SPECIAL SERIES

BREAKING GROUND

A Spotlight on Six Women in the U.S. Environmental Industry

NICOLE TK MOORE

FROM REDWOODS TO BOARDROOMS



Nicole's passion for the environment and hands-on leadership have shaped her distinguished career in environmental site assessments.

Exploring the redwood forest would chart the course of Nicole TK Moore's career. Accompanying her father on road trips to take one of her three brothers to Humboldt State University near Eureka, CA, proved inspiring for Nicole. During these early years, she would wander through the majestic redwood forests, taking it all in. Those trips with her father became the cornerstone of her passion for the environment.

Career Roots

Nicole's initial interest in biology, psychology, and neuroscience in pursuit of becoming a doctor shifted when she came across a course at the University of Southern California called "Environmental Studies," with an emphasis on biology. The interdisciplinary nature of the program, grounded in biology and systems thinking, aligned immediately with her interests and strengths. During the first class, she made lifelong friends and knew that this field of study was her destiny.

While searching for work options to help pay for her education, she discovered a small environmental consulting firm in downtown Los Angeles that was hiring full-time positions. She applied, and they offered her the job, allowing her to work nights while she attended school during the day to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies, Biology. This was compliance work, and upon graduation, she continued to work full-time at the environmental firm, securing her own clients among aerospace and chemical manufacturers. The work was demanding and, at times, adversarial, requiring her to advise large organizations on regulatory failures and

risk exposure. “Having to tell clients of major corporations what they were doing wrong was often challenging,” stated Nicole. These early roles sharpened her technical judgment, communication skills, and professional resilience, particularly as a young woman operating in traditionally male dominated sectors.

An introduction through a former college friend led to an opportunity in environmental due diligence, which Nicole pursued early in her career. That role became her entry point into Phase I Environmental Site Assessments and ultimately the foundation of her specialization.

Her transition into this work marked a defining inflection point. Phase Is aligned closely with her investigative mindset- tracing property histories, evaluating risk, and synthesizing complex information into clear, defensible conclusions. As she explained, “With compliance, you are looking at a moment in time to make sure clients are managing chemicals safely. But in a Phase I, you get to track the history of a property back to first use and investigate for signs that there may have been misuse or contamination at some point in the past.” The work combined research, fieldwork, and critical analysis, elements that continue to define her professional focus.

In 2007, Nicole took a leap of faith, framing another pivotal career choice. She and seven others joined Joe Derhake in starting Partner. She had just married and purchased a house, and she was going to a job with no guarantees.

Trust clearly factored into her decision. The nine founders of Partner had worked closely together; they trusted, believed in, and relied on one another to achieve and enjoy success. And women made up half of the team! “It really makes me happy and hopeful to think that we might inspire the next generation of female scientists,” said Nicole.

Current Role and Achievements

The first few years at Partner involved weathering the financial crisis of 2008. Partner grew rapidly, to more than a thousand employees and coverage in 40 offices globally, not only in environmental due diligence, but also in building assessments, engineering, construction risk management, energy and sustainability, environmental health and safety, geotechnical services, land surveying, site civil engineering, and valuation/appraisal.

Nicole is the National Technical Director of Environmental Site Assessments, managing the environmental consulting practice. She has been instrumental in propelling the firm through her detailed templates and training programs, providing ongoing guidance to her team and technical excellence in the field. Partner produces tens of thousands of Phase I reports annually under Nicole’s stewardship.

Motivating Factors

In the beginning at Partner, Nicole and her colleague Monique Burrola were the only two professionals dedicated to environmental reports and projects. Monique’s personality and work ethic have been a true inspiration to Nicole for over 20 years, motivating her to be her best self every day. As the firm grew, Nicole assumed leadership of the environmental practice, navigating client and team growth, product excellence, and delivery ever since.



Nicole is proud of the products her team produces and the individuals who produce them. “Their success is my success.”

Producing quality work, something the company is proud of, motivates her every day. When people come for an interview and say they have read a Partner report and they really liked it, Nicole swells with pride.

Leadership Approach and Passion for the Work

Despite her executive responsibilities, Nicole remains

actively engaged in production work. While she oversees large teams that produce most of the work, Nicole believes that if she is not actively fulfilling the work she asks her teams to do, she cannot fully understand their concerns. She goes into the field with new staff on training sessions and to complete her own reports. While this is a minor role, she believes it has allowed her to make important decisions and implement modifications to templates, training programs, and technical aspects of field assignments.

Nicole is a nurturing leader who enjoys helping her staff develop their careers within the company. She is approachable, professional, compassionate, and cares about people, products, and the company's culture. Her enthusiasm for Phase Is and their investigative nature is contagious, and she strives to keep the work interesting, calling her technical staff "investigators" sleuthing and tracking property use.

Her favorite aspect of the job is problem-solving. "I get pulled into situations when things get complicated, and I must figure out how to make miracles happen for our clients."

There is typically a problem-solving exercise every day, and that motivates and excites her about what she does. Her work is her passion. Nicole is a true leader, trainer, mentor, and executive strategist who has taken initiative, seized opportunities, and had the drive and determination to capitalize on her accomplishments.

Navigating Challenges

One of Nicole's ongoing challenges is navigating a wide range of personalities and working styles. While she values input across the organization, Nicole is clear-eyed about decision-making: not every good idea can or should be implemented. Nicole approaches these moments with care, balancing honesty with encouragement. She sets clear expectations from the initial interview to help minimize surprises and support her team's continued enthusiasm.

Another challenge is managing change. The company has been very open to change, always seeking the best way forward. While that keeps the job interesting and fresh, it also requires careful coordination and determining how much change can be tolerated before fatigue, production decline, and frustration set in. The timing and implementation of change with a busy production schedule is an obstacle she has overcome often, resulting in constantly keeping her finger on the pulse of the workload.

Advice to Women

Nicole's hands-on leadership and mentorship have also informed the advice she offers to the next generation of women in environmental consulting.

"Show up, be prepared, exude confidence, no matter how you feel inside."

> "SHOW UP, BE PREPARED, EXUDE CONFIDENCE, no matter how small you feel inside."

Having older brothers helped Nicole learn to stand up for herself early in life. Her advice to her own daughters is to "speak up and own it". Don't let others drown your voice.

She encourages women entering the field to consider Phase I work. "Phase Is are a great training ground and foundation for work in the environmental industry, and many will find a lifelong passion for it. Learning to juggle many projects at various stages of completion provides great time management and communication training."

Today's Trends and Looking to the Future

Nicole's outlook for the year ahead is an optimistic one. "There is a lot of money sitting on the sidelines; people are tired of waiting for geo-political stability and want to get deals done". With interest rates dropping somewhat and hopefully further, people are ready to transact, and she foresees a dynamic year ahead.

Partner constantly monitors all segments of commercial real estate globally, and Nicole has noticed increased

Phase I activity in warehouses, solar farms, data centers, and industrial buildings over the past several months.

Nicole remains deeply committed to advancing the environmental consulting practice she helped to build. She loves the culture, her peers, her team, and the clients. She will seize opportunities to ensure the continued success of the environmental consulting practice, always maintaining her passion projects — Phase Is.

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