



# Me Too?

**Porzio lobbyist  
Barbara DeMarco  
ponders why there  
aren't more women  
in the gaming  
industry**



## Bio

Barbara DeMarco is a governmental affairs consultant and strategist at Porzio, which specializes in gaming, technology, education reform and agriculture policy as well as procurement and corporate development issues. DeMarco has seen over three dozen gaming related bills signed into law since she began working on these issues in 1997.

**A**t the height of the #MeToo movement, I had a conversation with my brother, who is in the building trades, that I will never forget. He divulged to me that most of his clients have told him that they will never hire a woman again because the risks outweighed the rewards. I thought at the time (and still do), 'one more door to open'.

Much like the building trade, politics and gaming are predominantly male-dominated. When you look at the US Capitol and State Houses, the lack of diversity is visible. For every eight male lobbyists in New Jersey, there is one woman (by my last count). As it relates to gaming, the count of women to men was roughly one to seven at the last conference I attended. I can blame men for not being open to the hiring of women in roles where decision-making has great policy and financial implications, or I can blame women for being fearful of putting themselves in these atypical work environments.

I don't want to do either. Women who work in predominantly male environments are aware of all the nuances that are unique to their situation. Women know that they must distinguish themselves by something other than gender. Women also know that they need to become an expert on whatever topic they are championing so they are taken seriously. They know that a cursory knowledge and a slap on the back with a knowing glance just doesn't work for them as it does a man.

I came into lobbying on gaming issues with all the advantages I could ask for. I grew up 28 miles from Atlantic City, so I knew the impact and importance of the gaming industry on the economic stability of the area. I had a father who was a horseracing enthusiast who taught me the industry and how to wager. Finally, I was a product of a well-known political family. This combination of these factors created the perfect formula to be a lobbyist in the gaming arena with a specialty in horseracing. Now add my gender to this equation

and you can figure out why people knew me and my expertise. There was no one else like me.

## Overcoming challenges

Even with these advantages, establishing myself in the industry was far from a cake walk. Beyond having to know my issues inside and out, I had to always keep my ego in check, crediting my successes to the legislator championing the issue or to the client. I also had to navigate the '#MeToo' world, which is something I did not anticipate. I experienced many unwanted advances that were offered in exchange for policy goals. Clients were often sympathetic when they witnessed it. One memorable time many years ago, a client stepped in for me, negating my need to respond: "Sir, we've asked her to take one for the team, but she just won't do it." Everyone laughed. Thankfully, his intervention defused the situation completely.

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As with any woman actively working in politics, I never speak of these occurrences other than in the abstract. The reason: I refuse to focus on '#MeToo' or any other obstacle or excuse. Rather, I choose to focus on what I can do and what I have done with my portfolio of clients that has expanded to include casino/racino owners, lottery companies, internet gaming companies, etc.

I told a client recently that he needed to hire more women as his company was 95% men, especially in the US market. He agreed, stating his experience working with me has produced excellent results. I can only hope that there are more men who think like this client and are open to hiring women in these atypical environments because in the end, if they choose wisely, it will pay off. ●