

PROFILES

WOMEN IN GEOTHERMAL

Promoting the education, professional development, and advancement of women in the geothermal community.



Spotlight on Women in Geothermal USA – September 2024

Kayla Dowty, Director of Business Development, Ormat Technologies

Pioneering Geothermal Energy with Passion and Purpose



In the rapidly evolving world of renewable energy few individuals stand out, such as Kayla Dowty, a dynamic leader in geothermal energy development. With a career rooted in engineering and a passion for sustainable energy, Kayla’s journey is a testament to resilience, adaptability, and leadership. From her early days in civil engineering to her current role in business development at Ormat Technologies, Kayla has consistently pushed boundaries and shattered expectations.

Leadership, Mentorship, and Advocacy

Kayla’s leadership style is rooted in mentorship and collaboration. She credits her early mentors for shaping her approach and emphasizes the importance of asking questions and learning from others. “Always be solutions-oriented, not problems-oriented” is the best advice she ever received, and it’s a principle she instills in her team.

She’s also a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion in the energy sector. Her team includes members who focus on DEI initiatives and Indigenous peoples’ rights, ensuring that Ormat’s projects are inclusive and respectful of all communities.

From Law Dreams to Engineering Realities

Kayla’s journey began in her home state of Nevada, where she initially aspired to become a lawyer. However, during a pivotal conversation with a college counselor, she was encouraged to explore engineering, a field that was gaining popularity and offered strong prospects for future law school applicants. “I liked math and science, so civil engineering seemed like a good fit,” Kayla recalls. She quickly found her footing in the field, particularly drawn to the environmental aspects of civil engineering.

Her path took an unexpected turn when, she became a mother during her second year of college. Balancing motherhood and a demanding academic schedule was no easy feat, but Kayla’s determination never wavered. “I needed to finish my degree quickly, not just for myself, but for my son,” she reflects. Though challenging, this period of her life, solidified her commitment to engineering and laid the foundation for her future success.

A Fortuitous Start in Civil Engineering

Kayla’s first major break came when she secured an internship at a woman-owned civil and environmental consulting firm in Reno. This opportunity was a game-changer. “The company was small, which meant I got to experience a bit of everything,” she says. The mentorship she received from both the company’s owner and a senior engineer was invaluable. “I had two incredible



mentors who were experts in their fields. One focused on environmental permitting, while the other was a technical guru with decades of experience in power transmission design.”

This diverse exposure allowed Kayla to develop a well-rounded skill set early in her career. She jokes, “I’m a civil girl living in an electrical world,” a nod to her expertise in both civil and electrical engineering aspects of utility consulting.



Rising Through the Ranks at Tri Sage

After graduating with a degree in civil engineering, Kayla joined the firm full-time, where she continued to hone her skills for 15 years. During her tenure, the company expanded, adding an electrical branch that Kayla played a significant role in developing. She became the first non-utility employee to be hired, a distinction that allowed her to learn from some of the most knowledgeable engineers in the industry.

Her work with Tri Sage was instrumental in shaping her career, particularly her involvement in renewable energy projects. One of her most significant clients was Ormat Technologies, a leader in geothermal energy development. “My first project with Ormat was at Steamboat in 2009, and I’ve been working closely with them ever since,” she shares.

A New Chapter at Ormat

Kayla’s transition to Ormat was serendipitous. Following Tri Sage’s acquisition by a private equity firm, she reconnected with Paul Thomsen, Ormat’s VP of Business Development. “I reached out to him on LinkedIn,

and within a week, we were having lunch and discussing this incredible opportunity,” she says. The timing was perfect, as Ormat needed a new director, a role Kayla was already familiar with as a consultant.

At Ormat, Kayla has continued to excel, now leading a team responsible for transmission and interconnection, origination, and business development. “I work with a team of 15 in business development, and together, we are working on some exciting projects that will shape the future of geothermal energy,” she says with pride.

Driving Geothermal Growth and Innovation

Ormat is focused on expanding its geothermal portfolio, with particular attention to new projects in the Western United States. She’s passionate about the potential of geothermal energy, especially in light of recent policy changes like California’s 2021 Mid-Term Reliability (MTR) order, which requires 1,000 megawatts of firm, clean baseload power by 2031. “This has significantly increased demand for geothermal energy and a market forecast that the industry hasn’t experienced in decades,” she explains.

Kayla is also involved in innovative solutions for data centers, which require substantial and stable power supplies. She envisions a future where data centers and geothermal plants work in tandem, reducing the need for long-distance power transmission. “If data centers are willing to locate near areas of known geothermal resource, it would open up incredible potential,” she notes.





Balancing Work and Life

Despite her demanding career, Kayla prioritizes time with her family. “We spend our summers at Lake Almanor, boating, wake surfing, and enjoying beach time,” she says. With three children active in sports and other extracurriculars, her weekends are often spent on the football field or at other events, which she describes as her “favorite thing to do.”

Looking Ahead

As Kayla continues to drive Ormat’s geothermal projects forward, she’s focused on achieving ambitious goals for 2024, including completing five new interconnection requests and supporting the company’s operating power plants. Her vision for the future is clear: “We’re on the brink of significant growth in geothermal energy, and I’m excited to be part of it.”

Kayla Dowty’s journey is a remarkable example of how passion, hard work, and strong mentorship can lead to success in the renewable energy industry. As she continues to break new ground in geothermal energy, she remains committed to inspiring and leading the next generation of engineers and energy professionals.

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