

MTACC Celebrates Engineers Week February 19-25 2017

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Read these exciting perspectives in our Engineers Week series "5X5: Five Engineers, Five Questions" running February 20-24 on *MTA Today*. Kicking off on Friday, February 17 with a story on engineering feats.

Because Engineers Matter

“The world we live in today would not exist if it weren't for engineers.”



Jignesh Shah
Construction
Manager – SAS

“We push the barriers of the impossible to solve important social and environmental and economic issues.”



Minosca Alcantara
Scheduling Chief –
Program Controls

“At MTACC we help make life easier and better for people throughout New York City and the tri-state area.”



Ainsley Allen
Construction
Manager – Capital
Security Program

“Engineers look at the existing infrastructure and don't see it simply as it is now, but also how it should be 50 to 100 years ahead.”



Chester Yee
VP and Deputy
Program Executive,
Design and Support –
ESA

“Even prehistoric people were acting as engineers the moment they figured out how to use caves as shelters. Our way of thinking is critical.”



Anthony DiFiore
Program Manager –
No. 7 Line Extension



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5X5: Five Engineers, Five Questions - Day one

Published: February 17, 2017

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MTACC Celebrates Engineers Week February 19-25: 5X5: Five Engineers, Five Questions



Read the first of five exciting perspectives from our engineers running today through Friday.

Five Questions for Jignesh Shah

Meet an MTACC engineer who helped open SAS Phase 1 on time.

For Jignesh Shah, a Construction Manager on the project, being an engineer isn't just about having a specialized skills set like electrical or mechanical. Rather, he strives to be a combination problem-solver, coordinator and diplomat. To do whatever it takes to keep a project moving forward—and accomplish things professionals in other careers could only dream of.

1. How did you first get into engineering?

I'm from a city called Baroda located on the West coast of India, where the state tabulates high school results to prepare a merit list on which admissions to engineering and medical colleges are based. Even though I earned a high merit list ranking, as in most of India at the time, there were basically three options in terms of the area in which I could earn a BS: civil engineering, radio electronics or water management and irrigation. I chose civil engineering. So, in a way you could say the field of civil engineering picked me. And I'm very glad of that because it's an excellent calling.

2. Why are engineers so important?

The world we live in today would not exist if it weren't for engineers. We provide sustainability, technological innovation and safe and healthy environments that benefit all of society. We are multitaskers who bring people together toward a common mission of building a better future. Because we play such a critical societal function, I believe we are even more critical than doctors, bankers and lawyers.

3. Who's your favorite engineer of all time and why?

I could easily name a famous engineer whom I've read about, but I wouldn't really know who he or she is because I haven't worked with the person. That's why my favorite engineer is a person I've worked with for over three years on SAS—Tom Kenny. Tom has proven expertise in construction management as well as designing various mechanical systems like HVAC, elevators & escalators, and various fire suppression systems—a true Renaissance man in a professional world in which most engineers only specialize in one area. He is not only an extraordinary engineer but a true gentleman.

4. What's the biggest challenge you've faced as an engineer?

Without a doubt, the biggest challenge of my life was helping launch SAS Phase 1 on time. The project was truly epic.

Working to launch on a fixed date of December 31, 2016—according to a fixed schedule and budget—was really tough. We had to overcome skepticism both of ourselves and others. "Can we make it?" was the big question we faced. Team members had to put all other tasks aside and gain everyone's cooperation—from CCM, contractors, designers and NYCT users departments—to meet Governor Cuomo's challenge.



We ensured there were no safety/code violations. We tested all elevators and escalators, tunnel ventilation, stair pressurization and fire suppression systems successfully. There were hundreds of people working day and night to get it done. But what I myself contributed was diplomacy and relationship-building skills to establish a coordinated effort among all professionals involved—from contractors to designers to all NYCT departments—to resolve any technical issues and hurdles in achieving the common goal: opening SAS Phase 1 on time.

5. Why would an engineer want to work for MTACC?

Working at MTACC is fascinating. Instead of doing rehabilitations like other agencies, we build projects that are new. Not only that but our projects are mega in size, scope and budget—which means we must achieve milestones to overcome big challenges. And, as a result, we enjoy even greater satisfaction.

We're a small team—MTACC has less than 150 employees—which gives each engineer room to learn and grow. And we get recognition for what we do since everyone knows one another.

