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Support Systems

Fostering strong relationships between management, employees, and customers can ignite a new-hire's passion for the pro dealer industry that crosses age and gender barriers alike.

By: [Jessica Nobmann](#)



I've seen some priceless expressions in my time as manager of Golden State Lumber's Sierra Point, Calif., yard, those brief moments of surprise from vendors and customers who have walked into my office to speak with “the boss” and found me—a 27-year-old blonde—on the other side of the desk. It is obvious that most don't expect it. But eventually they get over their initial shock and settle down to business—sometimes all it takes is a firm handshake.

Being a “young woman boss” in a male-dominated profession like the lumber business has come with its fair share of challenges. But I know that young women are thriving in many successful businesses today, even industries like ours. I know women can be very effective managers; we have a natural work style with a sense of mission. From employees to customers and vendors, everyone wants to be inspired in their daily work. Female management often can offer empathy to that mission that creates a supportive climate and encourages participation in an environment where people want to give their best!

Jessica Nobmann, Yard Manager, Vice President, Golden State Lumber, Petaluma, Calif.

However, I'm also the owner's daughter, and that fact brings a whole other set of dynamics to my management scenario. Again, there are many preconceived notions about how I will or won't run the business, make day-to-day decisions on operations, or deal with customers, employees, and suppliers. I have to follow in my father's footsteps, but I also have to be my own person. Like most of the team at Golden State Lumber, I learn fast, I know my own capabilities, and I am critical of my own performance. But as a young woman manager and the daughter of the owner, I also have had everyone's acute attention as my career has grown.

Everyone has had my attention, as well. I truly believe that the single most important part of my job is, and always will be, the relationships between management, employees, and customers that I have found to be the key to unlocking everything about managing a successful business. Regardless of age or gender or family ties, those relationships begin where the job begins, with the employees already working on behalf of the company

and its customers. When I joined Sierra Point as manager a year ago I made a constant effort to create and foster those relationships. I asked questions; I listened; I observed. Everyone in our industry at one time has been immersed all alone in something new where it's too late to turn around, too late to make a break for it. I quickly learned that it's only with the support of our employee and customer relationships that we can stand up, shake hands, and act and feel like we belong.

When I first came to work for Golden State Lumber, I told my father I would give the lumber business a try for a year; if I didn't feel the same kind of passion that he demonstrates every day, I would eventually have to move on. We are different in many ways, but he and the other managers and employees at Golden State Lumber have been there to share their expertise, to share their knowledge, and to share the relationships that cut across those personal differences. It is with that support that I was able to find my place and see my future here. Of course learning the pro dealer industry is hard. Of course becoming a manager at a young age has been challenging. But in the time I have been here, working together with our team, we have produced great results.

It's been more than three years since I first agreed to give the pro dealer business a try, and overcoming the challenges has been a part of what has made it worthwhile. I'm still here, and, blond hair and all, I love being a part of what my father, my fellow employees, and our customers have created.

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