



INFORM, INSPIRE, AND MOTIVATE

with **Jenise Osani**

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OUC— THE RELIABLE ONE

What inspired you to join the energy industry?

I joined OUC in September 2009 just after the economic downturn. I had been working at creative agencies, and I wanted to expand my design skills into strategy and marketing at a secure job. A colleague told me about an opportunity at OUC to become the Manager of Marketing & Customer Education. During the interview process, I learned that OUC was about to launch a “green” brand. I feel strongly about sustainability and wanted to be part of the movement. So, when I was offered the job, I took it, and I haven’t looked back.

Can you tell us about your current role?

I transform OUC’s connection to customers through marketing, communications, e-commerce and design solutions. I work with an amazing team and am exposed to nearly every aspect of the utility. I oversee research, marketing, design and branding; developing, implementing and tracking the success of programs promoting OUC products and services; creating technology solutions that allow OUC to interact with all of our stakeholders; and enhancing and maintaining the OUC digital user experience. Essentially, I work in the space where business, design and technology intersect.

How would you say the energy industry has changed since you stepped in your role?

When it comes to deploying new programs, technology and services, the industry has accelerated from 50 mph to 100 mph. I have felt a shift from thinking to doing and more willingness to take risks. I’ve also

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seen a change in customer expectations. Although the customer has always been at the center of what we do, third parties have stepped in and are offering alternatives, which have shifted some of the “power” to them. Thanks to innovation in other industries, customers demand instant and accurate information at their fingertips. This creates the need for rapid deployment of new solutions along with more communication and engagement to manage their expectations.

Where do you search for inspiration to develop creative and successful marketing?

I just try to stay open and curious. Marketing has become a part of daily life. Unless you are completely off the grid, it is hard to escape. New integrated marketing techniques are all around you on social media, in stores and on websites. In Orlando, the theme parks are doing amazing things where marketing and technology overlap, such as wearable devices and express passes. They are tracking experiences to better target and insert marketing opportunities into guest visits, ultimately leading to increased sales. Also, I've heard the call to action on some radio spots say, "Ask your smart home speaker to xyz." That has me thinking about how OUC will leverage those devices and provide information to customers when they want it. When I see or hear new things like these, I begin researching them to see how they can possibly become part of our future endeavors. I'm finding that marketing is more about being integrated into people's personal circuits and not always a typical ad or radio spot.

One of the best parts of the energy industry is the collaboration among different utilities. Coke and Pepsi would never share competitive strategies, but because utilities do not directly compete with each other, we can. Through conferences and peer-sharing calls, we share best practices and discuss our successes and failures. Beyond our industry, I also spend time researching thought-leaders at companies like Amazon, Google and Apple to see how they stay ahead of the curve. Smaller companies are good to watch too because they have to do more with less.

Of course, there are also sources like Gartner and E Source that provide research and conferences to keep me inspired. Conferences are a great way to be immersed for a few days and ask questions. And, I try to read publications and websites like Communication Arts, HOW, Wired and Fast Company to keep up with industry trends. I also have a couple of creative books that I re-read from time to time: "The Artist's Way" by Julia Cameron and "Big Magic" by Elizabeth Gilbert. I recently ordered "Imagine it Forward: Courage, Creativity, and the Power of Change" by Beth Comstock, former Vice Chair and head of marketing and innovation at GE.

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

We rise by lifting each other. I have a tendency to try and do everything myself. When I watch people from vastly different areas in our company come together to respond to a crisis like Hurricane Irma or Maria, I am truly humbled. It reminds me that anything is possible when we work together.

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

I see the opportunity to create a digital energy platform that serves as a central hub and ultimately makes customers' lives easier. Through third-party partnerships, we can develop mutually beneficial relationships with our partners but also our customers, vendors, developers and community. If we can figure out a way to quickly scale and incorporate new programs and features in the digital space that translate to needs in the physical world, we have the opportunity to be the source for energy information, services and goods.

If you had unlimited funding to promote OUC, what would you do?

With unlimited funds, I would love to go inside our low-income customers homes and help make all necessary energy efficiency improvements they need, which in turn would help reduce wasted usage and save money on their bills. Once that goal was met, I would take a page out of Oprah's playbook. I would gather about 100 customers to tape a show about energy efficiency and then surprise them and say, "You get an EV! You get an EV! You get an EV!!!! Everyone gets an EV." The positive promotion would be epic.

How would you define your marketing philosophy and how has it evolved over time?

I discovered design thinking in college. Design thinking is a process that includes defining the problem, researching, forming ideas, prototyping and testing while keeping the customer at the center. I don't know that my philosophy has changed much since then. Perhaps I have become more numbers- or results-driven. However, my philosophy has always remained the same: Solve hard problems with creativity. Marketing is the perfect profession to apply that philosophy.

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

There are so many acronyms. Some days you will feel that without an engineering or accounting degree, you will never make it. So, just ask questions and be patient and gentle with yourself while you learn. At the same time, don't be afraid to say your ideas out loud. The energy industry is being disrupted and needs new perspectives to evolve. When it comes to where energy and marketing mix, guess who makes most of the energy buying decisions in a household? Women do. That means women have a unique perspective that can help move the industry forward. My advice is to own that.

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

"VITAL."

Energy is necessary and important, but is also dynamic and evolving.

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.