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Five Questions for Minosca Alcantara

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MTACC Celebrates Engineers Week February 19-25: 5X5: Five Engineers, Five Questions

Read the second of five exciting perspectives from our engineers running through Friday.

Five Questions for Minosca Alcantara

Steeped in math and science at an early age, Minosca Alcantara loves to study.

A Scheduling Chief in Program Controls, Minosca's degrees include a B.S. in Civil Engineering earned in the Dominican Republic, an M.S. in Construction Management from George Washington University and an MA and Ed.D. from Columbia University.



No mere degree-collector, however, Minosca has dedicated herself to raising the visibility of engineering in the broader culture—exactly the mission Engineers Week is looking to achieve.

1. How did you first get into engineering?

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, scientists and engineers surrounded me—uncles, aunts and cousins. My father, a residential real estate developer, was a chemical engineer; my mother, who had a doctorate in pharmacy, developed medicines in her chemical lab.

That I attended a demanding private catholic girl school from kindergarten to 12th grade was fortunate, considering the experience of many students today who feel academically unprepared to compete in math and science. I excelled in math and science and my teachers encouraged me to pursue engineering. There was not any concern that the field was male-dominated.

2. Why are engineers so important?

We envision a world that does not yet exist. Pushing the barriers of the impossible, engineers are mass healers (bioengineers) and community bridge-creators (civil, mechanical, electrical) focused on solving important social and environmental and economic issues.

3. Who's your favorite engineer of all time and why?

My favorites are two women. Neither an engineer in terms of academic training, but nevertheless possessing skills that enabled them to be instrumental in the success of major civil engineering projects and leave extensive legacies:

- **Queen Hatshepsut.** The fifth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt, and the second historically confirmed female pharaoh, Hatshepsut ruled peacefully for 22 years. The most prolific builder in Egypt, she commissioned hundreds of the most complex, architecturally advanced construction projects.
- **Emily Warren Roebling.** Known as "the first woman field engineer," Roebling oversaw the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge after her husband, the chief engineer John Roebling, became bed-ridden with caisson disease as a result of working in the airtight compartments (caissons) that allowed underwater

construction of the bridge. At the official opening of the bridge in 1883, Emily Roebling was the first person to cross it.

Clearly, women are underrepresented in engineering. To help address this issue, in completing my Ed.D. at Columbia, I wrote a dissertation focused on understanding the underrepresentation of Latinas in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education. To introduce middle school girls to STEM fields, I directed the GAMES (Girls' Adventures in Math, Engineering and Science) summer camp at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. And I advocated for girls as a member of the Champaign School Board of Education and as a Commissioner for the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. It's important to me to take action to support what you believe in.

4. What's the biggest challenge you've faced as an engineer?

"Oh my God, what did I get myself into?"

I remember saying this to myself as I first glanced at the plans while serving on the Central Artery Project in Massachusetts. At the time it was the largest infrastructure project in the United States. As a chief scheduler, I helped drive the construction of the \$350 million Route 1A/Logan Airport Subway Station.

While chief scheduler at Logan Airport on 9/11, a colleague and I watched on a tiny television as the World Trade Center Towers fell—and destroyed Cortland Street Station—later learning that the terrorists had departed from that very airport. Coincidentally, 15 years later, I am now working at Cortlandt Street as chief scheduler. As engineers, our job is to build.

5. Why would an engineer want to work for MTACC?

It's a dream come true: MTACC is like a playground for infrastructure construction management professionals like me. We work on complex mega-projects that require an exceptional degree of coordination and advanced construction techniques. The job gives an engineer the opportunity to work alongside the most committed and extraordinarily smart people.

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Five Questions for Ainsley Allen

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MTACC Celebrates Engineers Week February 19-25: 5X5: Five Engineers, Five Questions

Read the third of five exciting perspectives from our engineers running through Friday.

Five Questions for Ainsley Allen

At MTACC, we build big. So protecting our transportation infrastructure and customers is a major responsibility that depends on the expertise of professionals like Ainsley Allen. As Construction Manager – Capital Security Program, Ainsley is not only committed to safeguarding our built environment and riders, but he's also passionate about preserving the natural surroundings that make our projects possible in the first place.



1. How did you first get into engineering?

I came to engineering indirectly. When I was just 14 years old, I wanted to be a geologist and save the earth in my own way. At 17 I enrolled at City College of New York and decided to pursue a geology degree. I eventually learned from my older brother, also an engineer, that it might be tough to be a geologist since the field lacked a clear-cut career path. I subsequently decided pursuing a career in engineering would not only provide job opportunities, but also allow me to make a positive impact on New York City.

