



Green Advocate

A WOMAN OF MANY TALENTS, **SONITA LONTOH**, TELLS UMESH BHAGCHANDANI ABOUT THE WONDER OF GREEN TECHNOLOGY AND THE ROLES SHE PLAYS IN EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH MENTORSHIP

WITH THE RECENT hoopla surrounding global warming, one can neither overlook nor ignore the need and deed of a better vision of the world and its greener future that will heavily depend on new innovation and renewable energy sources.

Serving as an executive of Trilliant, a Silicon Valley-based company specialising in green technologies, Sonita has gotten into the energy game since 2005, saying, “My first exposure to green technology was when I worked on different kinds of energy-related programmes in Pacific Gas and Electric Company in my early years of career, and it has continued since then with me being involved in the smart grid system for Trilliant,” explains Sonita.

The smart grid system enables energy to be more distributed by way of an advanced information and communication technology, thus helping utilities companies and end-users control and monitor energy use and costs more effectively. The system is also considered environmentally friendly because it allows for greater penetration of highly variable renewable energy sources, such as solar power and wind power.

On green technology, Sonita says it will become very essential for all the countries in the world pursuing sustainable development. Perhaps it’s a bit too soon for Indonesia, but with global carbon emissions rising and the inevitable climate change, the idea of green technology applied to any sector in this ever-increasing industrial world is no longer a pipe dream.

“The thought of our world becoming more green technology-oriented is what counts. You don’t have to buy electric cars or build solar panel rooftops to make such a technology a reality. You can always start the movement through simple things—for instance, buying more energy-efficient bulbs, or even as simple as recycling,” adds Sonita.

Amidst her busy schedule, Sonita also plays a double role as a mentor and advocate of women’s

leadership and empowerment. “I’m always passionate about communications. I believe that a person’s intelligence will be in vain if she can’t communicate properly. To express her ideas, a person must have great communication skills in order to succeed in our hectic, competitive lives,” Sonita says.

Sonita cherishes her role as a mentor, too. “I have many

guiding principles, but I always encourage people to do simple yet often forgettable methods, such as working hard, seeing the glass half-full, and being confident. However, the main important thing I’ve learned in this life is to never be afraid of asking what you deserve,” adds Sonita, a graduate of the venerated Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she earned a Master’s degree in Engineering.

Sonita is also a professional mentor for TechWomen, a programme spearheaded by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. TechWomen is a professional mentorship and exchange programme that enables talented women from the Middle East and North Africa with technical skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to reach their full potential.

“I love meeting women who share the same passion, and TechWomen has enabled me to meet many great individuals, such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who not only excel at their career but is also passionate about educating and helping other women worldwide.”

One can’t help but admire the long list of achievements and endeavours Sonita Lontoh has accomplished. Sonita is one of the recipients of the prestigious Indonesian Diaspora Award, the ceremony of which was held in Los Angeles last year. “It was such an honour to receive such a recognition. There are many talented Indonesians worldwide, and the Indonesian Diaspora is the exact platform that I’ve always wanted and needed to be a part of. The panel serves as an umbrella for all Indonesians worldwide. Through it, we can work on and exchange ideas, as well as uniting our passion for helping others feel proud of being Indonesians,” Sonita concludes. ■

AT A GLANCE

EDUCATION
Sonita received a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research from the University of California, Berkeley. She holds a Master’s degree in Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

CAREER
She once worked as a management consultant at the consulting firm, Bain & Company. Sonita has lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

AWARDS
Sonita has been recently named a Global Emerging Leader Under 40 by the National Association of Asian MBAs.