



- Kelly Scanlon:           Joining us on this episode of Banking on Kansas City is Lisa Garney. Lisa is the president of two construction companies, LMG Construction and G2 Construction. She's also the owner of a consulting company called LMG Professional Services, and she's the Kansas City Chapter President of the Women Construction Owners and Executives. The Garney family has a 100 plus year history in the Kansas City area, not just in business but in philanthropy and civic leadership as well. Welcome, Lisa.
- Lisa Garney:             Thank you, Kelly. Thank you so much. It's an honor to be here, and I appreciate Country Club Bank giving me this opportunity.
- Kelly Scanlon:           You founded LMG construction in 2007. Tell us a little bit about the company and what inspired you to start it.
- Lisa Garney:             I grew up in the construction industry. My educational path took me from a business degree to an economics degree to a law degree that led to a law practice that involved a lot of construction work through the progress of public law, tax incentives, tax abatement. All involving developers, owners, city code and permitting, platting. That experience included working for Briar Cliff Development Company, which then gave me a springboard to start my own company and my first company, my first WBE certified company was a consulting company practicing law, affirmative action, compliance, codes, zoning. Through that work, I saw an opportunity and I saw a need for women owned businesses in the construction industry that were providing a service. I saw an opportunity to get into an area where there might not be a lot of competition, where there could be an expanded reach for women to get in, learn a trade, learn a skill, and provide a valuable service back to the community and to the industry. And so I engaged in figuring out and learning how to do that. The result of that was the formation and evolution of LMG construction.
- Kelly Scanlon:           Throughout all of this, you've obviously been involved in many, many projects, many of them high profile that our listeners would recognize. So what have been some of the projects that you've been a part of?

Lisa Garney: We just finished Arterra, which is a downtown high-rise multifamily project. We're working on Reverb, which is a downtown high-rise multifamily project. We finished the 21-story renovation of The Grand, which is at 11th and Grand. We did a large multifamily project on 12th and Washington that overlooks I-35.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, so major, major projects here and on top of all that-

Lisa Garney: And the airport, not to mention the airport.

Kelly Scanlon: Oh of course, the airport. I'm so glad you brought that up. I knew you were involved in that.

Lisa Garney: Yes, the airport.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. So on top of all of this though, you still find time to found yet another company G2 it's a concrete company. Tell us where that came into play.

Lisa Garney: G2 resulted from a project that I will forever be most proud of was my work at Whiteman Air Force Base. In 2010, we were awarded with MW Builders, a six-year contract to pour the runway at Whiteman Air Force Base. So I took that experience and got certified in Kansas City for concrete placement. And then two years ago, three years ago, I thought, "How could we evolve this?" And I was really interested in the idea of aggregates and of manufacturing and so I sought to learn concrete manufacturing.

Kelly Scanlon: What are the core principles and philosophies that guide your businesses?

Lisa Garney: Core philosophies and guidelines and having these words as walk around words in your head that every employee understands and takes ownership of are critical to the success of any business. My father taught me that and he rooted core philosophies in Garney which are forever ingrained in my mind. Win-win, integrity is the shortest path to success, altruistic intentions for ourselves and for our community, excellence is the standard. These roll in my head daily, I wanted-

Kelly Scanlon: You personify them. They're not just words on a page. They become so ingrained and embedded in you. They're part of who you are and you live them every day.

Lisa Garney: You live them. And if they're in your head and if they're on the wall and if they're on your shirts and if the crew lives by them at the same time, then they take them with them as well. I've been struggling to create my own because I thought, "Well, it's my own company. I started this on my own. I've done this on my own. I need my own core values and philosophies." But my dad did it so well and Garney has now grown and their reputation is so amazing. They've lived by these core philosophies for so long. So I am working on creating my own, and we have developed an acronym called people.

Lisa Garney: And the P-E-O-P-L-E stands for performance, which is always delivering more than expected. Engagement. Ownership, which means everyone holds everyone accountable. It's holding each other accountable for our actions, for what needs to be completed, for learning and teaching and guiding as we develop new people in the company. Persistence, I feel persistence and tenacity has been a key to the success of my companies. If someone tells you no, find out why and then re-engage with them at a later time. But success is always learning from your mistakes.

Kelly Scanlon: And no, doesn't always mean no.

