



INFORM, INSPIRE, AND MOTIVATE with Margie Sweezer-Fischer

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What inspired you to join the energy industry?

I joined the energy industry to gain a strong engineering foundation where I could grow professionally in a business that would always be critical. And, nearly 20 years later the energy industry continues to evolve and embrace innovation. Joining this industry and navigating the exciting world of energy was and has been a great decision. Throughout the years, I knew I was on the right career path, as my talents and work ethic were a great fit. The opportunities I've been provided have allowed me to tackle a number of interesting challenges, while contributing to the growth and dynamism of the energy industry.

Can you tell us about your current role?

My current role is amazing. I have the honor of overseeing the technology and innovation development for NextEra Energy's fleet of fossil, solar and wind generating assets. The teams I lead create applications that allow us to operate our fleet of assets. They also ensure the applications are working 24x7, develop algorithms through data science that can provide early indications of potential issues, and create visualization tools to speed up our decision-making. Lastly, we explore and deploy emerging technologies to improve how we manage and operate the fleet.

Generally, when people think of careers in the utility sector, they may think "engineer," "line worker," or "customer service representative." Your role is a unique one. Can you tell us about the significance of your role in the energy industry, especially as it pertains to the growth of our economy?

Over the last five years, I've had the opportunity to finely hone my leadership skills through roles that required me to build strategies and execute tactical plans for building a stronger and smarter energy grid for Florida. The work my team and I did has had a huge impact on the Florida economy. We were able to improve the reliability of power to our customers, which has helped attract new business to our state.

What is a challenge that you have been proud to see the industry overcome?

Over the last few years, we've worked tirelessly to deploy new technology that better defines the customer experience. We created an empirically customer-focused view, so we can easily see everything we do to improve the experience for the people we serve.

From all of the elements that make up our interactions with customers, to the service delivered directly to their homes or businesses, we've continued to look for ways to improve their lives – after all, we're customers too.

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What are some exciting things on the horizon in the power generation industry that may create opportunities for the next generation of workforce talent?

The sky's the limit when it comes to technology and innovation. The energy industry is going through an amazing evolution. Through the deployment of smart meters and new technology, we've had a great flow of new "big data" that provides a new level of visibility to our operations. The energy industry is now ripe for data science.

Customer expectations have also evolved significantly in what it means to provide reliable energy, and customers now interact with their energy company in a more digital way.

Another exciting area is in the renewables and clean generation sources of energy. These sources have become more and more cost-effective – this also makes our industry even more favorable to the environment.

And, the introduction of battery storage is a game-changer for our industry. It will shift how we design and operate the grid, and deliver power to our customers. These changes provide new opportunities to all areas of our industry, from technology, to regulation, to customer-facing teams, to new development, to generation and delivery, and to how we engage and develop new talent.

“Energy is used to illuminate everything, to create everything and sustain everything. The energy we generate is able to touch everyone in some way or another.”

What is an idea, a motto, an insight, a person, or an experience that you feel has motivated you along the way as your career progressed?

There are many aspects throughout my career that have motivated me. It's hard to choose just one! I will say that I'm very motivated by the end use of our product. Energy is used to illuminate everything, to create everything and sustain everything. The energy we generate is able to touch everyone in some way or another.

What do you look forward to most in the work that you do?

There have been occasions throughout my career where we've uncovered some interesting trends that required me to assemble a team to tackle the emergent challenge. I've found over time, that when you pull together diverse talents, experiences and schools of thought, you are able to pull out the best solutions from the team. What I look forward to the most in these occasions, is when we discover something new or break a long-standing barrier that changes our thinking. It's these moments of innovation and discovery that get me energized.

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

Over time, I've learned that you are not encumbered by what has been. You always have the opportunity to make improvements to any situation you encounter.

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What advice would you give to other women who aspire to join the energy industry?

Jump in! This is a dynamic, evolving and challenging industry, but most importantly, energy is a necessity of life. What better an industry to contribute your talents.

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

“ENERGY=mc²”

I'm stepping out on a limb here and answering with an equation. Engineers, mathematicians and scientists will allow me to use this equation to prove that our industry is traveling at the speed of light.

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.