

OPENING DOORS

Alene Garlick at a project site, The Pyramids, in Fort Myers. (opposite) Giselle Moreira-Rattis in her Fort Myers showroom.



Alene Garlick

President, AGT Builders

FOUNDED

Began in 2006 with Garlick and her husband, Matt Thomas, both certified general contractors. The Cape Coral-based company specializes in the building envelope, she says, by providing and installing doors, windows and storefront systems. It has 25 to 35 employees.

PRIOR CAREER

She holds a business degree from the University of Michigan and is a CPA.

FAMILY INSPIRATION

Her father, who was a civil engineer, owned a heavy earth-building company and was a land developer. "I always wanted to get into the business, but at that point in time, he didn't think the construction climate was good for women. Of course, that always made me want to be involved even more."

HER CLIENTS

General contractors, developers, colleges, assisted living facilities, homeowner associations, school systems and government agencies. Recent projects include work for DeAngelis Diamond (approximately 1,000 windows and several hundred sliding glass doors and French doors at Amavida in Fort Myers), Suffolk Construction (Naples Square II and The Moorings Building R and clubhouse renovations) and Ashton Woods in Naples.

KEY EARLY STEP

Keeping the fixed costs small. She worked a full-time job when they started the business. "We had to have a supplemental income for a few years." The company is a Florida certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) by the Lee County Port Authority for the Department of Transportation, which she says also helped attain contracts.

STATE OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY

"I don't think this business is any tougher than any [other] business I've ever been in, but there aren't a lot of women in it." She's hopeful about the impact of construction management degrees. "If a woman was interested in construction when I went to college, they either became an architect or an engineer. Now, there's that option."

ADVICE

Make sure to follow through to the very last detail. She's even opened every one of the thousands of windows in a project to make sure they operate smoothly. If the work is done poorly, you may not have the client anymore, she says.