2. Why are engineers so important?

Many people go into civil engineering because they want to build bridges. But while I also create infrastructure, at heart I'm more of an "earth guy"—a person with an abiding interest in the way earth and water interact. Engineers are indispensable because they help sustain an environment that supports soil, plants, air and water, accomplished via the disposal and processing of solid waste using landfills that speed up biodegradation, and the treatment of storm and wastewater before they are returned to the water cycle via lakes and streams. Similarly, we at MTACC build infrastructure that doesn't threaten this delicate environmental balance.

3. Who's your favorite engineer of all time and why?

I have a high level of respect for Karl Terzaghi, known as the "father of soil mechanics," who believed the welfare of the planet radiates out from the earth's soil. Terzaghi developed methods for soil analysis and irrigation explaining how soil and water interact within ecosystems. He was a civil and geotechnical engineer and a geologist—and there are parallels in our studies and career paths. I'd like to think MTACC's projects reflect an awareness of such perspectives, in particularly by being environmentally friendly.

4. What's the biggest challenge you've faced as an engineer?

I've been with the MTA for 16 years, LIRR for 15 and MTACC for one. The MTACC Security Program provides structural and electronic security at strategic locations within the transit system. Overall, one of the highest hurdles we face is in coordinating our activities with major municipal entities and organizations such as Madison Square Garden, Barclays Arena, Penn Station and Jamaica Station. In addition we work with

the LIRR, Amtrak, New Jersey Transit, DOT, and the 34th Street Partnership. As a result, it can be challenging to reach consensus to move a security project forward in a timely manner.

Another hurdle we've had to leap over, so to speak, was putting in both electronic security and physical control systems (barricades) to protect Madison Square Garden (MSG) and Penn Station (PS). While PS is owned by Amtrak, the Garden (MSG) is owned by the MSG Corporation. The performance of MTA work is done under a shared agreement. This is a delicate and intricate process. For example, trucks unloading at the arena for concerts cannot be impacted by our work; MTACC must coordinate its activities around MSG's events. As the saying goes "the show must go on."

5. Why would an engineer want to work for MTACC?

MTACC manages a host of cutting-edge, city-changing mega projects—from the historic Second Avenue Subway to the transformational and award-winning No. 7 Line Extension, and the massive East Side Access project, the largest infrastructure project in the nation—presenting engineers with opportunities to contribute to the re-shaping of New York's landscape and even parts of the northeast corridor. These projects give engineers a chance to make life easier and better for people throughout the region. It's great to be a part of making positive change happen and improving our economy, which relies so much on effective transportation.

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Five Questions for Chester Yee

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Read the fourth of five exciting perspectives from our engineers running through Friday.



Five Questions for Chester Yee

Whether taking apart and oiling a squeaky fishing reel—or putting together a desk for his parents—ever since childhood Chester Yee has had a passion for making small things work.

Except now, serving for the past six years on the East Side Access (ESA) project where he is VP and Deputy Program Executive – Design and Support, the thing Yee is responsible for making work is very, very big: an MTACC mega project.

1. How did you first get into engineering?

One of my earliest hobbies was working with my hands to build and assemble things. I remember constructing a dog house for the family pet, and furniture for my brothers and parents. I enjoyed carpentry—which is construction on a small scale.

While attending the Boston Latin School, I developed a major strength in math and science—the underpinnings of any good engineer. My school was also rigorous in social sciences and literature, which helped me learn to read and write well, and acquire the communication skills that are critical on construction mega projects.

2. Why are engineers so important?

Engineers plan and build the world's infrastructure—our “built environment”—to create a solid footing for the future. We look at the existing infrastructure and don't see it simply as it is now, but also how it should be in 50 to 100 years.

Engineers have a responsibility to create infrastructure that lasts, which is why in college I became interested in conservation and building small, to minimize the use of resources. It's important to build infrastructure today that will meet the needs of our kids and grandchildren.

3. Who's your favorite engineer of all time and why?

I'm very partial to John Roebling, the force behind the Brooklyn Bridge. Roebling had a vision and didn't let go of it—until he designed and began constructing the longest suspension bridge of its time in 1870. He made innovative use of caissons—watertight chambers, using air pressure—to enable construction to occur in the East River. Roebling stuck to his guns and—despite setbacks, injuries and illness—created the bridge that connects Manhattan and Brooklyn.

