

Kareen Boutonnat
Group COO
Lightsource BP



Lightsource BP is a global market leader in the development, acquisition and long-term management of large-scale solar projects and smart energy solutions. Lightsource BP projects generate competitively-priced, dependable clean energy for businesses and communities.

Building the future

An industry in motion

In a landscape experiencing vast amounts of change, with new energy sources coming online, and renewables playing ever greater roles, Kareen Boutonnat believes we're at a critical moment in the energy sector. Renewables like solar will be vital to providing sustainable and clean power to meet global demand. The way to get there will be through technology.

With the industry under so much pressure to innovate, Kareen sees the relative newcomer status of renewables as an advantage. "We're not tied down by incumbent systems and we can take a fresh approach to solving problems without worrying about legacy processes," she says.

That ability to think outside the box and move unencumbered by the past will be critical to reimagining a substantially different future—one where everything has the potential to change, from how we source our power, to how we use it, and other elements of today's core energy systems both locally and globally.

"The digitalization of energy is the most logical step forward in addressing the future. In almost every aspect, our lives, our businesses, services, homes, gadgets and so on are becoming more connected, more intelligent and more efficient. It's time that the energy industry catches up to this pattern, and it's particularly vital for renewables, given the significant role we must play in the future," Kareen says.

What's next in tech

The teams at Lightsource BP spend a lot of time thinking about what it means to bring new technology into the business. For Lightsource BP, Kareen notes, technology has to improve the business as a whole and how the company operates as a generator of power.

"Safety, productivity, and reliability are vital to our business, and new technology enables us to be more responsive and available. We're focused on developing and investing in technologies that will help us reach these goals, such as advanced data analytics and artificial intelligence."

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AI is one such space rich with possibilities and an unlimited number of potential applications. Reflecting on Lightsource BP's goals, Kareen sees its advantages when applied to predictive maintenance. Being able to look "into the future" would revolutionize how Lightsource BP runs their Operations and Maintenance division. The company could dispatch technicians at the point of failure rather than relying on endless rounds of check-ups and reactive maintenance. The benefits would be monumental—huge savings in time and money.

Empower people

For new technologies to be able to change the company, people have to be on board. Nothing is more critical for Kareen than mapping people and processes—it has to come first. She believes that "new technologies need to adapt to your staff and operations" and that "it's important to raise awareness to ensure staff understand the significance of the implementation." After all, it's the people in a company that are the true drivers of change.

New technologies can also breed new behaviors. Kareen has noticed herself relying more on instant messaging to generate quick responses instead of turning to email, which has had a big impact on the speed of decision making. She says not all changes are foreseeable, and that surprises are always a good reminder that we should all stay flexible and open to change.

Ecosystems of learning

In fact, staying open to new ideas is a method Kareen often uses to stay informed. A big champion of networking, she has fostered relationships with professionals and organizations across all the sectors where Lightsource BP is active, or has an interest in becoming active. That people-driven ecosystem lets her stay on top of the latest trends and new developments in the industry.

She applies the same method inside Lightsource BP to stay connected to innovation within the company. It helps that the head of Innovation at Lightsource BP reports to her. She also makes it a point to forge strong relationships with the in-house team to stay abreast of what's in the works, and what's coming next. Staying abreast of innovation is critical to her, given the amount and pace of change throughout the energy sector—it's imperative to keep evolving in order to stay at the forefront.

Powering rapid global growth with diverse talent

That pace of change is keeping Kareen extremely busy these days. In just the last 12 months alone, Lightsource BP has launched nine international locations as the company expands their global footprint. Ensuring these new platforms are successful and thriving has been a consuming focus.

That rapid growth has allowed Kareen to focus on building the right teams and providing the right level of support to advance careers. "I'm proud to say that at Lightsource BP we place a huge emphasis on talent and diversity across our leadership and workforce. Our team currently boasts over 29 different nationalities and now as a mentor myself, it's really amazing to see more women building up their careers across the energy sector, which has typically been very male dominated."

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