



INFORM, INSPIRE, AND MOTIVATE

with **Cindy Clemmons**

*MANAGER OF LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY RELATIONS
LAKELAND ELECTRIC*

What inspired you to join the energy industry?

Without a doubt, it is the communication challenge. Over the years I have learned that I love communicating complex topics to a wide variety of audiences. Thus, it makes sense I would gravitate to the energy industry since it is brimming with a multitude of topical rabbit holes. Every day offers new opportunities to do what I love.

Can you tell us about your current role?

I was recently promoted to the Manager of Legislative and Regulatory Relations for Lakeland Electric (LE). Prior to this role, I was LE's Marketing Manager and I have a history of working for government agencies as a strategic communicator. Given this background, in my new role I lean strongly on my communication background, but in an entirely new way. I spend my time investigating federal, state, and local legal and political ramifications for our industry, cultivating relationships with people throughout the industry and in the government, and creating approaches to better communicate critical topics important to LE.

Please describe to us your journey in arriving where you are now. What is an idea, a motto, an insight, a

I believe you should follow your passions. Growing up, I had two passions - writing and sewing. I obtained my undergraduate degree in fashion design and went on to a career in costume design in New York City, where I worked on costumes and costume management for Broadway and toured with shows for several years. I left the road and settled down to work for Disney in Orlando. It was there I earned my master's in communication and began my communication career, which has led me to the job I have today. Looking back, I realize I have taken a non-traditional career path, but it is this job diversity that serves me well in my role with Lakeland Electric. The energy industry is made of many dynamic parts – science, economics, marketing, government, to name just a few. It is an industry that demands diversity in its workers in order to successfully sustain itself. I am very proud to be a part of it.

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

You can't make everyone happy, especially if you are the electric company. And especially after a hurricane. Lakeland Electric's response and recovery to Hurricane Irma was my first time responding to a natural disaster in the age of social media. My last major response was in 2004, well before Facebook and Twitter. Social media must be managed with strategy and care even in good times, but this effort becomes much more difficult when you are dealing with a frustrated, hot, and anonymous audience who have lost not only their electricity, but also their ability to interact politely. My team and I swam through a tsunami of social media angst for several weeks and it took its toll on us. In the months that followed, we spoke to many of our communication counterparts across the state and discovered they had experienced the same. Camaraderie has a way of making everything feel more manageable, just because you are not alone. As a result, we have discovered tips and tricks that everyone used to manage through this difficult time and approach this storm season knowing we have a large group of communicators across the state ready and willing to help each other when another crisis occurs.

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

Being a relative newcomer in this industry, having worked for Lakeland Electric for almost 4 years, I enjoy learning about the intricacies of the energy industry; specifically how science, psychology, communication, and politics all interplay in this business is fascinating to learn about and then see in action.

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

Mother nature has sent her share of ire to the state of Florida in the form of several hurricanes over the last couple years. The response of the power utilities across the state to these natural disasters demonstrated their dedication to the public and even to each other. Statewide, utilities help each other power back up as quickly as possible. Outside of the energy sector, this type of industry partnership is hard to achieve or even expect during a crisis. It makes this industry special.

What is a special area of opportunity that you see in energy?

I’m curious about the evolution of the relationship between energy providers and consumers. At Lakeland Electric, we have been working to cultivate this relationship because we believe it is critical to the long-term success and sustainability of the industry. Taking advantage of our smart meters and other new technologies, our Customer Service division launched a website over a year ago with tools that allow all our customers to monitor and manage their consumption. Complementing that customer engagement, our Finance division created a residential demand rate for highly-engaged customers. These savvy customers can use a “rate calculator” on our website to identify which rate they would save the most money based on data from their smart meter. They can then learn from other website tools how to smooth out their peak loads. And, on top of saving money, they feel good about their actions, they enjoy investing time on our site, and that leads to more engagement.

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

There are so many avenues to choose in this industry. It allows you to hone a broad range of skills and, if you invest yourself, you will never be bored or lack opportunity.

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

Definitely, it is new technology. The energy sector has started to be influenced by the use of consumer friendly technologies which are mainstream for other industries. While the approach to using and managing these technologies in the energy sector is still evolving, the next generation will need to continue to innovate and invest in new business models and technologies to meet the consumer expectations.

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?

My job contributes to cultivating understanding so the industry can evolve and sustain our core business of providing affordable, dependable, and sustainable power. It is this understanding that informs and educates the consumer's energy expectations, which will shape what is important for our mission in the future.

How do strong community relations support the tremendous opportunity and growth that the energy industry promises?

I think it all comes back to cultivating simple communications that lead to more understanding, which leads to more engaged consumers.

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

“Bird-Dog”

intransitive verb: to watch closely

The energy industry is one that everyone should watch closely, or as we say in the south, we need to bird-dog it!

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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.