4. What's the biggest challenge you've faced as an engineer?

ESA is a massive project. When complete it will provide customers from Long Island and Queens with service to the east side of Manhattan in a new 350,000 square-foot passenger concourse under Grand Central Terminal. The project starts from the tail tracks under 38th Street in Manhattan, heads north along Park Avenue, then under the East River to Harold Interlocking in Long Island City, Queens. The mega project

occupies a wide geographic region and requires the services of diverse construction workers, trades and management—encompassing tunnel rock excavation in Manhattan; soft ground tunneling in Queens; reconfiguration and modernization of track, signal, communication and power systems in Harold Interlocking; construction of the new LIRR concourse and terminal; and the installation of track and systems throughout the entire project route.

The challenge of ESA is compounded by the fact that, when engineering changes are made to one construction contract, they will likely affect others. So, to ensure coordination, engineers need to communicate clearly, precisely and in a timely fashion.

One thing we're really proud of is that ESA has remained a stealth project with minimal impacts to the neighborhoods surrounding Grand Central Terminal while daily construction work—including drill and blast operations and extensive mining—was performed under some of the most expensive real estate in the world.

5. Why would an engineer want to work for MTACC?

I've always been fascinated by mega projects. Early in my career I was in charge of facilities rehabilitation for the Army Corps of Engineers, which was rewarding. But to be a part of creating new infrastructure for the New York regional transportation network—from the ground up—is much more exciting. The finished ESA project will not only provide additional capacity for Long Island Rail Road, but will also improve the regional transportation network.

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Chris Scrivo

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Counselor on the Run: Coworker Chat with Diane Nardi

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Counselor on the Run: Coworker Chat with Diane Nardi

Coworker Chat is the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year.



Diane dashing through a 3.8-mile trail race in Pennsylvania – part of a weekend series of runs including a 5-kilometer, 10-kilometer and half-marathon (13.1 miles) that amount to a full marathon. She completed them all.

“The big projects.”

Previously with NYCT for over four years and an attorney at a private law firm before that, deputy general counsel Diane Nardi joined MTACC in May 2016 due to an attraction shared with many other newbies: the allure of megaprojects.

Diane, who has a hand in assessing the legal implications of various MTACC projects, is an inveterate runner. In 2015, she completed three marathons in a span of three months: Reykjavik, Iceland (late August), New York City (early November) and Philadelphia (mid November). Of the seven 26.2-mile races she has participated in, she delivered her personal best of 3:47 in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) marathon.

Since distance runners expend so much energy, calorie replacement is a challenge they are lucky enough to face. What's her favorite food? “Chocolate,” she said.

The famous person she'd most like to meet? “Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” she said. “She speaks her mind and does what's right.”



Descending the mountains in Pingvellir National



Gearing up to be lowered 400 feet into a volcano in

Park, Blaskogabyggo, Iceland.

Reykjavik, Iceland to explore. Followed by a hike across a lava field back to her car.

Diane emphasized success isn't all about displaying Judiciary Branch-caliber braininess. "Sometimes people are too focused on intellect," she said. "We often forget that the smartest person in the room doesn't always get the deal done; being reasonable and courteous often win out. You'd be surprised at what you can accomplish by just being nice to people."

Wise counsel indeed.

7 Personal Questions

1. Favorite person

"My great uncle Vinny. He's in his late 80s, but is still independent, and a great storyteller."

2. Top bucket-list item

"Travel to Egypt to learn more about ancient times."

3. If you were an animal

"A giraffe. It's a peaceful animal."

4. Monday morning motivation

"Looking at the dozens of e-mails that I've already received by the time I wake up."

5. Most-used smartphone app

"Google maps. I have a bad sense of direction."

6. Preferred subway line

"4/5. For me it's the fastest."

7. Business tip

"Get along with others in the office. It will pay dividends."



Diane, her sister Maryann and uncle Vinny.

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Chris Scrivo

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Published: April 9, 2017

Comments:

The Travel Bug: Coworker Chat with Coleen Cohen

Introducing Coworker Chat, the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year or so. Because in the work we do, collaboration is important. Getting to know your colleagues personally can make a difference – and it's fun, too.

Coleen Cohen was born to tour the world.

When she was a child, the human resources manager immigrated to the United States from Jamaica with her family.



