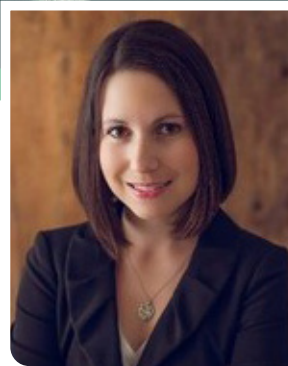


WISE (Women in Smart Energy) Panel



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Authority



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DEBRA CHANIL,
Director of Editorial
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Smart Energy
Decisions
(Moderator)

CHANIL: Shonique, you are new to the energy industry but you've been in workforce development for a long time. Let's start by talking about the importance of getting women into the energy industry.

BANKS: Data shows that a diverse workforce strengthens our bottom line. Women comprise about 48% of the labor market, but only about 25% of the energy field. When you talk about diversifying energy and bringing women into the space, you're really talking about creating equity and access for women to come in and offer a different perspective.

CHANIL: Earlier, you mentioned the phrase, "Equity as a verb." What does that mean to you?

BANKS: Equity is about intentionality in establishing the practices and policies within the culture of an institution. It's about intentionally creating those supports that help women grow in the field. Maybe it's providing flex time to help meet family needs. If you want to change, you need to create those intentional practices.

LUCENTE: Women in leadership roles need to be seen by youth, by people of color, by other women. Otherwise, it remains a dream – it won't become a reality. SEIA (Solar Energy Industries Association) estimates that the renewables workforce could quadruple in the next 10 years.

Okay, so if you don't have an equity strategy or diversity strategy right now, is it going to be business as usual? Are we going to maintain 25% women or 8% Black representation in the fastest-growing sector? I hope not. I'm very optimistic about the opportunities. I'm especially proud to be at Target and to be part of their innovative commitments to effect change. We're talking about the culture of a company. My leader said recently, "culture eats strategy for

breakfast," which I think is so true. When you say you'll commit [to a diverse workforce], you can't just throw money at the issue. You have to be accountable, ask the community what they need, then take steps based on what you learn: it's recursive. We have an awesome program called "Target Scholars," and we're going to spend \$2 billion in the next few years on Black-owned businesses. Large companies need to have innovative solutions. We need a lot of experiences and a lot of people to drive that change.

BANKS: Liz, that's interesting, because I also think it takes representation, right? You need women, minorities and young people all at the table if you're going to make a change. This requires patience and multi-year funding because making an impact doesn't happen over 12 months, right? It takes time.

LUCENTE: One notable changemaker in the industry is Carla Harris [look up *Carla's Pearls*]. She's an executive of innovation at Morgan Stanley and a previous Chair of the National Women's Business Council, which is a U.S. presidential appointment. She talks about sparking that sense of joy when you meet somebody new and giving people that aren't like you a shot, especially if you're in a leadership or management

At Target, notable changemaker women, like Kiera Fernandez, our Chief Diversity Officer, and Laysha Ward, our Chief External Engagement Leader, really go above and beyond. They lead from every seat that they're in and show that YOU can lead from any seat. Carla's Pearls advise that you give somebody a shot. Get a mentor and a sponsor. Understand innovation is winning.

A sponsor is someone in your company who is in the decision-making room when you're not. They can advocate for you and keep you connected, maybe giving you a shot at that cool project. Managers, don't just take the easy way out by picking the person who looks like you and talks like you.

Liz Lucente,
Lead Program Manager – Energy and Sustainability,
Target Corporation



BANKS: This also speaks to allyship. When you walk into a room, try to make contact with that ally, because as a woman, as a woman of color, you have to want to belong, especially in an industry like energy. You have to find your space. Our fearless leader, Emily Schapira (Philadelphia Energy Authority's CEO) has really given us space to bring our entire selves to the job. It forces you to work with folks, sometimes in an area where you may not be comfortable. For women in energy, it is so important to have that ally in the room to help you.

CHANIL: Liz, talk about the difference between mentorship and sponsorship and the importance of both.

LUCENTE: Mentors can be anyone in any industry – younger or older, it doesn't matter. You just need to have enough rapport with that person so you can tailor whatever golden nuggets of truth and wisdom they have to

your goals and what you want to achieve. Conversely, sponsors are exceptionally important, and I think less sought out, but this is where culture and inclusivity are important. A sponsor is someone in your company who is in the decision-making room when you're not. They can advocate for you and keep you connected, maybe giving you a shot at that cool project. Managers, don't just take the easy way out by picking the person who looks like you and talks like you. That sponsor is the key to a healthy workplace. I would challenge companies: if they're not already specifically placing new employees with a sponsor, they should do so. It shouldn't be beholden on a new employee to go find that sponsor. Again, I love working for Target because they encourage you to find a mentor or sponsor. By the way, it's a fun way to network, too! 🌐