

THE “HANDYMA’AM” CONTRACTOR

A PROFILE

BY W. RICK HARRIS, REIA



Part of my strategy in building my investment advisor’s business, aimed at real estate investors, was to launch a podcast and blog. I am always in search of inspiring and fascinating people within the investment real estate business, those who can impart real know-how to my listeners and readers.

A couple of months ago, I had the pleasure of crossing paths with a former colleague. Shelley Collins is a contractor who founded a business and created a brand that captures the essence of her passion. I asked Shelley why her love affair with real estate and contracting?

In her early adult life, Shelley moved five times in just eight years; the nature of her husband’s career required that they move often. She calls this the “staged” part of her life: she learned to keep an eye on all details of their home, as she knew they might have to sell at a moment’s notice. Marketing her home effectively meant she had to be aware of both its interior and exterior details; one misstep could put her family’s finances at risk. Shelley wanted to ensure that they saw a positive cash gain from each sale.

Shelley’s life has not been without challenges: she is now a single mom with two young daughters. Shelley had to construct a new life for herself and her family, and she also has now transformed her career, having followed a path she hopes more women will follow.

The Handyma’am is a home-improvement business dedicated to two things: taking its clients’ visions and turning them into brilliant realities, and forming its own contracting team, consisting exclusively of women.

I asked Shelley, why women only? Her answer was three-part:

1. It can be uncomfortable to have someone you don’t know well come into your personal space. Many women and

seniors feel much more comfortable having a *female* skilled labourer in their home. Our team is seen as confident, trustworthy, and respectful of people’s need to be comfortable in their own living space.

2. Why not? We love to surround ourselves with strong-minded, able-bodied, and skilled teammates. The idea of training, mentoring, apprenticing, and empowering other women is truly inspiring. The more work that comes in, the more opportunity for team growth and expansion.

3. Did you know that a shortage of skilled labourers has been predicted for the near future? This is an opportunity for women to potentially realize longer-term and likely higher-paying income as other career paths narrow.

“A shortage of skilled labourers has been predicted for the near future. This is an opportunity for women to potentially realize longer-term and likely higher-paying income as other career paths narrow.”

In my interview with Shelley for the Vault to Investment Real Estate Success podcast (Episode 0008), you can tell that her passion for contracting runs deep, but the passion to have women be a part of the contracting business runs even deeper. Shelley is on a mission to show women they can be part of an industry that is male-dominated. She wants women to know that physical stature should never be a barrier to entering the contracting field. Same with lack of education.

Shelley has several great mentors in her life; a couple of them are in the construction and real estate fields. One is Rob Allan of SIR Group, who has more than 25 years of experience in general contracting and custom home building. Another is Candice Chilton of Sotheby’s International Realty Canada, a broker with more than 11 years in real estate.

The mentorships of Rob Allan and Candice Chilton have inspired Shelley in her career as a contractor—and to be a mentor herself. As a way of paying it forward, Shelley is currently mentoring at George Brown College.



continued...



before



after

Technology and social media have also helped opened the door for a career in contracting, giving Shelley access to education, and to business and marketing tools to build her skills and her own business.

For Shelley, Instagram has been a real asset to learning, as well as to marketing her business. Recently, Trades Women of IG chose Shelley as the first Canadian woman tradeswoman they'll feature on their Instagram feed—following her around for a day. Shelley sees this as a fantastic oppor-

tunity to showcase the life of a woman contractor building a house.

Recently, Shelley sold her residence in order to strategically purchase a property that will help her get a much higher return on her capital and build her financial future. On December 7, 2017, Shelley moved into the new property she is planning to develop. The drawings are close to completion, and once they are, Shelley will submit them to the city to get the needed permits. Working with an architect,

Shelley designed a 1,900-plus-square-foot house (excluding the basement). The home has three bedrooms, and three and a half bathrooms, including one bedroom and full bath in the basement. There is also a detached garage.

Meanwhile, Shelley has built The Handyma'am into a full-service contracting business that does both exterior and interior work. Its services include:

- landscaping, landscape maintenance, and deck refreshing
- exterior painting
- hardware installation
- backyard makeovers, including pool and deck installations
- interior renovations: kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, tiling, plumbing (including toilet and faucet installation), interior-door installation, flooring installation (hardwood and carpet), electrical-fixture replacement, appliance installation, painting
- hardwood-floor refinishing
- furniture refurbishing

The Handyma'am is fully insured and guarantees project results or you do not pay. Shelley knows that as she builds her contracting network of like-minded and skilled women, she can take on even more of a leadership role in order to build her business and her mentor role.

Shelley is building her business on quality work for a fair price, and through her actions of caring for and adding value to every facet of the business, she is attracting clients, and not only women but also men.

It is the actions of a few that help lead the way for many. I wish much success to Shelley Collins, the Handyma'am.

W. Rick Harris, REIA, an active real estate investor since 2002, has developed his purchasing strategies and processes specializing in vacation and recreational properties, single-family homes, and condo rentals.

www.vaulttoinvestmetnrealestatesuccess.com
www.linkedin.com/in/wrickharris/



before

after