Coleen In the Lahbab Desert, Dubai

Ever since, she's never stopped globetrotting.

Coleen has recently visited Costa Rica, St. Lucia and Trinidad. She's been to the Middle East, Canada and "back home" – not to mention Jamaica, Queens, where she moved after growing up in East Elmhurst.

But while travel is her bliss, she's also dedicated to her career. "It took prayer, sweat and tears to earn my Senior Professional in Human

Resources (SPHR) designation," she said. "Only 45 percent of people pass the test on the first try."

Coleen decompresses by bringing her culture to life in the kitchen through cooking. "I can cook a meal really quickly," she said. Jamaican specialties like oxtail, jerk chicken, and coconut rice and peas have been known to be on her menu.

What's the most underrated quality in a person? "Honesty," she said. After a 15-year career punctuated by acquisitions and restructuring in the private sector, "I came to MTACC for the stability."

7 Personal Questions

1. Favorite person

"My mom. (Don't tell my dad)."

2. Top bucket-list item

"Traveling to Greece."

3. If you were an animal

"A pit bull. It looks mean but is actually very nice."

4. Monday morning motivation

"Monday is one day closer to Friday."

5. Most-used smartphone app

Fitbit.

6. Hidden talent

"Friends tell me I'm a great writer especially on leisure topics – food, drink, travel."

7. Preferred subway line

"The F train. It reminds me of family trips from Queens to Coney Island."



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Living the Dream: Coworker Chat with Dmitriy Marenko

Published: May 1, 2017

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Living the Dream: Coworker Chat with Dmitriy Marenko

Coworker Chat is the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year.



Dream job.

Stuffed cabbage, his mom, and daughter.

These are a few of Dmitriy Marenko's favorite things – not necessarily in that order.

Dmitriy, a design manager, joined MTACC in July 2016. Previously he was with NYC Transit, Staten Island Railway, and Bridges & Tunnels for 14 years. Back in 1994 he emigrated from the Ukraine, where the aforementioned delicacy was often on his family's dinner table.

He and his wife Veronika and daughter Aleena live in the suburbs of New Jersey. On weekends not full of family activities, Dmitriy indulges his adventurous side with hobbies like target shooting.

What's the most underrated personal quality, according to Dmitriy? Perhaps the ability to make delicious stuffed cabbage – or consistently hit a target's bullseye?

"Communication," he said. "If you don't have it, there will be a lot of issues."

His biggest accomplishments are coming to the United States and raising his daughter. "I want to prepare her for life," he emphasized.

"I'm living the American dream," he added.

7 Personal Questions

1. Favorite person

"My mother."

2. Top bucket-list items

"Own a motorcycle. Travel more. Ride in a hot air balloon."

3. If you were an animal

"A bear. It can be either gentle or strong."

4. Monday morning motivation

"Looking forward to work."

5. Most-used smartphone app

"Pandora."

6. Hidden talent

"I can cook stuffed cabbage."

7. Preferred subway line

"The 2/3 line, which I take from 34 street during my work commute from New Jersey."



Swimming with the sharks.



Mexican vacation with the family.

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**Got Nachos?
Coworker Chat with Anam Usman**

Coworker Chat is the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year or so. Because in the work we do, collaboration is important. Getting to know your colleagues personally can make a difference – and it's fun, too.



Anam about to dive into her favorite food.

"I love nachos."

Anam Usman, Assistant General Counsel, paused to clarify.

"Actually, I love all food," she said.

Searching for cooler temperatures than her home state of Florida, she moved to New York in 2014.

Anam has engineering and construction in her genes. Her father, Ghulam Usman, owns and runs a construction company in the Sunshine State. In fact, she is not only a lawyer, but also has a B.S. in civil engineering and is a licensed professional engineer.



Naturally, MTACC appealed to her.

In a Second Avenue Subway tunnel.

"We build big projects to move New Yorkers around the city at a hectic pace," she said.



At age six (pre-nacho era).

Life isn't all about success per se, though. "Making my parents proud is important," she said. "And smiling, laughing – and good food."

Tex-Mex, presumably.

7 Personal Questions

Not surprisingly, Anam responded to our lighthearted questions with lawyerly tact. But can you guess how she answered the food-related query?

1. Favorite person

"My brother – he's funny and smart and always has my back."

2. Top bucket-list item

"Not one thing: to enjoy life all the time."

3. If you were an animal...

"A giraffe—so I could see over everyone else and know what's going on all the time."

