



# The Subtle Approach to Attract New Surveyors

**M**any years ago, what I thought was a friendship with another woman surveyor fell apart when she accused me of not being militant enough in pursuing equality and respect for women in our profession. We had joined forces to battle the overt sexism then prevalent in equipment advertisement, but apparently I was not confrontational enough to suit her in our other endeavors to support women from technicians to licensees. It saddened me both to lose all contact with that bright, energetic woman and to find that she believed there was only one way to achieve our mutual goals.

But subtlety does work. Sometimes it is called working from the inside, and sometimes it is called subversive. But banging someone over the head doesn't always work, so there has to be another way. In my own career I have had to use both blatant and subtle approaches to gain equal pay, stop sexual harassment, and take full credit for my work rather than see it taken by male co-workers. But this article is not about me or about women in our profession. It is about drawing new people into our field.

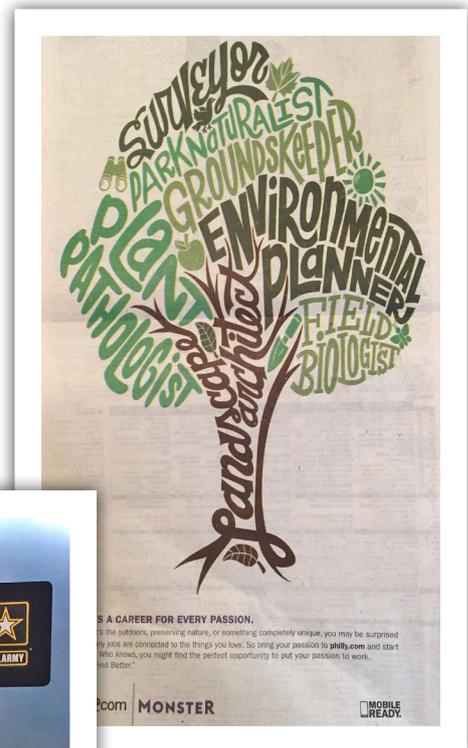
There are a number of programs with the objective of drawing and keeping young people interested in surveying and all its fascinating variations. Trig Star shows high school students that there are practical applications for the mathematics they study. (I wish I had known there was any practical application for all the math I enjoyed in junior high and high school; I only thought of word problems as fun puzzles.) The annual NSPS competitions between college surveying teams build the

students' pride in their surveying abilities and their creativity both in problem solving and costuming. We also have videos and brochures to attract people to our profession, all very focused and very direct.

Recently, within a week of each other, I came across two very different ads that were not about surveying at all, yet each promoted surveying. The first was a poster in the Trenton, NJ train station, an ad for the United States Army. My photo in the dimly lit hallway doesn't do it justice, but it is very clear what the young man in the image is doing under the banner of



“Kickstart Your Career.” While I was trying to get a good shot of it, a lot of people walked past it distracted by their phones, their children, or tight train connections, but a few did glance at it. Thousands of people pass through this station daily; some are bound to say, “I don't know what that is but it looks cool, and I'd like to try it” or “Hey, that's a surveyor! I didn't know the Army did that!” It's a subtle way



to advertise both a career in surveying and an application of the things we do.

The second ad was a full-page affair in the Philadelphia Inquirer, which has a daily circulation of about 158,000 and a Sunday circulation of almost twice that. The names of various professions are woven into the shape of a tree, a variation on several similar ads for the paper's job seekers' website. Other ads have been in the shapes of shoes and other familiar objects, each formed of the names of various fields of employment, but this is the first time I've seen one with “Surveyor” in it. Again, this is not an ad for

surveyors, but it loudly proclaims the field as a viable profession. And in the context of the other names in the same image, it links surveying to environmental practices, which is a good draw for another sector not drawn by the military ad.

In case it isn't obvious, I love surveying, and have ever since first discovering it. Unlike those who say surveying is a dying profession, I see many possibilities for applying our particular expertise. In

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1983, I was part of a panel asked what we saw as the future of surveying. Part of my response was that land cannot be outsourced and that there will always be neighbors arguing over their boundaries (although BLM's new approach to surveying in Alaska will complicate matters there). Another part of my response extrapolated that view to any celestial bodies we might inhabit in the future. My opinion has not changed, and I still see a need to draw new minds to take our places as many of us age into semi or full retirement. But we haven't tried using the subtle approach, with examples of the possibilities illustrated by the two ads presented here. Should we be building more collaborative approaches to drawing newcomers? Should we approach other industries to suggest they feature surveying being applied in their own fields? ■

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