There aren’t that many Native Americans in this area who do construction work,” she explains.

In terms of economic impact, Native American-owned businesses contribute over \$33 billion to the U.S. economy and employ more than 200,000 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of the Interior.

“I do not advertise and I do not have a sales person; the majority of the work we get is by reputation and word of mouth — and that’s the best work you can ever get, in my opinion,” Locklear said.

The company’s projects are around 20 percent commercial, which includes multi-family residences and apartment communities, and 80 percent residential work, but she is looking for the ratio to become roughly 40 percent commercial and 60 percent residential. It does new construction as well as re-roofing projects. Although the majority of work is in the Triangle, their crews travel to projects around the state as well as in South Carolina.

“We’ve done some fire stations, including one in Winston-Salem; we’re doing a pharmaceutical [building] in Jacksonville; and we’re doing work for Kiddie Academy buildings and at Wake Tech Community College,” Locklear said.

Despite demands for construction projects and a dearth of housing inventory, business was down during the pandemic, largely due to supply chain constraints and shortages of building materials.

“What slowed us down was builders couldn’t get wood products. They were waiting on plywood and trusses before they could put roofs on, so it was a trickle-down effect to all of us,” she said.

“Even now, we’re looking about six months out to get materials for commercial jobs — orders today probably won’t deliver until May.”

Still, 2022 looks promising as Locklear has built a steady book of business with repeat customers such as construction giant Pulte

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Homes, where Locklear may roof all of the homes in a community.

“We just finished more than 2,000 houses in a Pulte community in Brier Creek; this was a four-year project and we have several subdivisions like that with production builders,” she said.

“When I first got into the business, I found out that if I can keep subcontractors busy five days a week, they don’t wander out looking for other jobs, so even though the profit margin is a little smaller with production builders than custom houses, it’s worth it. You might only get one or two custom homes a week, but if you keep [crews] busy and working 12 months a year, they stay with you and you can create a continuous cycle.”

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