4. Monday morning motivation

"Coffee."

5. Favorite kind of food

"Mexican – nachos in particular. Obviously."

6. Hidden talent

"I have a black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do."

7. Preferred subway line

"Walking. But if I can't, I like the 4/5 line."



With her father on one of his job sites.

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We Are Family: Coworker Chat with Gwen Dhu-Gilling

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We Are Family: Coworker Chat with Gwen Dhu-Gilling

"Coworker Chat" is the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year.

Gwen (middle) in New Orleans with granddaughters (L-R) Kayla, Lanaye, Autumn and Laurny.

Gwen Dhu-Gilling has developed an important talent that's well known to her family. But it's a virtual secret at MTACC, where she provides administrative, research and analytical support to the Quality and Safety departments, including maintaining quality data, reports and charts for management review and decision making.

Hint: Gwen's secret ability has to do with raising a large family – including five daughters and two sons – with her husband Raymond.

"I can cook Ethiopian and Caribbean cuisine," she said.

Gwen, who is also responsible for inventory management of quality and safety supplies – like hats, glasses and safety vests – became an employee in May after consulting here since 2008.

According to Gwen's supervisor, Ehambaram Sundaresan, Chief – Quality, System Certification and Site Security, "Gwen is a team player with knowledge of our projects that has grown over her years with MTACC. She has a great work ethic and gets along with everyone."

What's the most underrated quality in a person, according to Gwen?

"Humility," she said.

That explains why she might be understating her brilliant cooking skills. While her children – who range in age from 24 to 41 – are all grown up, she also has nine grandchildren.

"My family is my biggest accomplishment in life," she said.

Gwen's secret to a happy family life is to keep things fun.

"We have a lot of festive events," Gwen said. "Every year we organize our Red Carpet event with a message around giving thanks and a Hollywood theme."

Right now she is planning a Back to Our Roots extravaganza where family members all wear African attire. At their We Are Family get-together, everyone will express what family means to them and there will be lots of cooking and music.

Naturally, the music selection at the latter event includes both the original and cover versions of Sister Sledge's song of that name.

One more question *MTA Today* should have asked Gwen: "Can all your colleagues come to your next family party – and what's on the menu?"

7 Personal Questions

1. Favorite person

"My husband."

2. Top bucket-list item

"I want to travel to Ethiopia. I'm a fan of ancient history. I'd like to visit Lalibela, an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian cathedral built in the 12 Century that's one of oldest churches in the country."

3. If you were an animal

"A lioness. I'm fierce."

4. Monday morning motivation

"Get to work so I can pay the bills."

5. Most-used smartphone app

"WhatsApp, the messaging and photo-sharing app."


6. Preferred subway line

"The 4/5 because it takes me right to 2 Broadway fast."

7. Business tip

"Conviction is critical. You need it to know why you're doing what you do, and how you're going to do it."

Source Agency: MTACC

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Ready to Do Big Things: Coworker Chat with Virginia Borkoski

Published: August 16, 2017

Comments:

Ready to Do Big Things: Coworker Chat with Virginia Borkoski

Coworker Chat is the MTA Today series profiling employees who joined MTACC over the past year.

Virginia Borkoski is excited to be back at MTACC taking on the new role of Senior Vice President – Program Planning and Delivery to enhance the public transit experience.

Virginia began her transit development career as an architect at NYCT in 1988. Her 30-years of industry experience – including 22 years with NYCT and MTACC and roles in private sector transit development – has taken her all over the world. She has played leadership roles in various worldclass transit projects, including the Government Center in Boston, Eglinton Light Rail in Toronto, the Doha Metro in Qatar and MTACC's Fulton Center.



Left: Virginia with her license after passing her driving test. **Right:** On a Doha Metro construction site.

1. What brings you back to MTACC?

I'm very excited to return to MTACC to work with the leadership team and the entire organization to support our transformation. We need to change – to get even better – to break down barriers and keep our public promise of a world-class transit system.

Not many people leave MTACC – we're like a family – so coming back seems almost like destiny. In fact, when I left in 2010, I accidentally left behind a box of books, which were kept because they were mixed in with some project files. And now the books are back on my office bookshelf. It already feels like home again.

2. What's the focus of your new position?

I will be supporting key strategic capital initiatives to enhance interagency relationships and partnerships. I'll be focused on harnessing the full technical expertise of our professionals to improve the design and construction process at critical stages of our projects.

