



INFORM, INSPIRE, AND MOTIVATE *with* **BETH KEATING**

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Please describe your journey in arriving where you are now. What has been your motivation?

While at times it has felt like a long and winding path, looking back, I realize that I've proceeded down a rather direct route on my journey thus far. Like so many, I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I got out of law school – I just knew I needed a job, and fast. I'd had some vague idea about doing First Amendment/Broadcast law during my latter years of law school, but, when the best Ted Turner had to offer was a free internship, I figured I'd better start looking at other options.

I saw an advertisement for a position at the Florida Public Service Commission and decided to take a shot, since they actually included a salary. The position was in the Electric and Gas Bureau of the Commission's Legal Division. When I interviewed, I honestly had no real understanding of what the Commission actually did, but somehow managed to talk myself into the job. I worked in that group for a couple of years, and then transferred to the telecommunications group, where I remained for the next nine years. Lila Jaber provided me with the opportunity to take on new challenges in private practice 12 years ago, where I've again had the opportunity to be involved in the energy arena as well as areas that were completely new to me.

From the very beginning, I had the good fortune of having a supervisor who believed in giving his employees an opportunity to learn early and on the go (read: "trial by fire"). Truly, that same philosophy ran through all the supervisors with whom I had the good fortune of working over my tenure at the Commission. It was rare that I ever heard any of them advise me, or any other new attorney, that I wasn't ready to take on a challenge. Quite the opposite, their philosophy was always that the best teacher is experience; thus, they provided opportunities as well as the support necessary to ensure success. The fact that they had the confidence that I could handle a case or role went a very long way in ensuring that I accepted challenges readily. I'm fortunate that I've had that same experience in private practice as well.

I really have too many examples to recount of times that various co-workers and supervisors provided timely words of support and expressed confidence in my abilities, which has been an incredible blessing. Frankly, that remains true to this day. That's why I believe three things are key to a fulfilling career: (1) do not entertain self-doubt for long; (2) find a supportive work environment that provides an opportunity to take on challenges – or work to develop such an environment in your current workplace; and (3) pay the encouragement and support you've received forward.

What is the most memorable lesson or skill that you have learned while practicing law in the energy industry?

I'd say there are really two critical things I've learned: To listen and to address the problem, not just the symptom.

Listen to what your clients say are both their legal and their business needs. Listen to what regulators say their concerns are. Then, consider whether a specific issue or problem identified can best be addressed by a global solution to a larger issue. Also, don't get trapped in the mindset of "this is the way it has always been done." Often, there are other ways to resolve an issue or craft a solution.

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How do you feel the practice of law can best support the tremendous opportunity and growth that the energy industry promises?

I think we do more just by regularly implementing the two lessons I've learned. First, really listen to our clients' issues, work to understand their business/industry, and develop an open pathway of communication so that you can better understand when there may be a broader problem that is generating their legal/regulatory needs. Second, try to avoid approaching new challenges with a predetermined bias that "this can't be done" or "this isn't the way it has always been done." True, there are times when there really is not an easy solution, but, more often than not, there is a solution and it is not necessarily found down the well-traveled path of least resistance. As my grandmother would have said, "There's more than one way to skin the cat."

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What advice would you give to women who aspire to join the energy industry, especially on the law and policy side?

Don't be intimidated by the jargon and the technical aspects of this arena. Certainly, there's a learning curve, but it is by no means insurmountable. If you are looking for a challenging career in an industry that impacts all of us on a daily basis, give this area a try. You'll find this is an evolving industry with new challenges on the horizon as well as a wide range of opportunities. Also, don't be hesitant to ask questions and to look for support and mentors in the industry, both women and men.

Describe the energy industry using one word, and share with us why you chose this word.

So, as a lawyer, finding one word to represent anything, much less the energy industry, is nearly impossible. My first instinct would be to say that, "This isn't your grandma's electric or gas company." But, if held to the one word, I'd have to say,

"DYNAMIC."

The industry is truly evolving. With the mergers of gas and electric companies, the intersection of energy and water, the advancement of renewable opportunities, and the addition of the transportation sector, there's something new to consider every day. You definitely will not be bored.

The annual Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum (FWELF) aims to promote opportunities in the energy industry by recognizing the success that women leaders in the energy industry have demonstrated in growing Florida's economy and diversifying an already tremendous workforce.