Lisa Garney: And no, in my world, never. What's no? Right? What's no? Yes, no doesn't always mean no. Longevity I think it's important. It is developing a reputation that withstands the test of time.

Kelly Scanlon: Sustainable, definitely.

Lisa Garney: Sustainability of... Definitely. And then I talked about engagement. We talked about excellence and within the excellence is quality. If you don't have time to do it right the first time, you're not going to have time to do it over.

Kelly Scanlon: Exactly, so true.

Lisa Garney: Or reverse that. But quality is definitely a standard.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. Your family, you mentioned your father and what he ingrained in you, but you've had a long, long history here in Kansas City, not just in construction, but as I mentioned earlier in philanthropy, in civic engagement, and in many other ways. Why has it been so important for your family to be involved in these types of initiatives and not just focus solely on business?

Lisa Garney: My family, my mom and my dad along with, I feel there's several founding families within Kansas City that have set such a high bar for service. And when I think about service, I always comes to mind is Martin Luther King's famous saying, which is that everybody wants to be famous. Not everyone's going to be famous, but everyone can be great and to be great involves service because service is success. When you are committed to service to your community, to your environment, to your neighborhood, selfless service is the key to success. And when you can commit to this, it's a game changer.

Lisa Garney: And I feel my mom and dad set a very high bar for giving back to the community. We were gifted with a lot of success and in exchange, they said, "We're going to take this success, we're going to give it back. We're going to develop the infrastructure of the Northland. We're going to create organizations that will fund domestic violence and create shelters and we're going to engage our time in giving back and creating an environment that can host fundraisers, philanthropic activities, civic engagement." And I think this just became a way of

life for me as much as work ethic on the professional side became a way of life, civic engagement, philanthropy, and service also became a way of life. It's all I ever knew.

Kelly Scanlon: Yes. So it was ingrained in you through the actions of your parents that you raise people up. And in raising people up, you raise a community up. And if you have a great, it's easier to do business too. They all work together.

Lisa Garney: I think it raises people up and in return, the selfless service raises up your own self esteem. And I think to be a great leader, before you can be a great leader of others, you have to be a great leader of yourself.

Kelly Scanlon: So true, so true. And building on that, you're very passionate about giving people a second chance through jobs. Tell us about that.

Lisa Garney: When I started my businesses, I felt the best thing you could do for humankind was to give a man, and man used in a general term, but give a human a job. Give them the ability to earn a wage. Give them the ability to earn a skill, or I'm sorry, to learn a skill and earn a wage and to support their family or support themselves.

Kelly Scanlon: Jobs give people dignity.

Lisa Garney: Yes. And as entrepreneurs, that's what we're doing. We are creating commerce for our communities and for our cities, for our counties, for our states, for our country, which adds in global wellbeing. I mean everything starts really... I think if every human individual took accountability for their own actions and whether that's creating a job and not just giving people a paycheck, but also teaching them a skill and being committed to their wellbeing. And then if we gauged our success, not just on profits, but on overall wellbeing of our employees, which is going to then extend over into the community, which ties back to the civic engagement, I think that measure of wellbeing is a key catalyst for success of all organizations, cities, municipalities, all governments moving forward.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, yeah. And you don't know as a business owner, as an entrepreneur, you don't necessarily know how something that you do today like this will pay forward for decades to come. I mean all of the people who probably because of your business, I've been able to send their kids to school. Then what are those kids going to do? And it just plays itself forward into however far out it's going to, but a long ways.

Lisa Garney: I think you have a vision of you need to start with a vision. Anyone who today is going to start a business or anyone who today is considering starting a business, anyone today who is considering bettering themselves in some way, changing a habit, becoming good at something, being more kind to somebody. I think any of these routes start with a vision. You have to know what you want, you have to know what it is that you're good at and that you can contribute. So first,

understand yourself and then understand where you want to go, but do not start anything without the end in mind. So have the vision in your head of what it is you want to create, how you want to feel, how you want to treat somebody, and then that will play itself out.

Kelly Scanlon: You were talking about helping people learn skills. You've recently started a plumbing school. An in-house plumbing school. So talk to us about that.

