

BEYOND BLUEPRINTS

BUILDING LEADERS WHO LISTEN AT JMT

When you ask Kristyn Newby about her career, you quickly realize she's not the type to sit still. She serves as the associate vice president, learning and development manager for Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT), an employee-owned architecture, engineering and construction firm recognized for delivering exceptional infrastructure services. Kristyn spends her days designing programs that help engineers and project leaders do more than solve technical problems — they learn to lead people. For Kristyn, that's where the magic happens.

At JMT, the stakes are high. The company designs the roads we drive on and the infrastructure that shapes entire communities. "We have to make sure we're getting projects done efficiently, which means we need the top skills," Kristyn explains. "We can't be successful at delivering for our clients unless we have amazing leaders who can influence and coach their teams."

That's a tall order in a company full of problem-solving engineers. But Kristyn recognizes that when people-problems arise, the first step may not be to dive in with a solution — but first to listen.

That's where the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute at Towson University came in. About four years ago, Kristyn and her team were looking for a local partner to elevate JMT's leadership training. After discussions with Institute leaders, Kristyn knew it was a perfect match. "Their philosophy and vision lined up with ours right away," she recalls. "They were open to feedback, practical in their approach, and their content was fresh, not stuck in the past."

Since then, JMT has embedded the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute training into its leadership cohorts. Twice a year, groups of JMT employees go through sessions on conflict management and coaching, and the results speak for themselves.

For example, many of the JMT employees have completed the Grasmick Institute's conflict resolution training. Employees regularly report that the program's simple but powerful model helps them address challenges head-on. "They say it's one of the best sessions in their leadership cohort," Kristyn says. "People feel more confident because they finally have the tools to handle conflict instead of avoiding it."

Kristyn also has seen impressive outcomes from the coaching session for JMT's senior leaders. "Engineers are great at problem-solving, but they want to solve everyone's problems," Kristyn says with a smile. "The facilitator helped them see that leadership isn't about telling—it's about asking questions and listening. That shift has allowed our leaders to connect with their teams on a whole new level."

Kristyn herself is passionate about this work. With an HR background, she knew early on she wasn't interested in benefits or compliance — she wanted to invest in people's growth. Over her ten years at JMT, she has built a robust development program that aligns closely with the Grasmick Institute's mission of developing leaders for the public good.

And the payoff goes beyond JMT's offices. Stronger leaders mean smoother projects, safer roads, and better communities. As Kristyn puts it, "When we foster great leadership, it helps teams work better together and ultimately do better work. The entire community benefits."