



Lime Energy— Energy-Efficiency Projects

“We specialize in energy-efficiency projects,” states MaryAnne Lauderdale, regional director, engineering, Lime Energy, a design/build/construction company. “We also retrofit projects for institutional, commercial, and industrial facilities, including the government and public sectors. We specialize in retrofitting existing buildings with energy-efficient equipment systems for lighting, heating, air conditioning, and other systems.”

On a daily basis, Lauderdale manages a team of engineers that help provide a number of different services to its clients such as energy audits and analyses, where they conduct surveys and identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency in facilities. “Some of our work is for multimillion dollar projects with significant retrofits of chillers, boilers, air systems, and lighting,” says Lauderdale. “We calculate the potential energy savings, estimate the cost to complete the retrofit, and then assist with the implementation.”

An important aspect of her job is working with clients. “It’s important for young engineers to understand that in order for engineering companies to be able to do work, they have to sell work to clients. When you get into a managerial position in a corporation or company, you’re not just doing engineering work, you have to help secure that work, as well,” she adds.

Hence, Lauderdale is involved with project development; working with customers; responding to requests for proposals; putting together price proposals for projects; and more. “For me,

as an engineer, that's been a challenging part of the job over the years, but is also rewarding—becoming more and more involved with the business development part of securing business for the company. That can be a challenge for many engineers," continues Lauderdale, who notes people with strong technical skills may not naturally possess the skillsets needed in a business development role. "It's actually a skillset that translates well for many women," she admits. "A lot of women who go into engineering with a technical background gravitate to sales because they have good people skills."

Engineering was not Lauderdale's first major of choice when she entered college. "I studied mechanical engineering at San Jose State," recalls Lauderdale, who wasn't even remotely interested in the sciences while in high school, despite her good grades in those subjects. "I took lots of liberal arts and literature classes. I thought I was going to be a journalism major. I always did well in math and science," she remembers, "but I thought if I did something in mathematics I'd end up being a math teacher. In high school, my guidance counselors never said, 'Hey Lauderdale, look at your scores in math. You should go into engineering.' There was absolutely no discussion about that whatsoever. So I was a journalism major until I realized I'd be working for free during the summers." Lauderdale wanted to be independent as quickly as possible, which meant she needed paying gigs. "I had friends who were engineering majors; I saw what they were doing and thought, I can do that," she declares.

Lauderdale tried a few classes and eventually switched majors. It took her a little longer to graduate, but she made it. "It was not easy. I don't know how I persevered but I did," she says, "and I wound up



MaryAnne Lauderdale,
Regional Director,
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Lime Energy

with a mechanical engineering degree." Although Lauderdale attended school in the mid-1970s, she says schools today still lag behind when it comes to encouraging young women to enter science and technical fields. "We're not fully utilizing the talent we have and we're not going to compete in the future by only encouraging technical education to half the population," she comments.

Despite the number of layoffs at many companies, Lauderdale says the energy-efficiency and sustainability business looks for people—bright, young people who are trainable, interested, and energetic. "Business is good," adds

Lauderdale, "and it's still competitive and challenging. These are fields that are growing. We look for talented people. It's not like the rest of the economy."

Lauderdale directs some of her energy and expertise toward CWEEL. "In the last few years, other women started talking about

keeping—and influencing—women to get into the energy field. It became an aspiration to be able to create influence and have an effect," she states. "We're in a position now where we can invest a little bit of our time to give something back, not just to women, but men too, and have some powerful results. My aspiration at this point is to be able to be that mentor and be that coach for younger women through CWEEL."

CWEEL donated its first thousand dollars of scholarship money to the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) scholarship foundation. "That was a huge accomplishment for us," his board co-chair exclaims. Happy with her current position, Lauderdale enjoys working for Lime Energy. "Throughout my career, what I was striving for was to work on cool projects with a dynamic group while having a good time. Even though the work is challenging, it's fun," says Lauderdale, who has always set career objectives according to her interests. "And I've been able to achieve those objectives. In energy engineering, there are many opportunities for young people to create a career that is positive and rewarding."

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