Lisa Garney: I'm very excited about LMG University. This has been a vision of mine to provide training and to skilled trades. The construction industry right now, a lot of people are talking about the decline in workforce availability. Not as many people today are going into construction as they did, let's say in the 1950s, the 1960s. Fewer people are seeing trade as an option and where we change that, I'm still working on. Where do we make the change that more people know that the incomes in construction are as high or higher than several other professions? And change the tenure and change the reputation of a blue collar lower paid job opportunity or career choice and make it a career choice for more individuals.

Lisa Garney: And so I thought, "Let's develop a school in education so that we can train," and right now we're training plumbers. Possibly moving forward we might expand this to train other trades, but we're really concentrated on plumbing right now and it's taken time to develop the curriculum to get have the people that can teach and instruct the course. And so I'm very proud of this right now. And so we rolled out six classes this year and we've had a lot of engagement and great feedback from my crew that is participating.

Kelly Scanlon: How many people has this touched in terms of students or what do you call the people who are enrolled in the classes?

Lisa Garney: Currently the people enrolled are my employees or my crew. And it's not mandatory that they attend the classes, but it's highly recommended. And to date, I'd say we've gotten about 90% participation and we knew rolling out the classes at the start of this year that our success would be based on who comes back for the second class and then who comes for the third class. And we've noticed that the numbers are rising.

Kelly Scanlon: That's great.

Lisa Garney: Right. And then the other great thing too is the community that it creates because then the crew does hang out for awhile after class and they talk and I find some of our best ideas and quality control and idea sharing for better production, better quality, better learning happens in that time after an LMG University class.

Kelly Scanlon: So at the moment, these are for your employees?

Lisa Garney: Correct.

Kelly Scanlon: Do you intend though to offer it to the public?

Lisa Garney: I think it would be a great service if we could grow to that. I think it would take some organizational forming, but I think it would be a great service to be able to provide. And I think there are a lot of companies right now that are looking at in-house education and if we could expand that, I think it would be a great opportunity. I'm tracking pretty closely the higher education reform act and I'm tied with some people in Washington that are working on this and I think it's fascinating the idea of providing more workforce development opportunities. There's a lot going on in Washington right now around this exact topic. I think we need to involve the NEA. I think getting the schools involved in this and what we're teaching the students middle school, high school, what's part of their curriculum will play into this as well.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, certainly something that we'll be keeping our eye on. It's very much a need as you've mentioned, especially in the construction industry workforce development. It's a huge need. You've found your success, as we've been talking about today, in more than one nontraditional field for women. I mean we're talking about real estate law, we're talking about different construction areas, you're a master plumber. So what would you say to other women who are trying to break through in the STEM industries and in other nontraditional areas that haven't typically seen a lot of women in leadership positions?

Lisa Garney: I would say that you need to brace yourself because you are going to find yourself in positions where people don't always like you. They don't like seeing you there. They're not used to seeing you there. And the best advice I could give to somebody coming into a role like that would be surround yourself with people that see more in you than you see in yourself. Surround yourself with people that believe in you, because that will then propel you forward. There's going to be people you encounter along the way that don't like you very much.

Kelly Scanlon: Going to cause you to doubt yourself, doubt your intentions your actions and so you need that support system.

Lisa Garney: Your success is not going to feel right to them. And maybe they just don't understand it. And so surround yourself with people that do believe in you and surround yourself with people that do see more in you than you see in yourself.

Kelly Scanlon: You've recently become President of the Kansas City Chapter of Women Construction Owners and Executives. In fact, you're the first president, not just a new president, but the first president. It's a new chapter. So what does WCOE we do and why is it so important?

Lisa Garney: It's important because I believe there are so many great stories lying within so many women in our community and a lot of them within the construction

industry. And for those stories to be told, you need to give them a voice. And I believe WCOE KC gives a voice to women owners and executives in the construction industry. The WCOE organization has been around for several years. What I'm proud of is that Kansas City is the first official charter chapter.

Kelly Scanlon: Congratulations.

Lisa Garney: Thank you.

Kelly Scanlon: You were mentored by Condoleezza Rice. How cool is that? How did that happen? What was the experience like and what were some of your takeaways?

Lisa Garney: I sought Condoleezza Rice because she's someone that entered an industry with mentors that didn't look just like her. She didn't have many African American women that had dealt in Russian Secret Service and undercover intelligence and so she found mentors and people that she aspired to be. She aspired to achieve the same standards that they had set and to operate at the same frequency in which they were operating. So for me, although Condoleezza Rice isn't directly correlated to construction, she is a woman that has achieved a high level of respect and success and done it with a lot of dignity, a lot of humility along the way. She's given back along the way. She's involved in a lot of different areas. She's not pigeonholed into just one. She sits on the, I believe the college, I'm going to mess this up, but she's deeply involved in college football. She's a big sports fan.

