

Navigating career crossroads

*IEEE Schenectady Section/
Women in Engineering
Speaker Series*

Danielle Merfeld, PhD
Technology Director
Electrical Technologies & Systems



imagination at work

Identify your “purpose”... build your network

Mission-based work is more fulfilling, and easier!

- Builds in endurance
- Engages multiple passions
- Fosters connections with others



Build in resiliency to enable stretch

Think positive, but have a 'plan B'

- Support structure for family
- Backup plans for critical projects
- Move outside 'comfort zone' ... Stretch brings breadth



The risks of over-planning

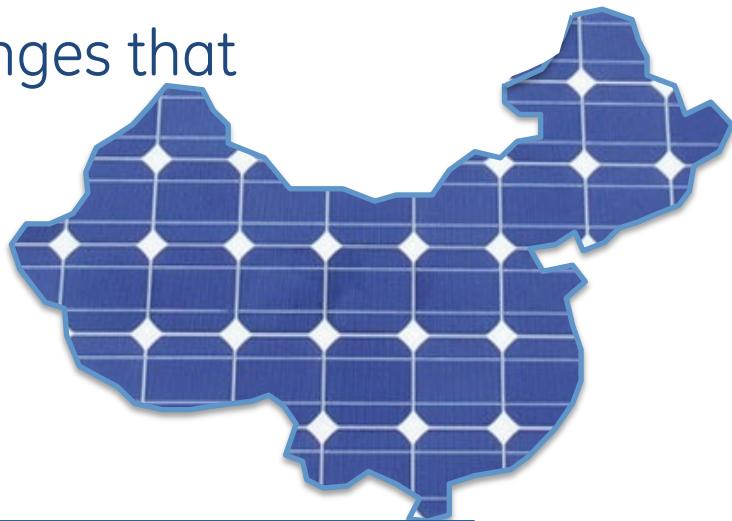
- Life happens ... enjoy it!
- Don't make decisions based on how things "could be" in the future
- Embrace creative solutions to balance competing demands
(modified schedule, flexibility, new work arrangements, new work assignments)
- Expect obstacles and be prepared to navigate around them



imagination at work

Tough times call for leadership

- Be passionate, but stay rational
- Seek out crises, but don't create them!
- Important messages require over communication ... be ready and be clear
- It is the tough situations and challenges that really develop you and your "brand"



Biggest challenges can be best opportunities



imagination at work

Big picture career thoughts

- The value of 'mentors', 'coaches' and 'sponsors'
- Seek out opportunities to learn, network, gather ideas, & think about how you can continue to grow
- Don't avoid the spotlight; representing others is a critical skill ... build it through practice
- Take **every** opportunity seriously

Enjoy working in the most exciting and challenging technical era in history!



imagination at work

Essential skills for navigating change

1. Spend time reflecting on core values and mission in life
2. Be persistent
3. Be flexible and creative
4. Look for links between seemingly separate and diverse elements
5. Accept uncertainty and be optimistic
6. Keep fit and healthy
7. See the big picture