



REDEFINING LEADERSHIP IN NUCLEAR: THE TRAILBLAZING JOURNEY OF KIMBERLY COOK-NELSON



ABOUT KIMBERLY COOK - NELSON

Kimberly Cook-Nelson is the Executive Vice President of Nuclear Operations and Chief Nuclear Officer at Entergy, overseeing the safe and reliable operation of the company's four nuclear power plants and five reactors across Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

With over two decades in the nuclear industry, Kimberly has held key leadership roles in operations, system engineering, and performance improvement. She has a strong background in nuclear safety, regulatory compliance, and risk-informed applications, helping drive operational excellence and strategic growth.

A licensed professional engineer, she holds an MBA, a master's in engineering management, and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the University of New Orleans. She also completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School.

In an industry where reliability meets innovation, Kimberly Cook-Nelson has emerged as a transformative leader. As the Chief Nuclear Officer of Entergy Corporation, Kimberly's 29-year career in nuclear power exemplifies resilience, forward-thinking leadership, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. From earning her SRO license to driving community impact and advancing diversity in the workplace, Kimberly is paving the way for the future of nuclear energy.

A Career Built on Vision and Adaptability

Kimberly's career journey is anything but conventional. From her start as a mechanical engineer to becoming one of the few female Chief Nuclear Officers in the industry, her path showcases the power of seizing opportunities.

"I always tell people to know where they want to go but to recognize that career paths are rarely a straight line," she reflects. Her willingness to volunteer for challenging roles and tackle problems no one else wanted to address propelled her career forward. Whether establishing risk management programs or stepping into roles others shied away from, Kimberly's ability to adapt and lead in tough environments set her apart.

Championing Diversity and Inspiring the Next Generation

As someone who has often been the only woman in the room, Kimberly recognizes the importance of representation. "For much of my career, I didn't even notice that I was the only woman at the table—it was just the norm. But I've come to realize how critical it is to ensure that I'm not the last," she explains.

Kimberly is passionate about creating pathways for future leaders, particularly women and minorities, to thrive in the nuclear industry. From engaging with schools to showcasing nuclear careers at Girl Scout events, she emphasizes the need to start early. "We spend a lot of time showing young people what a career in nuclear can look like. It's about planting the seed and making sure they see themselves in this field," she says.

Nuclear's Role in Communities and the Future

Beyond technical leadership, Kimberly highlights the profound impact of nuclear power on local communities. From providing high-paying jobs to supporting local businesses and philanthropic initiatives, the ripple effects of nuclear are vast. "For every one employee, there are five offshoot jobs created in the community," she notes.

Looking ahead, Kimberly is deeply involved in ensuring that nuclear remains a cornerstone of clean, reliable energy. "We need to overcome construction risks and ensure public perception aligns with the incredible potential of nuclear. It's essential to tell our story and advocate for nuclear's role in a carbon-free future," she emphasizes.

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ABOUT HOST: PHIL ZERINGUE

Phil Zeringue, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at NuclearN, has dedicated over two decades to driving transformative growth in the nuclear industry. Renowned for his operational rigor, strategic insight, and unwavering commitment to excellence, Phil has established a reputation as a disciplined leader capable of addressing complex organizational challenges with precision and clarity.

With a career spanning engineering, maintenance, project management, and IT, Phil has cultivated a profound technical understanding of the nuclear sector. Over the years, his expertise has evolved into a visionary leadership style that leverages emerging technologies to deliver impactful and sustainable change.

Phil's ability to elevate company performance and inspire teams to transcend expectations has been a hallmark of his career. Through his structured, results-driven approach, he continues to lead initiatives that shape the future of the industry while ensuring meaningful, long-lasting success.

“Great Achievement rests on effective organization, meticulous preparation, and visionary leadership”

Continuous Improvement: A Path to Premiere

At Entergy, Kimberly is spearheading a cultural shift through the “Path to Premiere” initiative. Focused on operational excellence, organizational health, and customer satisfaction, the program embodies Kimberly’s vision for a lean, innovative, and high-performing nuclear organization.

Her approach to leadership is rooted in challenging the status quo and embracing innovation. “Whether it’s leveraging AI to streamline operations or finding new ways to increase output, we’re on a journey to ensure nuclear remains the most efficient and reliable energy source,” she explains.

Final Thoughts: Inspiring the Next Generation

Kimberly’s message to the industry is clear: advocate, educate, and inspire. “We must get out there and tell nuclear’s story. Whether you’re speaking with policymakers, neighbors, or students, every conversation matters,” she says.

With leaders like Kimberly Cook-Nelson driving change and innovation, the future of nuclear energy is not only promising but essential in shaping a clean and sustainable world.

To watch the full interview, visit nuclearn.ai.