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ENERGY

Fast-growing Central Florida solar energy firm to expand nationwide



Lisa Percy, owner and CEO of 15 Lightyears, has a lifelong passion for sustainability, and her client list includes NASA.

JIM CARCHIDI

COMPANIES

By [John A. Barrett](#)
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15 lightyears

Longwood, FL

"Impossible is nothing" is a phrase said often by CEO [Lisa Percy](#) at the Longwood-based headquarters of solar

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energy contractor 15 Lightyears.

The optimistic slogan does a good job of summing up Percy's outlook as a business leader. For her, not even the sky is the limit.

While the 38-year-old may have spent the first half of her career in sales and marketing for heating, ventilation and air conditioning manufacturers, her passion for sustainability started early on. "My entire life, even as a 10-year-old girl, I've been environmentally focused," said Percy.



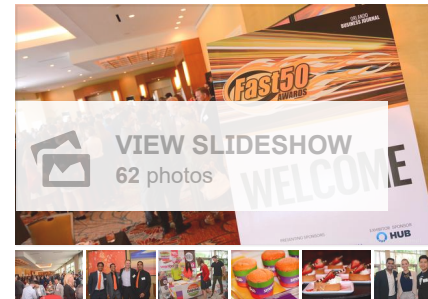
Lisa Percy, owner and CEO, 15
Lightyears

JIM CARCHIDI

Percy worked at All Elements Energy for three years as director of energy and sustainability before eventually buying and rebranding it as 15 Lightyears. The company

provides clean energy solutions for residential and commercial builders and homeowners through energy audits, inspections, solar panel installation and more. The contractor boasts a client list that includes the city of Orlando, Bank of America and even NASA.

15 Lightyears' rapid growth landed it a spot on *Orlando Business Journal's* 2019 Fast 50 list which ranks the fastest-growing companies in Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties by percentage of growth over three years. Its 2018 gross revenue of more than \$2.6 million showed a 112.2% growth over a three-year period since 2016.



In addition to the business sector, Percy and her company also delve into advocacy and philanthropy. The

15 Lightyears Foundation promotes sustainability workforce development and hosts a three-week summer program that connects teens aging out of the foster care system to on-the-job experiences in the energy, construction and building performance industries.

Here, Pearcy talks company growth and the future of sustainability:

What challenges did you face after buying and rebranding this company into 15 Lightyears? With a business, if you are established you have more ability and availability to everything. A lot of small businesses go out of business within the first two years. I was the core of the business, so as long as I was there, it was still the same company to all of our old existing customers. The people are what makes a business, the name change was easy. I was nervous to do it, but we were willing to take that risk because we knew that regardless, it would be the same customer service and the same people.

What does a day in your role look like? It's anything from being out in the field doing site visits and checking on technicians to spending an entire day in my office working on the business side of things, spending a day with an electrician on plans and ideas, or jumping over to

accounting. It's knowing a little bit about everything and making absolutely sure you have the right people in the right places. Also, being a cheerleader for the mission and our foundation is a huge part – believing in what's next before it's even happening and getting everyone on board.

What motivates you to grow your company? Definitely the employees. Bringing them with me pushes me further to bring this company to success because it means I can grow them, as well. Their capabilities are endless, and they've shown that time and time again. My family and the future are also huge motivating factors. I'm a big proponent of speaking for the elderly and the kids. Somebody told me once, "You have to make money to contribute money." That definitely pushes me to grow the company, because as the money grows, so does the 15 Lightyears Foundation.

What are some long-term goals for your company? A huge goal is developing the 15 Lightyears Foundation. Also, growing the employees. As we grow, it's amazing if we can dive into our employees and find out what their skill sets are. We've realized that as a company, we're able to offer more services to our existing clients who have needs for these services. We've covered Florida

with several satellite offices, so we're looking at becoming both a national company and eventually looking into the Caribbean. Our mission is not just to get bigger – it's to get better. Diversifying our portfolio is also important as the solar industry expands.

What does the future of renewable energy look like to you? I hope that we're 100% renewable eventually. I want us to be not just renewable, but also also carbon-free. Our goal within the solar industry is to have the infrastructure by 2030 so everyone can supplement their homes with solar energy and the power companies are running off carbon-free energy completely.

What challenges have you faced as a female CEO?

There's a perception that you have to overcome, especially in anything with science and technology. We're trying to bring more women in and it's definitely helping. Even as a company, we love empowering women to jump into any kind of industry. I had to study harder so I was bringing something to the table instead of just being another seat at the table. In the beginning, being CEO was definitely an uncomfortable position, but now it's becoming more of the norm. I can run a meeting and not feel like I have to control the entire meeting. When

you have the projects under your belt and the experience, it's a lot easier.

15 Lightyears

- **Description:** Solar energy contractor
- **Top executive:** Lisa Pearcy, CEO and owner
- **Employees:** 30
- **Address:** 776 Bennett Drive, Suite 101, Longwood, 32750
- **Education:** Bachelor's in marketing, University of Central Florida
- **Family:** Two children
- **Hobbies:** Running, paddleboarding, kayaking, catch and release fishing
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