



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



July 2021

Power Profile: Rachel Williams

Senior Project Manager

Tetra Tech

Rachel, in your bio, you note that you are both an environmental professional at Tetra Tech, and a women's leadership coach. How did that happen?

I have always loved science and nature, so when I was graduating college with a B.S. in Biology, I found environmental consulting which combined both of those passions. I started my career as an environmental scientist performing wetland and wildlife studies for the environmental permitting group, which was working mostly on developing natural gas pipeline projects at the time. Given my passion for leadership, I quickly moved up the ladder to become an environmental permitting project manager, and ended up helping develop projects in different industries, including oil and gas, electric transmission, and wind and solar.

After about a decade, though, I was experiencing burnout and dove into personal development to find answers on maximizing my potential while also increasing work-life balance and fulfillment. In that, coaching naturally found me, and helped me get really clear on my vision, strengths, and weaknesses, and what it means to be an authentic feminine leader. This inspired me to shift my corporate role into one more aligned to who I am (business development and connection) and become a coach helping other women maximize their leadership and growth all while reclaiming their personal life. This gives me the fulfillment I was looking for!

Having served as an environmental professional within the energy industry and consulting to the industry as long as you have, are you seeing more opportunities for women and, for which careers?

Within the energy industry, in my experience, I have seen more women in the environmental permitting and wildlife space than men. I feel like we've started seeing more women get promoted to higher levels of leadership, which is great. But bigger than that, I've seen many different companies on both the industry and consulting sides develop robust Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programs, which includes amazing development and support resources for women.

D&I programs are essential for retaining talent and boosting employee satisfaction, which in turn boosts employee performance, so it is really uplifting and inspiring to me to see companies making it a priority. Tetra Tech formalized their internal Professional Women's Network as an official Employee Resource Group (ERG), and the impact it has been facilitating for women company-wide has been really amazing to watch and participate in.



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How does your involvement with the Southern Gas Association's Women and Leadership Committee fit into all of the things that are important to you?

Like my participation in the Tetra Tech Professional Women's Network, participating in the SGA Women and Leadership Committee combines so many things that I am passionate about: leadership, women in STEM, energy, networking, and personal growth. Being able to have an impact on women not only within my own company, but industry-wide, means so much to me. The women in that committee are truly inspiring leaders (like our own Ms. Lila Jaber!) and are helping to pave the way for the aspirations and dreams of women with currently with us and behind us.

Leadership coaching is more than an example of your entrepreneurship, why did you become a leadership coach?

I believe the strongest teams are composed of complimentary opposites. Therefore D&I is so important for companies, and why I believe we need more women and minorities in leadership. One of my favorite quotes is "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." Therefore, helping women get clear on their unique gifts and how to leverage those in their life and workplace is so important to me. I want to give women the tools they need so they so they can have the impact they want to, and do not feel the need to drop out of the workforce because of burnout and not conscious choice!

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

I believe being grounded in who you are and having a clear vision for the impact you'd like to have in the world are the keys for anyone to be an effective leader.

Knowing who you are and what your strengths are (and being unapologetic about them!) allows you to be an AUTHENTIC leader who can connect with people. No one wants a perfect leader; they want an authentic leader leading from a place of heart. This gives you the confidence to move forward.

Having a clear vision of the impact you'd like to make (mission) is important, because to recruit people to lead you must know where you are taking them! When you live your life INSPIRED to make things happen - whether it's heading a charity, baking really cakes, or leading a company to make sure energy gets to the people who need it most – people naturally want to get in on that.

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

You do not have to have it all figured out now, or by the time you leave college! Just go with what truly interests and inspires you, and let life lead the way.



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

I just gave a presentation for “5 Tips for Effective Networking” in the Tetra Tech Professional Women’s Network! In short, those are:

1. Put the focus on THEM, not on you! Go in with the intent of possibly serving them.
2. The quality of your conversations is determined by the quality of your questions – so ask really good questions!
3. Be personable, it does not have to be all about business. Business is built on relationships, which come from knowing, liking, and trust!
4. Be clear on who you are and what it is that you offer – develop a good short “elevator pitch”.
5. Take OTHER’s information/cards instead of handing out yours – this gives you control of the follow-up which should be done within 48 hours.