



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



February 2021

Power Profile: Bentina Terry

SVP, Metro Atlanta and Corporate Relations | Georgia Power

You are a natural leader and you're a servant leader at that. What are the qualities that one must have to really be considered an effective leader?

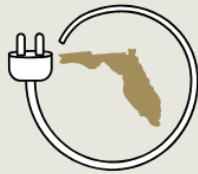
There are so many qualities that make an effective leader. Two of the main ones are empathy and courage. Good leaders make sure they understand what you mentioned about being a servant leader but to serve you must first seek to understand your employees and what they are experiencing. During these particularly difficult times with employees being dispersed, empathy is extremely important. I also mention courage because leaders must hold others and themselves accountable on a wide range of topics – performance issues, business direction, diversity and inclusion, etc. Good leaders know when and how to speak the truth in a way that's effective.

Your parent company really stepped up post the George Floyd murder by releasing statements, PSA's, and the like. How has that been received by the team?

It has been well received by most. It has launched conversations within the company that we need to have. It has also stirred up emotions and questions so its important that we don't let those messages stand alone but are accompanied with listening, training materials and other resources. I wouldn't be giving a complete picture if I didn't say our company is a microcosm of the world, so we have some employees struggling with the conversations and what they think it means. We must make sure we are paying attention to those employees as well to help them understand what is going on.

You left us in Florida but thankfully, not too far and still part of the Southern Company family. Describe your new role.

My team is responsible for our 1.4 million customers in Metro Atlanta and the many ways the company touches these customers and communities. We have some great partners in power delivery, customer service, sales and community and economic development that we work with as we serve our customers. My team represents the company externally and is responsible for our external relationships with community leaders and government officials, agencies and community organizations in this geographic area. Lastly, last year, I was given responsibility for our relationships in underserved communities statewide. Georgia Power has always made a special effort to ensure that customers and communities of color, seniors, members of the LGBTQ+ community and women are served equitably by our company. As you can imagine, this department has become increasingly more important with recent events and our focus on social justice and racial equity.



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Having served with the energy industry as long as you have, are you seeing more opportunities for women and in particular, for which careers?

YES!!!! The opportunities for women in our industry continue to grow and I would say the areas are limitless. Over the last 25 years I have been at Southern Company, I have seen so many women in roles that only the guys had before. We have women leading operations functions and running power plants. With that said we must look towards the future forward, innovative areas of our industry as we move away from carbon and expand in renewables, electric vehicles, etc... The last frontier for us is that top CEO job. There still are not nearly enough of us in that job so I'd say we should keep our eyes on that for the women in our industry.

Based upon your own personal experiences in your profession, what has been the biggest challenge you have faced or lesson you have learned?

At times I can be my biggest challenge. My actions or my attitude can sink me long before someone else takes a shot at me. I've learned I have to do my part – and when I fail, I've got to pick myself up, learn from the experience and even sometimes laugh at myself. I am not saying that I've not faced challenges others have had a hand in. I have and I will. Most of the times, I cannot control them. But I can control what I do and my outlook or attitude, how I respond to conflict and negativity and what impact it has on me going forward.

In your role, communication and ability to form trust and credibility are critical. What advice do you give to young professionals about networking and collegiality?

I think the hardest thing to learn to do as you network and form relationships is to be gracious. What I mean by that is to give people room to be imperfect, don't try to be judgmental or see the worst in others. Instead of focusing on how they make you feel or what they said, focus on how you want to make them feel and what you are saying and doing. One of my favorite sayings is "we judge ourselves by our intentions, we judge others by their actions." Grace give you peace with yourself and others and helps you build lasting relationships.

What advice would you give to a 2nd year college student deciding on a career path?

When I was early in my career, a mentor of mine saw me in a meeting sitting at one of the chairs around the perimeter of the room as opposed to at the table. He told me that if I deserved to be in the room, I deserved to be at the table. There are so many rooms you will walk in where you will be the only by some characteristic. Don't let that stop you. Demand your seat at the table and when you get there, add value.