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- Design & Planning
- Energy Upgrades
- Additions
- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Landscape
- Masonry
- Decks

(we also offer philosophy
& psychology upon request)

Nobody Solves A Problem Like Maria

Q&A with Byggmeister Business Manager Maria Washington



Ask anyone at Byggmeister who the real boss is, and they'll tell you it is Business Manager Maria Washington. As the company's longest-standing employee, Maria has seen and handled it all. Whether trudging through a dark night to deliver client paperwork or just helping someone through a bad day, Maria solves problems with a whole lot of humor, patience, and even a little Hip Hop.

You've been with Byggmeister for 14 years. What was it like back in 1995?

When I started, we were four or five people working out of Paul's house. Paul's daughter was in daycare with mine, so we knew each other from that and when the company grew to the point where Paul needed a full-time bookkeeper, he brought me on. It was small, like a family, and I was ready for that after my other job.

What did you do before joining Byggmeister?

I worked in accounting for a software company. It's funny, at one point my boss there said that he could see me as a business manager because I like to do everything. It was a dramatic change to go from that company which was a couple hundred people to a four-person re-modeling company. Everything was so different. I loved it.

So, what do you do at Byggmeister?

Everyone thinks that I just handle the money. Clients probably say

"Oh, no! Here she comes!" But, I do everything from managing the finances and production reports to working on estimates. I also play an HR role, mostly because I'm an extrovert and I like people. I just sense it when anyone is having a bad day. I'm kind of the go to person around here.

So, it's true you run the company?

Paul always jokes that I'm the one really running the company, and it is pretty much true. [Laughs]

Do you get out of the office?

Paul encourages me to get out to the jobs and see what's going on, so I do occasionally. Once, he asked me to deliver an contract to a job site and it was pitch dark by the time I got there. There were no street lights, the houses were behind bushes and I couldn't see any numbers, so I parked and trudded up and down the street to find it – took me forever. [Laughs] That experience aside, I like to go to see the work, especially when it all comes together at the end.

What do you think it is that makes Byggmeister special?

People stay here because they enjoy the work. We are always a little ahead

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Sustainable Construction

Environmental stewardship is at the center of our design and build practice.



Why does Guild Quality keep contacting me?

If you have worked

with us over the past several years, Guild Quality has probably been in touch with you more than once. You may wonder why—and if it's really necessary. Guild Quality conducts customer satisfaction surveys for hundreds of contractors and is able to use its data to compare Byggmeister's performance with similar remodeling contractors across the nation. Guild Quality enable us to learn from our customers in an objective and quantifiable way where we excel and—more important—where we fall short.

We sincerely appreciate the time you take to respond. It is because of your responses—and how we've tried to incorporate your feedback—that we can proudly say we have received the Guildmaster Award for three consecutive years. This award goes to those building service companies who have demonstrated unusually high quality work and outstanding customer service. We are honored to receive this recognition, and, with your help, hope to continue to meet this level of success for years to come.

Written by Paul Eldrenkamp

Because our work lasts for decades or even centuries, those of us who are remodelers, architects, and builders have a special responsibility. Consider the goal of 80% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2050, for instance: If we do our job right, the major renovation we complete on your home this year will easily still be in service in 2050. So the question we need to ask ourselves is this: In 2050, will those living in the homes we've worked on be thinking we really knew how to plan ahead, or will they be thinking we may have missed some key opportunities?

We understand that very few (if any) of you will be in your current homes in 2050, and that some may find it borderline ridiculous to think that far ahead. But almost all of your homes will still be very much part of the built environment 40 years from now. It's projected that, in Massachusetts, at least 80% of the homes that will be in use in 2050 are already standing.

At Byggmeister, we are trying to account for the fact that our work will have a service life measured in decades, and to anticipate resource availability over the next several decades to determine what our current standards should be. As part of this stewardship responsibility, we're looking at three ways homes consume resources: energy for heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting,



and appliances; water for hygiene and landscaping; and maintenance efforts required to keep it all working well and looking nice.

Energy. Here, we're looking at what an appropriate energy "budget" for a home might be over time—by the year 2050, how much energy should your house be consuming, for economic and environmental reasons, and what's the best way for us to get it moving down a path to that target goal?

Water. Although most of the communities we work in are lucky to get their water from the MWRA, which, in its own words, "has one of the most abundant and high quality water supplies in the world," we shouldn't be needlessly profligate with that water. There are easy and painless ways our homes can significantly

reduce their water usage, help to maintain the abundance of regional fresh water, and thereby buffer us from the severe distress anticipated for less water-rich parts of the world.

Maintenance. Maintenance and remodeling are expensive, and use a lot of resources. To the extent that we can establish and meet rigorous standards with regard to the durability and health of your home over time, we will significantly reduce those resources (financial and otherwise) required to keep your home functioning well and looking good.

We're in the midst of quantifying what the goals described above should really mean, so we can measure and monitor success. It's easy to claim to be "green" if there's no quantifiable goal or outcome for those green efforts.

Thus, we are hoping to be able to put real numbers to questions such as "How long should wood siding hold paint, before it needs recoating?" and "What's the most appropriate amount of water an eastern Massachusetts home really needs to function satisfactorily?" and "What level of energy usage reduction do we need to aim for over the course of this renovation to stand a chance of having this house meet a 80% greenhouse gas emissions goals by 2050?"

By defining our "green" efforts in these measurable ways, and being transparent about our successes and failures, we're hoping to become even better stewards of our region's existing homes—and to work with you, our clients, to do work that looks great



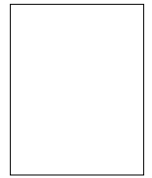
today, and will look even better many decades down the road.

Watch our website for updates:
byggmeister.com





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of everyone in what we do. And, Byggmeister really is Paul. He wouldn't say that, but it's true. He gives people opportunities to grow, so everyone really does contribute to the company's success. He sees people's strengths and helps them develop, which is why even our subs have been with him for 10 or 15 years. Of course, Paul and I have a very different relationship than everyone else. It comes from having worked together for so many years. We joke that we'll still be giving each other a hard time when we're moving around on our walkers.

Has the firm changed much over the years?

We started with four people and we've grown quite a bit, but the company

still has a family feel to it. We've continued to work by our operating values and that's not an easy thing. Even after 14 years, our core business values are the same, which keeps us all grounded.

Is there anything people would be surprised to know about you?

I take Hip Hop classes, which would probably surprise a lot of people. And, I can't believe I'm saying this, but I've just started going to Bingo. It is not easy as you think but it's a lot of fun. It keeps the mind sharp!! Besides that, I have a 20-year-old daughter at UNH who runs track, so I go to as many meets as possible. Even though she's in college, she is still my priority and she wants me to come, which is nice. I wear two hats: Business Manager & Cool Mom!