



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



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Power Profile: Rachel Klinger

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As an engineer doing work within the power industry, do you find that the interest in STEM-related careers has increased or decreased?

Based on my experience, I absolutely think the interest has increased. About a year ago, I visited a local high school to talk with students about careers in environmental engineering. After touring a large classroom designed to support STEM projects and meeting a group of female students eager to learn more about STEM-related careers, it was clear that with the right teachers and tools, the interest in STEM is alive and strong for both males and females. Over the 11 years with Geosyntec, I've also seen the applications and qualifications of female applicants for engineering and science positions increase.

What inspired you to pursue an engineering career?

As a young child, I loved nature and loved helping my dad fix things around the house. It wasn't until a summer high school internship with an environmental engineer that I realized I could combine the two things in a professional career. For the past 11 years, as a licensed professional environmental engineer, I can absolutely say I made the right career choice. I hope I inspire others to become an engineer one day!

At Geosyntec, you work with both water and electric companies. Do you find similarities in the responsibilities?

As an environmental engineer, I focused on solving my clients' most challenging problems no matter who they are. For my power clients, I am committed to navigating the challenges associated with assessing and remediating environmental impacts in various media (soil, groundwater, air, and sediment) by providing value-added services and excellent client service. While each utility has slightly different environmental liabilities and approaches to address their challenges, the process of helping identify and implement the solution in their best interest is similar for both water and electric companies.



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What advice would you give a 2nd year college student still deciding on her career?

You have a lifetime to work so take your time and try a little bit of everything until you find what you love and feel really passionate about. Then fully pursue it with everything you've got. Getting involved in professional or college organizations, talking to professors and professionals, and participating in internships is a great way to sample what your potential career has to offer.

For women pursuing an engineering career and trying to maintain an effective work-life balance, what best practices would you suggest?

Carve out time for yourself! If you don't, no one will. I suggest developing a schedule and sticking to it. Of course, we all need to be flexible, but I find my work and family life balances best when I'm mentally and physically strong! Working for a firm that supports working women and work-life balance as a whole, creates a good foundation for success too!

Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your view on career, family, and the future of your profession? If so, how?

The COVID-19 pandemic is teaching me to focus on the things I can control and let the other things go. Let's be honest though, it's a work in progress! It has also taught me to be more compassionate to my clients, colleagues, family, and friends. Everyone is struggling in their own way during these times and it is more important than ever to reach out and ask them how they are doing and stay connected.

Does your company have a mentorship program or organized women's professional development group? Can you elaborate please?

Geosyntec believes strongly in professional development and mentorship. Several years ago, a small group of women saw the benefit in developing a mentoring program focused solely on women (amazing, right?). Today, the Women's Mentoring Program organizes webinars on topics specific to women, coordinates in-person meetings to connect with other women, and most importantly, with over 600 participants, provides a community of support.

It has also served as the framework for the development of other mentoring programs company wide. Our mentoring programs serve to enhance learning and career development by acclimating new employees to our culture and work environment, developing our future leaders, facilitating better communication between individuals, different functions and/or management tiers, and providing support and safety values for rapidly changing environments and the use of new technologies. While the formal programs are extremely beneficial, I strongly believe the informal touches are equally important. I've learned almost as much from informal mentors as I have from formal mentors. Life is constantly evolving and so should you, your mentors, and the mentoring topics.