Kelly Scanlon: Yes, I know exactly what you're referencing, but I can't think of the name of it either.

Lisa Garney: And my history and politics working in the White House several years ago, working on Capitol Hill. I've always been interested in politics. And so I think Condoleezza has been a great leader. I think she's a very prolific speaker. I think she commands an audience when she speaks. I think she's a great leader running the state department. Everything that she's done has been done very well and is someone I'm very proud of. So to call her a mentor is something I'm proud of. And she is someone that taught me this story that I shared earlier of always surrounding yourself with people that see more in you than you see in yourself.

Kelly Scanlon: Oh definitely. That's great advice. And as you talk about this, I'm sure there are some of our listeners out there who are thinking, "She actually got through to Condoleezza Rice and Condoleezza rice said yes? And it just reminds me of some advice I got early on as an entrepreneur when I was afraid to ask for help. It had always been ingrained in me to figure out how to do things yourself. And someone very wise said to me, "If you don't ask, you don't get." And so it reminded me when you're talking about, I'm going to ask, and obviously she said yes. So how did that come about?

Lisa Garney: I think you nailed it in that saying, sometimes you just got to start out searching out people and you might be amazed the connections that you find. I mean that's who knows who and how you can get through to people and how you can connect with them. And I think that persistence plays a big part in that. I think that I'm very fortunate that I'm not afraid to take risks. And I think that possibly came from an upbringing being around construction and then also being around higher level CEOs. And so that mixture has given me the ability to speak with presidents of the United States and speak to my crew in the same conversation. Both are equally important to me.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. And you feel at home in all those situations.

Lisa Garney: And I've been very fortunate. I've met every president of the United States since Jimmy Carter. And I'm amazed at these and having... What I take away from this is the interaction with the individual because you learn, just being in their presence, you learn things about them. And you just take that experience. And each of these experiences then leads to another experience.

Kelly Scanlon: You have had many, many experiences and we probably just tapped a few of them today in conversation. So to sum up here, if you had to leave our listeners with just one piece of advice, what would it be?

Lisa Garney: Find good people and grow with them in your business. I am forever appreciative to the people that have helped me grow LMG construction, G2 and LMG Professional Services. Never take no for an answer. Be viciously persistent in chasing what you want. Always be kind to others and respectful. Find a vision and stick to that. And do your best to live in the present. One other thing I can't forget, Kelly, that really ties into what we talked about earlier, which it was so smart of you to ask is to give back. As you succeed and as you form your own path, remember service to others and to the community.

Kelly Scanlon: So true. So true. Our guest today has been Lisa Garney and your website, if anybody would like to get in touch with you, what is that?

Lisa Garney: LMGbuilds.com LMG B-U-I-L-D-S.com.

Kelly Scanlon: Okay, so Lisa M Garney. LMG.

Lisa Garney: You got it.

Kelly Scanlon: LMGbuilds.com Lisa, thanks for all that you and your family are doing for Kansas City. Good luck with all your endeavors and we appreciate you being with us on this episode of Banking on Kansas City.

Lisa Garney: Thank you for having me.

Joe Close: This is Joe Close, President of Country Club Bank. The Garney family has cemented a long legacy of doing good in Kansas City. From philanthropy to business to civic engagement. Today it's Lisa Garney at the helm of continuing that legacy and she's running with it from breaking down barriers for female workers and executives in Kansas City to making service a way of life. She's taken it upon herself to shake things up and get things done. That's the kind of tenacity that helps create equitable change in our city. And we at Country Club Bank are proud of Lisa's vision.

Joe Close: Like Lisa said, if you're going to start a business or better yourself, you need vision. Knowing what you want, what you can contribute, and where you want to go is key. As Kansas City continues to grow and become a shining example of success in the Midwest, I think it's important to remember that. Let's hold onto our vision of a better KC for all by taking a note from Lisa and leading through service, humility and integrity. Thank you for joining us for this episode. We're banking on you, Kansas City. Country Club Bank, member FDIC.