



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



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Ning, can you describe your responsibilities at Southstar Energy and how your role contributes to the overall success of the company?

At SouthStar Energy Services, one of the largest retail natural gas providers in the U.S., I serve as the Director of Quantitative Analytics. My primary responsibilities include overseeing quantitative analysis and data-driven decision-making processes. I lead a team of dynamic data scientists to achieve operational excellence, drive innovation, and deliver superior customer service by leveraging big data and analytics. By providing analytical support across various departments, we ensure that data-driven insights enhance customer engagement and drive profitable growth. I also chair the AI Steering Committee, leading the exploration and implementation of AI capabilities within the company. By fostering innovation, collaboration, and a strong analytical foundation, we help ensure that SouthStar Energy maintains its leadership in the retail natural gas markets while delivering exceptional value to our customers and communities.

What inspired you to use your expertise in the energy industry?

My inspiration to use my expertise in the energy industry stems from my deep passion for economics and data analysis. With a Ph.D. in Economics and a dissertation focused on the energy industry, I have published research in leading energy journals. This academic foundation equipped me with the knowledge and skills to tackle the unique challenges and opportunities in the energy sector. The complexity of the industry, combined with its significant impact on people's lives, motivated me to apply quantitative methods to solve intricate problems and drive innovation. At SouthStar Energy, I'm proud to support initiatives like the Greener Life[®] program, a sustainability program that helps our clients reduce their carbon footprint. We are currently offering "Greener Life[®] for Business" in Florida to help companies achieve their net zero goals by negating the impact of emissions as a result of their consumption of natural gas. This is an innovation unique to our company and it is a privilege to be part of an industry that profoundly impacts society while developing responsible and sustainable energy solutions for the future.



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You came to the United States as an immigrant and English is your second language. How has Southstar helped you adjust and find success within the company?

As a first-generation immigrant from China, adapting to a new culture and language was challenging. However, SouthStar Energy has been incredibly supportive in helping me find success within the company. The encouragement and advice from my managers, mentors, and colleagues have been instrumental in my growth. SouthStar's inclusive environment has provided me with the resources and support needed to thrive in my role. For example, the mentor program allowed me to receive guidance from executives, helping me navigate industry complexities and develop my professional skills. Additionally, communication training opportunities have improved my English proficiency and leadership skills. SouthStar's commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment has made a significant difference in my ability to adjust and succeed, ensuring that employees from all backgrounds feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives.

You led one of the employee resource groups (ERG). Have you found the ERGs to be an effective best practice?

Leading the Soar-GA employee resource group (ERG) for AAPI employees has been incredibly rewarding. Through Soar-GA, I have had the opportunity to contribute to the AAPI community within the company, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among AAPI employees. ERGs create a strong sense of community by bringing together individuals with shared backgrounds and experiences, building robust support networks. This has been particularly important for our AAPI employees, who may sometimes feel underrepresented. For example, we are planning our 2025 May Heritage Event, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the AAPI community and highlighting the significant contributions and leadership of AAPI individuals within our organization and beyond. My experience with Soar-GA has reinforced my belief that ERGs are vital to a diverse and inclusive workplace, providing a space for meaningful connections, personal and professional growth, and collective advocacy.

In learning more about you, I discovered that you practice Tai Chi to reconnect with your inner peace and balance. In today's world with so much stress, pressure, what other recommendations do you make for mental health and mindfulness?

Practicing Tai Chi has been a significant part of my life, especially when I started experiencing knee and back pains that prevented me from engaging in more intensive exercises. Tai Chi offers the perfect balance of physical exercise and mental clarity, helping me manage stress. In addition to Tai Chi, I also take yoga classes, which combine physical movement with mindfulness, improving both mental and physical well-being. Simple breathing exercises can also be incredibly effective; taking a few deep breaths and focusing on your breath can help you feel more centered and relaxed. It's important to find what works best for you and make it a regular part of your routine. Prioritizing mental health and making time for activities that bring peace and clarity can help navigate the challenges of today's fast-paced world and maintain a sense of well-being.



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Knowing what you know today, what advice would you have given yourself twenty years ago?

My advice to my younger self would be to embrace the courage to seek out mentors, build a strong support network, and intentionally seek exposure. These actions help in personal and professional growth and create meaningful connections and opportunities. As an introvert with English as my second language, I was initially shy to ask for help and support, fearing rejection and wasting others' valuable time. However, seeking mentors and building relationships could have helped me avoid many mistakes by learning from their valuable experiences, significantly speeding up my career growth. Moreover, seeking exposure intentionally is crucial as it helps others understand your capabilities and creates opportunities for collaboration, driving more value together. This is particularly relevant for individuals from cultures that emphasize humility and prioritizing hard work over self-promotion.