3. You've occupied many leadership roles in the industry. What makes you successful?

I'm a troubleshooter. I bring corporate world expertise that lets me take a fresh, broad look at projects. I also give projects structure and standardization, help expedite processes, and bring optimism to get things done.

People and relationships are essential to success. That's one reason why I'm currently involved in the industry as a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Building (FCIOB) and as a director at Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS). We all have to pull together to achieve big things.

7 Personal Questions

1. Favorite person – "My dad. He gave me talent and inspiration."
2. Top bucket-list item – "To sail across the Atlantic in a small boat."
3. If you were an animal – "A shark. You can't see its teeth but they're there."
4. Monday morning motivation – "Bill Withers' 'Lovely Day.'"
5. Most-used smartphone app – "Facebook."
6. Hidden talent – "I'm very adaptable wherever I travel around the world."
7. Preferred subway line – "The No. 7."



The Doha Metro starts to rise.



Rendering of the completed Doha Metro.

Source Agency: MTACC

Created By:



Chris Scrivo

646-252-3400

Created Date: August 10, 2017

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Coworker Chat with David Florio

Published: November 8, 2017 5:00AM

Comments:

Mega Space: Coworker Chat with David Florio



Right on time: David at Grand Central Terminal.

“Always over-communicate to manage expectations.”

It’s the watchword of David Florio, the new Director – Leasing, Acquisitions and Operations, at MTA Real Estate. The group’s responsibilities include the often complex process of securing space for MTACC’s megaprojects, and leasing and licensing retail space throughout the MTA’s New York service area.

Under the leadership of Chief Development Officer Janno Lieber, MTACC has renewed our emphasis on partnering with Real Estate. For David, who worked with the group from 1984 to 2001, rejoining the MTA to support our projects – with a focus on retail – was an opportunity he couldn’t pass up.

Retail means energy

“Retail gives our transit environment energy, customer amenities and better security,” David said. “We want to change the character of transit through our leasing activities.”

“I remember being on the team that worked on the electrification of the LIRR main line from Hicksville to Ronkonkoma,” David said. “We acquired property to build everything from sub-stations to high-level platforms. That project cut a half-hour from commute times. It’s very satisfying when one’s work impacts commuters’ lives.”

Before returning to MTA, David was a real estate executive in the corporate sector at the international real estate company CBRE. That experience gave him a different perspective on managing teams that he’s brought back to the MTA.

Real estate success at MTACC

"The Real Estate team is also excited to be working with MTACC to develop the retail components of larger scale projects and help the MTA get the most value out of its portfolio," David said.

The team is also responsible for leasing Grand Central Terminal, which today has more than 90 restaurants, retail stores and food shops. David will put the team's skills to work populating ESA's concourse – comprising approximately 25,000 square feet, including around 25 to 30 spaces, plus pop-up locations – with the right mix of stores.

7 QUESTIONS

- 1. Weekend activity – "My wife and I are urban hikers. We enjoying picking a neighborhood and exploring it."
- 2. Preferred Subway Line – "The No. 7 – the line I live on."
- 3. Monday morning motivation – "Weekly action list I wrote the previous Friday night."
- 4. Most-used smartphone app – "Amtrak app to plan visits to my family in Rhode Island."
- 5. Most underrated quality in a person – "A sense of humor."
- 6. Hidden Talent – "I've always enjoyed sketching buildings."
- 7. Top bucket list item – "Travel back to Asia."



Location, location: On the Grand Central retail concourse, which is leased by the Real Estate group.

Source Agency: MTACC

Created By: Chris Scrivo



Created Date: November 7, 2017

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Coworker Chat with Christopher Nesterczuk

Published: October 30, 2017 5:00AM

Comments:

Soul Searcher: Coworker Chat with Christopher Nesterczuk

MTACC has renewed our focus on partnering with MTA Real Estate, which now resides under the Office of the Chief Development Officer. Today we begin featuring stories about Real Estate and its professionals in MTA Today.

"I decided to go into the public sector to make a difference in people's lives," said Christopher Nesterczuk, who joined MTA Real Estate as Director – Leasing & Acquisitions in June.

"My father worked for the United States foreign service all over the world," Christopher said. "He took the family with him to live in the Caribbean, Russia, Bosnia, West Africa and other places. From an early age I came to believe in the importance of helping others and public service," he said.

Christopher began his career as an attorney representing developers. But surviving a life-changing event forced him to reassess his work priorities. One morning, while getting into his car to go to work, he was attacked and stabbed 15 times.

Miraculously surviving a neck wound – thanks to a neighboring doctor who came to his aid – Christopher turned a vicious attack on his life into a life-affirming shift in his professional mission.



From warehouses to retail

In 20 years in real estate, Christopher was director of leasing managing a portfolio of 37 million square feet for the City. His most memorable project was the acquisition of property in Maspeth Queens for the consolidation of the NYPD's evidence warehouse.



Christopher proudly stands in front of the building where he completed a 120,000 square foot lease for the Department of City Planning.

"I led the team that identified the property and negotiated the purchase to seal a deal worth approximately \$350 million, which included the development of the warehouse facility," he said. "The process to enter into the sales contract took 2.5 years to meet various City requirements relating not only to the space itself but also land use approvals and environmental considerations."

Having closed many transactions on behalf of the City for everything from office space to sanitation facilities, "Now my goal is to generate revenue for the MTA by putting my leasing skills to work on the retail side of the business," he said.

To augment his industry knowledge, Christopher is pursuing an M.S. in construction administration to supplement his M.S. in real estate finance.



With wife and sons at the Skogafoss waterfall in Iceland.

7 QUESTIONS

1. Favorite person – "My father for his courage and belief that by moving our family to one of the most remote places on Earth – Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso – as a family, we would have tolerance and a better understanding of the world's cultures."
2. Top bucket-list item – "Be the best role model to my kids."
3. Monday morning motivation – "Looking at my to-do list and knowing how much I have to accomplish."
4. Most-used smartphone app – "Apple Music."
5. Hidden talent – "Photography. And rock drumming."
6. Preferred subway line – "The 1/2/3 to take me home."
7. Most underrated quality in a person – "Compassion."

Source Agency: HQ

Created By: [Chris Scrivo](#)

Created Date: October 26, 2017



December 20, 2017

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From Design to Real Estate: Coworker Chat with Andrea Tedesche-Gomez

Published: December 19, 2017 5:00AM

Comments:

From Design to Real Estate: Coworker Chat with Andrea Tedesche-Gomez

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer, is smiling at the camera. She is standing in a subway station, with other people and an escalator visible in the background. The escalator has a sign that says "Escalator" with an upward arrow.

The real estate motto “Location, location, location” makes sense when it comes to finding space.

But for MTA Real Estate Senior Manager Andrea Tedesche-Gomez, the critical work – getting the space right – begins after a tenant deal has been signed.

As part of the Chief Development Office’s Real Estate Leasing and Acquisitions team, Andrea provides expertise to help the group lease and license LIRR’s station space for retail operations and assists in the marketing and public offering of sites through the RFP process.

Having arrived at the MTA in August with 16 years of experience at NYCT’s Office Planning, Design and Construction division, Andrea has an eye for designing and renovating facilities to meet clients’ unique specifications. Her most memorable project exemplifies how her team did just that for a client.

“I was on the NYCT team that found new space for the agency’s Transit Adjudication Bureau,” Andrea said. “After we worked with MTA Real Estate to identify the raw space, I helped design it to meet the Bureau’s challenging needs.”

The Bureau needed a large waiting area and rooms where lawyers could conduct interviews for their cases. Moreover, the space had to accommodate another tenant, the agency’s Employee Assistance group.

"Our goal was to find creative design solutions to satisfy various specifications at one location," Andrea said. As a result, she's learned how to navigate large team dynamics and solve client issues through proactive communication. What keeps her motivated, however, is a passion for creating functional spaces.

"My dad is a contractor. Watching him build things inspired me to study design and architecture," she said. What's more, "Studying abroad in Rome and experiencing its amazing art and architecture moves me to do what I do."

Raised in upstate New York, Andrea moved to Brooklyn, Queens and then Long Island.

Regarding architectural influences, "Nothing beats Italy," she said.

7 QUESTIONS

1. Favorite person – "My two-year-old son."
2. Top bucket-list item – "Design a skyscraper."
3. Monday morning motivation – "Coffee."
4. Most-used smartphone app – "Brightwheel. To track my son's daycare activities."
5. Hidden talent – "Doing hair and makeup."
6. Preferred train line – "Long Beach Line. To take me home."
7. What's the most underrated quality in a person? – "Being nice."

Source Agency: MTACC

Created By: Chris Scrivo



Created Date: December 18, 2017